

**THE INTERPLAY OF IDEOLOGIES IN THE SELECT  
NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH**

THESIS SUBMITTED TO VIDYASAGAR UNIVERSITY  
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BY  
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**2016**

## Certificate

*This is to certify that the thesis entitled “The Interplay of Ideologies in the Select Novels of Amitav Ghosh” which is being submitted by Ms. Meenakshi De for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English to Vidyasagar University, Paschim Medinipur – 721102, West Bengal, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree, is a record of original work carried out by her under my direct supervision and guidance.*

*To the best of my knowledge, Ms. De has not submitted her thesis for any other award or degree elsewhere. Nor do the contents of this thesis form a basis of the award of any previous degree.*

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## **DECLARATION OF THE CANDIDATE**

I, Meenakshi De bearing registration no. **0172/Ph. D. (Arts)**, do hereby declare that the dissertation entitled **“The Interplay of Ideologies in the Select Novels of Amitav Ghosh”** submitted by me to the Dept. of English, Vidyasagar University, Midnapore – 721102, West Bengal, in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English is an original research work, and has not been submitted to any other university or institution for the award of any degree.

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**DEDICATED**

**TO**

**MY LOVING ELDEST BROTHER**

**SANKAR PRASAD DEY**

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## PREFACE

The opportunity of going through the works of Amitav Ghosh, who being a master storyteller combines effectively history, philosophy, science and other social issues and concerns of the world, embraced me when I had been rigorously preparing myself for the UGC-NET, for, the synopses of fictional works of this writer gathered before my eyes and gladdened my heart. *The Shadow Lines* (1988) illuminating my notions of nation and history charmed me with its 'story' and I fell in love with the novelist, Amitav Ghosh. The novel mesmerized me to such an extent that I could not resist my urge to be acquainted with the works of Ghosh more and more and to delve deep into the art of his novels. Moreover, the rejection of the much coveted Commonwealth Award by Ghosh made me bow down before him with profound reverence and his strong sense of self-dignity and honesty inspired me a lot.

At that time, as a part of preparation of UGC-NET, I approached the neo-Marxist critic, Louis Althusser who by his famous formulation of the concept of 'Relative Autonomy' of the text drew my attention to the formation of literature. As something flashing in my inward eyes, my inquisitive little brain obligated me to go through Ghosh's novels in the theoretical light of Marxism. Honestly speaking, the inquisitiveness and the urge of doing something would obviously have been nipped in the bud unless I got the chance of carrying out a research work on Amitav Ghosh's works at Vidyasagar University. My gratefulness is due to the Dept. of English, Vidyasagar University for providing me with the privilege of carrying out my project. In this connection, special mention ought to be made of SCILET (Study Centre for Indian Literature in English and Translation) library which provided me with a treasure trove of valuable articles and books on Ghosh's fictional oeuvre which eased my mind.

My idea was boosted up by my teachers Prof. Joyjit Ghosh and Prof. Snehasis Maiti, my mentor, that a project may be carried out on Amitav Ghosh to explore the role of 'ideology' ( ideology of the textual content) in his fiction. Finally, my initial hesitation and fear evaporated when a board of eminent professors gave the green signal that my project might be proceeded. Now, the present study is an outcome of some efforts.

I take this opportunity to express the debts I have incurred to a legion of people during five years of my doctoral research. At the very outset I cannot but put on record a deep debt of gratitude I owe to Prof. Joyjit Ghosh, Dept. of English, Vidyasagar University without whose inspiration my long cherished dream of doing doctoral research would not have been translated into reality.

I am obligated to acknowledge my gratefulness to Prof. Snehasis Maiti without whose expert counsel, direct supervision, and scholarly guidance this project could not have assumed its present form. I am fortunate enough to have enjoyed the benefit of holding discussions on myriad theoretical problems encountered by me with respected and most revered Prof. Sankar Prasad Singha, Dept. of English, and Prof. Tirthankar Das Purkayastha, Dept. of English, Vidyasagar University. I cannot but acknowledge my gratefulness to Prof. Debashis Bandyopadhyaya who extended his co-operative hands towards me. In this connection, I cannot help recording with great appreciation the untiring assistance I came by from late Asoke Bhattacharjee, Professor of Bengali, Midnapore College.

My gratitude is also due to my loving father whose discussions on numerous historical phenomena illumined my mind. Special mention need be made of my beloved mother whose very presence served as a beacon of inspiration for me in proceeding to complete my research work. My debt to my elder brother also runs very deep as he perfectly performed the part of my critic. The sweet innocent face of my niece, Mithai also refreshed

my mind and enthused me to carry on my project. I would also like to extend my grateful thanks to my life-long companion, my husband Sk Nasim Ali, who went through my thesis with rapt attention and made a careful rectification of the errors committed by me inadvertently.

Last of all, my indebtedness to my eldest brother, Sankar Prasad Dey, my friend, philosopher and guide, is so profound that it cannot be expressed in words. His dedication and powerful guidance have made me what I am today. From the bottom of my heart, I dedicate my thesis to my eldest brother.

**Place : Paschim Medinipur**

.....

**Date :**

**(Meenakshi De)**



**ABBREVIATIONS FOR THE WORKS BY AMITAV GHOSH**

- ALB* *At Large in Burma*
- CC* *The Calcutta Chromosome*
- CD* *Countdown*
- CR* *The Circle of Reason*
- DC* *Dancing in Cambodia*
- GMG* *The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi*
- GP* *The Glass Palace*
- HT* *The Hungry Tide*
- IAAL* *In an Antique Land*
- ITI* *The Imam and The Indian: Prose Pieces*
- ROS* *River of Smoke*
- SL* *The Shadow Lines*
- SOP* *Sea of Poppies*

## INTRODUCTION

**“ for me, home is where the orcaella are :”**

...

**“For me home is wherever I can brew a pot of good tea”**

**Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (2004)**

How can it be possible? Why does this dissension of view about ‘home’ occur? The present age, as an age of displacement and dislocation, nurtures this dissension of view about home — ‘home’ is simply a home to some one; ‘home’ is not a home to another; again ‘no home’ is a kind of home to some people. Apart from postcolonial and postmodernist stance, the existence of human beings, according to Marxist point of view, determines human consciousness rather than vice versa. Existence is ‘reality’ which determines human ‘belief system’, by which the concept of ‘home’ varies. This ‘reality’ is not same to all people. Reality is the subjective idea over the objective matter. A distortion of relation between subjective ideas and objective things occurs systematically and purposefully by the ruling class in order to retain power. In this way existence of ‘reality’ differs from ‘appearance’. This phenomenon of socially determined consciousness can be regarded as ideology. It is, in general sense, the perception, belief system or consciousness of reality.

Ideologies provide the basis not only for our social, political and economic aspects of individual or collectives lives, they also influence the creative world in more than one way. Sometimes, ideologies go into the making of the fictional world that later on becomes a site for ideological interplays. Having special fascination for the eminent novelist, Amitav Ghosh, along with being a renowned anthropologist and a historian and being charmed by the author’s skill of combining ideological, political and historical elements with a pledge to

the novel as a beautiful work of fiction, the present study starts to find out the interplay of ideologies in select novels of Amitav Ghosh. As Ghosh's novels are steeped in ideological debates on political, historical, scientific, cultural and economic issues, the novels are characterized by the interplay of ideologies. His novels are unique in the employment of multifarious, innovative styles, generic experimentation and a conscious responsibility to the contemporary issues of the world around him.

Ghosh's personal life, to some extent, needs to be focused on, as his personal experiences and some contemporary situations of his 'time' and 'place' exerted great influence on his literary career. Born in Calcutta on 11 July, 1956 to Shailendra Chandra Ghosh, a diplomat, and Ansali Ghosh, a housewife, Amitav Ghosh, having the privilege of an upper class family, was shifted along with his parents from Calcutta to East Pakistan, to Sri Lanka, Iran and Myanmar. Being nurtured in the family of a Govt. official, his knowledge was brimmed with experiences of important historical and political facts. This gradually paved the way for his special and strong urge for journalism and research works — investigation, survey, analysis, travelling, findings and revelations. Receiving a BA with honours in History from St. Stephen's college, Delhi University in 1976 and an MA in Sociology in 1978, Ghosh's effort to achieve a DPhil (PhD) in Social Anthropology from Oxford University in 1982 was finally crowned with success. At this point of time, his visiting Egypt and spending some years there as part of his research work ultimately resulted in the creation of his *In An Antique Land* (1992). Ghosh's experiences in 1984, when the assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi occurred and a separatist violence in the Punjab broke out, were indelibly imprinted in his mind and made him a full-fledged writer. He observed the history very closely and 'faced' reality which seemed to be sincerely delineated in *The Ghosts of Mrs Gandhi* (1995). Ghosh writes,

Within a few months, I started my novel, which I eventually called *The Shadow Lines* — a book that led me backward in time to earlier memories of riots, ones witnessed in childhood. It became a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them. (*ITI* 59)

Ghosh's philosophy of life was very much influenced by Naipaul's view — 'writers don't join crowds'(quoted from *ITI* 60). According to Ghosh, the authors who present the horrors and bloodsheds of any riot, also should try to form a style to present not only violence but also a kind of human resistance to violence.

A full length study of the line of Indian English fiction is essential for the knowledge of Ghosh's position as a novelist in Indian English fiction. The first two decades after Independence gave importance on social history or presenting on social milieus. The novels of this time dealt with social realism more than historical realism. The tradition which was established earlier by Mulk Raj Anand was continued by novelists like Bhabani Bhattacharya, Monohar Malgonker, Khuswant Singh, Anita Desai, G.V.Desani, Nayantara Sahgal, R.P.Jhabvala and Salman Rushdie. Most of the novels in this period presenting social milieus of 1950s — social injustice, casteism, poverty, famine, sexual exploitation, starvation, miserable condition of poor villagers — are finest examples of traditional social realism of Indian English fiction which acquire the fullest form in Bhabani Bhattacharya's *So Many Hungers* (1947), *Music for Mohini* (1952), *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1952). In the similar fashion, Malgonkar's novels are neatly woven narratives on the view of life — love between men and women, moral issues of action, — which focus on traditional theme of social and realistic novels. Apart from Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh is another novelist, of whom M.K.Naik begins in this way — "The realism of Khushwant Singh (1918-2014) is of

an earthier variety. He has declared that his ‘roots are in the dunghill of a tiny Indian Village’ and his fiction reeks with the odour of his roots” (Naik 220).

While in the novels of Jhabvala, special importance is ascribed to the social milieu and in the novels of Markandaya equal importance is attached to the protagonists as well as social, political, cultural and economic contexts, in the major novels of Anita Desai the prime focus is on the exposition of intrinsic sensibility — sensibility felt in an Indian ambience. In her novels the external domain of action gains less importance than the exploration of the perception, thoughts and feelings of the major characters. Thus, it is apt to state that she has deftly adopted the stream of consciousness method in her fiction. Nayantara Sahgal’s novels are autobiographical and they also deal with historical and political issues. *Rich Like Us* is a historical as well as a political novel. Indian identity, in this way, is established through the novels of Sahgal — novels which reflect the political and historical incidents of the then India.

G.V.Desani, with the very style and tempo, linguistic wildness and fantasy of his *All About H.Hatter* (1948) proves himself as a pathfinder of the fiction of magic realism. It reveals that the novelist has employed the technique with a view to conveying the entire state and process of consciousness in the protagonist.

A new era had dawned in Indian English literature with the publication of *Midnight’s Children* in 1981 as changes in Indian English fiction began to usher in the coming of this fiction. Indian English literature got a solid new establishment in world literature as Indian diaspora forms a part of new fiction. Postmodern themes and techniques, magic realism and modern western literary techniques used by Rushdie gave a new orientation to Indian English fiction. *Midnight’s Children* is characterised by the combinations of elements of magic and fantasy on one hand, and grim realism on the other. The elements create a piece

of fiction where India is essentially an 'India of mind' of a writer who was born in India but was settled abroad. According to M.K.Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan,

It is significant that the spirit of the age is more pervasively and effectively reflected in the fiction of the period than in other forms like poetry and drama; for the novel, by its very nature, is better equipped to deal with social reality, whatever liberties it may take in projecting it. It is hardly surprising therefore that the most substantial contribution of the period comes from fiction. ( Naik and Narayan 16)

The last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century are regarded as a period of startling changes, with experimentation and new bearings in the Indian-English fiction. Though most of these writers are living abroad and categorized as 'diasporic', their writings are directly, or, to some extent, indirectly, linked with the issues of Indian nationhood, national identity, values of native culture and spirit etc. He has created an Indian ambience in his novels.

"The Diaspora in Indian Culture", an essay by Ghosh himself, included in *The Imam and The Indian: Prose Pieces* states —

The modern Indian diaspora — the huge migration from the subcontinent that began in the mid-nineteenth century — is not merely one of the most important demographic dislocations of modern times .... But the diaspora also counts among its members some of the world's finest writers: to my mind there are no finer writers writing in the English language today than V.S.Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and A.K. Ramanujan. (*ITI* 246)

Keeping the above comments of Ghosh in mind, if we consider Ghosh's place in Indian writing in English, we must note that he is a glittering figure of the stream of Indian English novel which is immortalised by the likes of Rushdie and others and it is because of his keen understanding and sensibility of the political, historical, sociological and cultural 'nuances'

that he has strengthened the genre. Ghosh has given a new shape to Indian English novel by blurring the distinction of anthropology, history, fiction and social commentary, and in this way he is creating a new space for his own definition of novel. “The novel”, in view of Ghosh, “is a meta-form that transcends the boundaries that circumscribe other kinds of writing, rendering meaningless the usual workaday distinctions between historian, journalist, anthropologist, etc”(Ghosh’s interview with Michelle Caswell). Therefore, Indian Writing in English is such a broad category which merges all other categorizations and Ghosh is comfortable with not to be categorized — “I think I would be uncomfortable with any categorisation of my work that did not acknowledge this. In this sense, ‘Indian Writing in English’ seems to me to be a perfectly acceptable categorisation of my work”(Ghosh’s interview with Sundeep Dougal). Some features of Amitav Ghosh’s fictional writings are sufficient to evaluate his excellence. His discourses are enormously varied, but they are bound by some core things and issues — deconstructing narrative mode between ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’, post-modern generic multiplicity and indeterminacy of texts, issues of ‘subaltern’ culture, limitation of mode of writing constituting ‘high’ culture such as historiography, ethnography and scientific discourse.

Ghosh has to his credit nine novels — *In An Antique Land*, *The Circle of Reason*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Shadow Lines*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*, each of which has drawn enormous critical attention. From his nine novels, *In An Antique Land*, *The Circle of Reason*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, and *Flood of Fire* (which has been published in 2015) have been excluded from my project. Before embarking upon the specific focal point of this dissertation, it is worthwhile to have a very general and representative survey of existing critical perspectives of scholars and critics on Ghosh’s works. A good point of beginning may be Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam who edited the book *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh* in

2001. Most of the articles by different researchers in the book concentrate on time-space shifting, complex narrative technique, history and subversion of history, individual and national concerns and multiple layers of meaning of Ghosh's novels. The two aspects to which they attach importance are — (i) stories of the individuals, stories of the past, present and future; (ii) interaction of individual and historical forces and subversion of history. The most important part of these research works which is most relevant to my research purpose is their focus on Ghosh's mastery in weaving different stories into one fiction. But they have bypassed Ghosh's skilful management in blending political and historical elements with fictional ones.

The next book which must come in the course of the discussion of the critical issues in Ghosh's work is *Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives* edited by Brida Bose published in 2003. Her ability to locate the formation of Ghosh's novel in a perfect balance between a warm security of location and a terrifying promise of 'imminent dislocation' (Bose's own word) sounds innovative. What she points out is Ghosh's ability to regulate the constantly conscious process of 'location' and 'dislocation' in order to generate an impression of reality by interplay of hope and terror, violence and peace. In her well-researched "Introduction", Bose shows history-fiction interface in Ghosh's novels. She states "Ghosh's imagination is as necessarily diasporic as it is postcolonial, being a product of specific histories of the subcontinent in the 20th century" (Bose 16). Bose cites Ghosh's constant search for the ways in which fiction can be pitted against history. Some common subjects and issues of postcoloniality, postmodernism, diaspora, history, fiction are discussed in Bose's book which successfully presents Ghosh's technique in blending fiction with history as a common phenomenon in postmodern text. The main thrust of Shubha Tiwari's book *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Study* is bringing out the elements of humanism in Ghosh's novels. What Tiwari emphasizes throughout her book is that Ghosh is a true nationalist, but



more than that he is a humanist who shows liberal attitude in building up a borderless peaceful universe.

Claire Chambers, a renowned critic of Amitav Ghosh, in her thought-provoking thesis “The Relationship between Knowledge and Power in the work of Amitav Ghosh” attempts to focus upon Ghosh’s preoccupation with knowledge which is produced by structures of dominance, particularly the military, economic, and epistemic strategies of colonialism. Chambers in the thesis, published from University of Leeds, shows the relationship between knowledge and power in the works of Amitav Ghosh.

Anshuman A.Mondal has rightly pointed out the different perspectives and predicaments of postcolonialism reflected in Ghosh’s novels. He has shown the dynamic approaches of identity in postmodernism and different contexts in postmodern writings. Mondal has highlighted the multi-dimensional cultural forms of Bengal Renaissance, influencing Ghosh very much. Yet, instead of merely stopping at reflecting upon the ideological and intellectual concern of Bengal Renaissance, he tries to explore the predicament of postcolonial modernity and finds the way out. Mondal examines Ghosh’s problematic questions about science, knowledge, education system and colonialism in a counter- narrative mode. Mondal makes an honest attempt to concentrate on *The Shadow Lines*, *The Glass Palace*, and *In An Antique Land* with a view to showing Ghosh’s meditation on question of identity, religion and nationalism in the postcolonial world. According to Mondal, all identity is imaginary, because there is no fixity of identity. So, Mondal’s work *Amitav Ghosh: Contemporary World Writers* contributes a lot in analysing the distinctiveness of Ghosh’s novels from that of the other Indian writers in English in Post-Rushdie generation.

Robert Dixon’s article “Travelling in the West: The writing of Amitav Ghosh” in Tabish Khair’s edited book *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Companion* builds up a powerful

argument against the notion of rootedness in place. He shows that no culture is separate, authentic and pure; all cultures have long histories of border-crossing and mixing. According to him, *The Circle of Reason* deconstructs any simple opposition between tradition and modernity, East and West cultures. Dixon applies the notion of a universal humanity in analysing *The Shadow Lines*.

Padmini Mongia's article "Medieval Travel in Postcolonial Time: Amitav Ghosh's *In an Antique Land*", included in Tabish Khair's *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Companion*, presents Ghosh's novel as a subversive history in the guise of a traveller's tale. It shows how with the advent of European colonialism in the late twentieth century the friendly relationship between different peoples and cultures of the medieval times is lost. Mongia thinks that here Ghosh's pre-colonial world of Egypt and India questions this European colonialism and Imperialism. She concludes the essay with Dipesh Chakraborty's concept of history that Europe, which remains the sovereign subject of all histories, subjugates the cultural exchanges and relations of other nations.

Most of the critical analyses on Amitav Ghosh's novels are primarily on postcolonial and postmodern issues in Ghosh's novels. History-fiction interface, subaltern studies, transcultural and trans lingual aspects are recurring subjects in the analyses of Ghosh's concerns. According to Anshuman A. Mondal,

In all his novels, for example, Ghosh exhibits an interest in the nature of language, textuality and discourse, and the ways in which human perception, comprehension, and experience is invariably shaped and to varying degrees, determined by them. For him, the question of 'identity' is always implicated in representations of the 'self' and of the world around it... (Mondal 20).

A common feature of Ghosh's text is its interrogation of common belief of 'fiction' as 'unreal'. This postmodern proposition of challenging the fixed and demarcated area of

knowledge is explored in Ghosh's novels through different techniques. Sometimes his fiction merges with history and sometimes fiction emerges out of history or history is reshaped through fictional projection — this interplay of history and fiction is structured with a right proportion. This structure is innovative in Ghosh's novels. A number of eminent research scholars of Amitav Ghosh have contributed considerably to the exploration of the impeccable combination of history and fiction in Ghosh's novels. What makes Ghosh distinguished as a novelist is his commendable skill in rendering annals of history into exquisite works of fiction.

An area which is relatively less touched upon is the way Ghosh's novels present the interplay of ideologies in them. Let us now turn to the focal point of this dissertation. The most intriguing and complex term, 'ideology', encompassing all spheres of human knowledge, works as an essential constitutive factor for the real existence of human being in society. It is human perception of natural phenomena through intellectual faculties. "Interplay" in the title implies that it is rarely a case that a single ideology dominates a text, rather different ideologies are often at play; these ideologies may influence one other, may interact with one another, sometimes may challenge one another. Of course, the term 'ideology', its role, the interplay of ideologies are highly provocative in the sense that questions may be raised regarding the specification of ideology (ideologies) being talked of — the author's own ideology; or ideology projected in the novel; or the ideology that dominates the novel; or the ideology of the dominant class of people which is projected in order to be subverted. The present study also raises the question whether the novelist is projecting a certain ideology in the novel with a positive intention or with a view to subverting it. In this connection it compulsorily needs to be pointed out that Ghosh's perception of reality of society performs an effective role in the formation of these novels. His ideological beliefs of language, culture, human relationship, nation and geographical

boundaries greatly influence his novels. The interplay of these ideologies determines the forms and content of his novels. In some of his novels, it may appear that characters, settings and plots are influenced by some ideologies, but it requires to be thought that these ideologies are not always projected by the novelist in positive sense, rather they are consolidated and projected in a certain way to be critiqued by a contrary ideology. Ideologies interact in such a way that they become dominant and determining factors in the making up of the novels. But, simultaneously it cannot be ignored that the text attains an 'autonomy' releasing itself from the predominance of the interaction of ideologies. The author deliberately posits gaps and silences and leaves the subjects of debate to the critics as well as readers for their critical inquiry and scrutiny. But, not much has been done on the exploration of the interrelation between ideology and text in relation to Amitav Ghosh's novels. Therefore, this study proposes to make a small contribution to filling the perceived gap in the existing body of research on Amitav Ghosh and here the attempt is to explore how ideologies influence the production of a literary work and how a literary production enjoys its autonomy, being liberated from that ideology. The present study, concentrating on five novels of Ghosh — *The Shadow Lines*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Sea of Poppies*, and *River of Smoke* — seeks to examine how much they can come out or liberate themselves from the dominance of interplay of ideologies.

The study has been laid out in five chapters. A chronological survey of ideology from historical perspective showing different views by several critics has been detailed in **Chapter I**, entitled "**Concept of Ideology Down the Ages**". The origin of 'ideology' can be traced back to the classical literature; though 'ideology' *per se* did not quite exist at that time. The survey tries to trace the line of conceptual development from Aristotle and comes upto Destutt de Tracy, in the late eighteenth century, with whom we can say 'ideology' as a critical term emerged. The subsequent debate has brought in contributions from Karl Marx,

Fredrick Engles, V.I.Lenin, Georg Lukács, Karl Manheim, Lucian Goldmann, Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, Jurgan Habermas, Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey, Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Slavoj Žižek, and Peter Sloterdijk. It may be noted that the list is populated by the ‘Marxist’ critics/theorists as it is they who have been particularly instrumental in continuing this debate over ideology and its role in life and literature. The survey carried out in this chapter reflects that most of the theorists discussed ideology from historical point of view. Historical perspective of ideology consolidates the idea that ideology is seen as a social and mental structure of individuals who, having been directly and indirectly influenced by the dominant institutions, are subjected to the dominant and ruling class. Actually ideology acts as a support system to reality, but itself is a mask and hides the crude reality in such a way that the individuals are persuaded to accept it as real. Therefore this ideological construction prevents individuals from seeing the ‘truth’ of the reality. **Chapter II, “Ideology and Literature”**, discusses ideology from literary perspective. The thrust of the chapter is the theoretical discussion of ideology from the point of view of literature. According to Althusser, a real and authentic art does not give us knowledge in the strict sense. What art gives us, gives us in the form of ‘seeing’, ‘perceiving’, and ‘feeling’. The work of art is to ‘make us see’, ‘make us perceive’, ‘make us feel’ something which alludes to reality. This form is ideology, from which art is born, in which it bathes, and yet from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes. From the general discussion of ideology, the project continues through Ghosh’s thoughts of history, ideology and fiction from his interviews, non-fiction and articles to the targeted area of Ghosh’s fictional world. Amitav Ghosh’s views are revealed in the **Chapter III, entitled “Amitav Ghosh vis-a`-vis History, Fiction and Ideology”**. The novels of Amitav Ghosh operate apparently on ideology (rather ideologies) which makes them concrete in terms of shape and also lends them fictional status. It is ideology which controls human society, and

revolves around fictional events and characters. Ghosh's novels cannot be regarded as mere imaginary presentations of some pre-conceived thoughts, rather they are deeply rooted in social, historical and economic issues and incidents of the world. A detailed go-through of Ghosh's personal interviews and non-fictional works reveals Ghosh's personal attitudes and views about history, fiction, nation, economy, empire and many other issues relating to human existence and human beings in this world. Ghosh takes numerous interviews from people of different parts of the world with a view to learning about the incidents pertaining to the lives of the individuals. If his purpose is to learn the incidents of a particular period of time of a particular nation, a close and detailed observation of historical records, documentation and a study of chronicles would suffice to be acquainted with the history and the influence of the historical incidents on human lives of that particular period, but that is not sufficient for his temperament. He does so, because he is more interested in being familiar with individual human lives and individual human stories than in nation's history. He intends to inform the readers of the impact of some important incidents on individual human lives, as historical records and documentations do not always record true incidents. Then, the dissertation reaches the focal chapter, **Chapter-IV, "Amitav Ghosh's Novels and Interplay of Ideologies"**, which is devoted to the analysis of the works of Amitav Ghosh in the light of the theoretical grounding made in the preceding chapters. An exploration is attempted in this chapter to bring out how ideologies play an apparently determining role in controlling the characters' views on reality and imagination, their response to the incidents happening in reality, their relationship with others as shown in *The Shadow Lines*, *Sea of Poppies*, and *River of Smoke*. It also presents how ideology seems to play a role in selecting the setting of the novel as setting is historically, politically and ideologically related to the individuals, community, way of life and thought process, economic condition of life, power and politics as manifested in *The Hungry Tide*, *The Glass*

*Palace* and *The Sea of Poppies*. This chapter also projects how ideology is apparently connected to the events of the novels as seen in *The Shadow Lines*, *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*. The successively next chapter, **Chapter-V**, entitled “**Autonomy of the Novels: Absence of Any Over-arching Ideology**” discusses the intensity and nature of enjoying aesthetic ‘autonomy’ in the works of Ghosh. These five novels are viewed from a standpoint whether they have reached a state of autonomy defying the interplay of ideologies in the novels. Though ideological concerns appear to be a determining force in the choice of literary forms in these novels, the forms have their own structure and own logic. This logical structure of the form of the text acts as complementary to the development of the ideological content of the text maintaining its autonomy, but a moment comes when the logic of the form and the logic of the ideological structure contradict each other. That fictions having their instinctive power of defying and elevating themselves from the constitutive ideology enjoy autonomous status, is analysed in detail in this chapter.

The concluding part, apart from summing up the arguments put forward in different chapters, attempts a comparative study of the five novels of Ghosh in the ‘tension’ resultant from the interplay of different ideologies and the liberating force of text over that ideology. It further points to the possibility of extending the study from an area of ‘tension’ between ideology and text to the state of a liminality where the characters and text enjoy a power. The relationship, as it is viewed, between ideology and the text is loaded with many possibilities. Further researches may be carried out in exploring the absence of any ideology in Ghosh’s fictional world which runs in its own way.

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## CHAPTER I

### Concept of Ideology Down the Ages

The term, 'ideology' was coined by the French philosopher and a member of the Institut de France, Destutt de Tracy in the late eighteenth century as a part of Zoological science. By this he implied 'science of ideas' or a theory of ideas. Science of ideas, here, is natural science which is based on man's experience of the world. Therefore, the nature of ideology is empirical and scientific one. Ideology, from Destutt's point of view, can be defined as human perception of natural phenomena through intellectual faculties.

History proves that philosophical changes and developments invite their own refutation. This process of change and development attaches a chain of clashes between binary oppositions; these oppositions reveal a mutual dependence, and the result of this clash is never the victory of one side, nor the exclusion of the other, rather the result is the emergence of an entirely new phenomenon. It cannot be said that one is true and the other is false or vice versa; rather everything may be true and everything may be false depending on the social situation. Every reality involves appearance and every appearance has its own reality. For example:

It is often remarked that our society is dominated by the 'economy', and that this 'economy' is dominated by money. The most salient characteristic of money is that it does not exist. Or rather, it exists only as a symbol, an idea in people's minds, as opposed to a physical object that one could see or touch. Money, in short, is an image that has attained the status of reality; it is an idol. (Hawkes 17)

Nations, at the earliest dawn of civilization, demonstrate the errors and the negative sides of their rivals. The Greeks present the other as uncivilized, primitive without any rational

thought; the Christians project the pagans as worldly and sensuous. These are the subjective misinterpretations and misrepresentations of the objective reality and this becomes possible to happen because of power and position in the world. The long debate on the superiority of idealism and materialism persists for a long period of time. Greek philosophers put emphasis on the ideal over the material, on the mind's subjective ideas over the objective material body. The formulation of hierarchy of mind (idealism) and body (materialism) acts as a means of vindicating all types of power play in Aristotle's *Politics* (400 B.C). He speaks of the dominance of masters over slaves, of Greeks over barbarians, and of men over women. This biased relationship between the ideal and the material body leads to the claim that certain human beings are fit only to be ruled by others; certain forms of consciousness are systematically false. Aristotle further detects the distortions of the relations between subjective ideas and objective things. People impose an idea on the object not naturally pertaining to the object itself. Error comes from an imbalance in the proper relations between ideas, matter and the way of representations that mediates between them. In this way, subject people are misinterpreted by the ruled class and they themselves start to misinterpret themselves.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the philosophy of Western Europe began to mutate and refute false consciousness of religion, and religious orthodoxy through logical and rational thinking. *The Prince* (1532) by Niccolo Machiavelli shows the function of a reforming ruler in legitimizing his reign. Machiavelli concludes that an innovative ruler must disseminate illusion among his subject. Hereditary princes do not generally want to change the old custom or do not want any social and cultural change, because it invites several questions from the subjects and the ruler must have to justify the new changes nullifying the opposite. Machiavelli says that the only possible solution for an innovative government is to deceive its subject people. In his *Discourses* (1531), he is of view that the common men are

satisfied with appearance as they have generally no habit to probe into reality. This is why, an innovative ruler tries to retain at least a semblance of the ancient form to delude the people into believing that things have not at all changed. But, in reality, 'new form' comes into being and these 'new forms' are entirely different from older ones. The misrepresentation of reality comes in two distinct ways. Machiavelli says that first of all, it is the tendency of the common people to continue what they are doing and what they are thinking. It is, therefore, the common mass that indirectly forces the ruler to guise the reality. The second deception comes from the rulers deliberately for their own purpose as if no change has been done. This false consciousness, therefore, is the spontaneous result of the day-to-day social reality. In *Novum Organum* (1620), Francis Bacon's discussion of 'idol' is related to ideology which is inherent in human mind. Here Bacon deplors the lack of rationality and limited understanding of human beings for which they cannot understand the causes of natural phenomenon. Moreover, they nurture many prejudices which prevent them think anything objectively and clearly. In Bacon's coinage, these are the 'Idols of the Mind'. He points out four notable 'fallacies of the mind of man'. The first three are — the 'idols of the tribe' refers to the prejudices of mind as a result of living in society; the second class of 'idol', 'the idols of the cave' are the mistakes arising from personal disposition of individuals; the third, the 'idols of the market place' refers to the mental distortions resulting from ignorance of the loose meanings of the words in common usage. These three kinds of 'idol', according to Bacon, are inherent in human mind, and therefore unavoidable. But the fourth class of 'idol', 'idols of the theatre' promotes various false philosophic systems which are apparently attractive, but mislead human mind, just as theatrical presentation pleases human beings, but deceives into an imaginary world. This discussion of 'idol' is related to the concept of ideology as these false ideas coming from day-to-day social life are apparently true, but these are introduced by the ruling class calculative for controlling power.

The clear understanding of consciousness actually owes its reasonable basis to empiricism during seventeenth and eighteenth century. A study regarding the formulation of ideas bears relevance to the notion of ideology. Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) is a classic and illuminating text on empiricism. Here, Locke rules out the possibility of nurturing intrinsic ideas; on the contrary, he asserts that all knowledge is gained from experience. He repeatedly speaks in favour of reason which helps us to behave in a correct way. The mistake of nourishing false ideas can be shunned by the acceptance of these ideas which come from empiricism. He emphasises 'reason' as a universal natural principle by which human being can learn the correct way to behave. Human beings can avoid false consciousness by accepting only those ideas which are derived from empirical circumstances. Bacon's concept of 'idol' can be related to Locke's division of experience into two classifications — 'reflection' and 'sensation'. Experiences can be gained from the application of mind and reason; on the other hand, it can be gathered by senses.

Raymond Williams in *Marxism and Literature* (1977) sums up Destutt's concept of ideology as the 'real elements' of ideology are "our intellectual faculties, their principal phenomena and their most evident circumstances" (Williams 56). The chief reaction against this concept of ideology is that metaphysical ideas find no place in the ambit of ideology and only the ideas perceived by men in the world constitute modern sense of philosophy. Destutt's conception of ideology as dependence of passive 'reception' of circumstances of the world and individual power of perceiving the phenomena and individual experience of the world is not 'illusory', rather 'scientific' and 'empirical'. Though it excludes the idea of metaphysics and delivers a limited assumption of philosophy, this idea of Destutt acts as a fundamental or primary stepping-stone for developing, and ultimately concretising the idea of ideology itself. Napoleon Bonaparte, the French dictator, accused Destutt's theory of ideology of defeating and destroying France. In the next stage of development, a derogatory

sense of ideology as ‘impractical theory’ or ‘abstract illusion’ was first introduced by Napoleon. According to Napoleon, ideology was not for the rational and intellectual persons, but for the ‘hot brained boys and crazed enthusiasts’ (Williams 57), because, to him, ideology is not based on practical knowledge, rather on ‘illusion’.

In empirical attitude, the study of consciousness is based on rationality, which denies the connection of soul. Descartes observes that human senses can deceive us in experiencing material things. Senses are not reliable mediation in experiencing the world outside human beings. The fact which he ascertains with certitude is that human mind can fully have certainty only when it is conscious of its own action. Descartes nullifies the view that our sensation influences our thought. On the contrary, he draws a distinction between idealism and materialism. He contends that it is our intrinsic reasonable qualities which make us experience the outer world — this view is opposed to that of the materialists.

Marxism, which puts emphasis on materialism, is associated with the thought that material environment determines human ideas. Marx, in the first half of the nineteenth century, developed his own idea of ideology and formed a newer version of ideology. In *The German Ideology* (1846), ideology is conceived of as a “pure illusion, a pure dream, i.e as nothingness”(Marx and Engels 33). Some writers before Freud have viewed dream as purely imaginary, as something which may be arbitrary and disorderly — the result of ‘day’s residues’. *The German Ideology* gives the indication of ideology as ‘inverted’ form of reality. In Marx’s view, ideology seems to become the super-structural sphere — some concepts or ideas of which men and women in a society become conscious and fight the basic contradiction of society. Each class in a society creates its own social and political ideology. The ruling class builds up its own ideological strata and presents them in such a scientific and reasonable way that the other classes of society are easily duped. Marx and Engels treat this phenomenon of ideology as socially determined consciousness. This consciousness is

determined by material reality and social beings. This 'inverted consciousness of the world' corresponds to an 'inverted world'. This basic idea of inversion in consciousness and in reality is retained in order to conceal social contradictions, which are rooted in economic base.

Engels clarifies his position on ideology which is connected with 'all products of consciousness'. He thinks that every ideology arises and develops with the previous 'concept material' which becomes a determining condition of everyman's thought process, yet each man is unconscious of that inner process. Therefore, the material condition of human beings is determinant (though in the last resort) of the thought process which leads to ideology. But the real motive of this ideology is to keep an individual unknown to himself, otherwise it would not be an ideological process. Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852), dealing with the relationship between ideology and political change, shows some historical events to explain how an inept ruler manages to control his reign. It is by self-deception and by the use of representation that rulers show their absolute truth and righteousness to have worked for the interests of all humanity. His 'imaginary' representation, according to Marx, is a determinant factor to influence people. David Hawkes, very finely, explains Marx's view of 'imaginary' representation:

Although these 'imaginary' representations are not 'real', and in fact conceal 'real', material interests and motives, they nevertheless really exert a determining influence on the way people think and behave. This is an example of how representation can actively determine material conditions, rather than emerging out of them as a mere 'reflection'.... Representation has become independent, and this autonomy of representation is necessary to project of falsely presenting the particular interest of a class as if it were the general interest of humanity. (Hawkes 93)

This 'false consciousness' comes because of the ignorance and isolation of the people from the reality.

To the present Marxist critics, the view of ideology as 'false consciousness' seems no more convincing. They want to discard the negative or pejorative meaning of ideology. Here are several reasons behind this thought. One reason is that in the present century most of the human beings are moderately rational. It is a conservative estimate to think human beings as sunk in irrational prejudice. The polarised notion of the ruler and the ruled, the dominant and the dominated is gradually changing in the poststructuralist concept. The last decade of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a new political climate which contributed to the growth of powerful working-class movements and parties, particularly in central Europe.

V.I.Lenin, a Marxist, produces a powerful political theory of class struggle, yet, from the beginning, he takes consistently a neutral position for ideology. He did not support Marx's negative view of ideology. Lenin realises that in the coming ages, the dominant ideas and rules will not remain unchallenged. The ruling class forms ideas and rules for its own political interest, but it becomes subject to a strong criticism. In facing the confrontation of such criticism of the ruled class, the dominant class must keep up the political and social interest of the dominated class. "In short, the political ideas of the classes in conflict acquire a new importance and need to be theoretically accounted for. This can be achieved by extending the meaning of ideology" (Larrain 64). Ideology of one class can be realised fully from the point of view of other classes. Thus, Lenin turned the notion of ideology from the masking of contradiction to the class – political ideas.

Lenin, in *What is to be Done?* (1963) shows the relation between ideology and class interest in society. According to Lenin, the spontaneous consciousness of the working class does not help in protecting and preserving its interest; rather this type of consciousness



becomes subordinated by the dominant and ruling ideology. So, ideology of one class must be based on the interest of that class. Class interest is more important than spontaneity of consciousness of a class in forming ideology. Therefore, the relation between ideology and class interest is established in terms of function or purpose for acquiring power. Lenin always lays emphasis on the interest of the class. "Ideology is conceived as the 'domain' of a theoretical struggle which expresses different class interest" (Larrain 68). Therefore, Lenin's concept of ideology replaces the negative view of ideology of Marx.

'Ideological struggle' takes place within classes because of class contradiction in terms of class interest. According to Lenin, the proletarian class is proceeding towards a revolutionary battle in spite of all waverings and weaknesses. The revolutionary energy of the Russian masses proves Lenin's political and theoretical achievement. So, Lenin's conception has played an important role in forming a new concept of ideology, class consciousness and class struggle.

The other Marxist critic who is a staunch follower of Leninist conception and who like Lenin emphasises class consciousness and class interest is Georg Lukács, a Hungarian Marxist, and one of the Premier theorists of 'social realism'. Lukács opposes the prevalent literary movement of Modernism of James Joyce, William Faulkner, Robert Musil and other Modernist experimental writers. Socialist perspective stresses classlessness as an essential precondition for equality in society. Socialist realism enables a writer to conceive the future from the inside, from a position participating in the present critical social situation. The writer of socialist realism is a natural insider who participates in making "a different future".

There is a close resemblance between Lukács's emphasis on Bourgeois ideology and working class ideology and on emancipatory means of the opposed social class and that of Lenin. Lukács always has spoken of the knowledge of the whole social system because truth

cannot exist without history. Truth is always relative to a particular historical situation. Lukács gives one way out as an emancipatory means of the oppressed social class. The Proletarian class must have a whole knowledge of the whole social system and a consciousness of the place or position of that social class or group. When the Proletarian consciousness is able to 'totalize' the social order for attaining knowledge of its own social condition, it will realise its oppressive social position. Lukács follows Marx's theory that the commodity form is the secret essence of all ideological consciousness in Bourgeois society. The capitalist class, purposively, adopts the reified economic policy where ultimate goal is political and power interest. Lukács writes, "For a class to be ripe for hegemony means that its interests and consciousness enable it to organise the whole of society in accordance with those interests" (Lukács 52). Lukács' concept is innovative in the sense that according to him, Bourgeois ideology is false; it cannot go beyond its structural limitation. The Bourgeois ideology always sees the objective result of economic set-up. This is a barrier or limitation of objectivity. Bourgeois thought cannot persist for many ages, until and unless it resolves its errors. Bourgeois class needs refinement of thoughts. When an ideology is formed, it is formed within some material constraints. These material constraints create an oppositional force to the Bourgeois ideology. It is not easy to break down these ideological constraints. The Bourgeois class ideology is baffled by these oppositional forces, if the Proletarian class consciousness creates a 'totalized' view of society. Therefore, bourgeois ideology may be false from the standpoint of some totalized social system, but it is not false in terms of social situation. According to Lukács, ideology of any class or any group is true to a false situation. By 'false situation', Lukács means a situation which denies the full potential of human power where human essence is estranged.

It is clear from the above discussion of Lukács' concept of ideology that in ideology, thought or consciousness must have a social foundation. Historicity plays a major role in the

formation and the perpetuation of ideology. Lukács believes in historical dynamism. The Postmodern theorists' views of progressive nature of plurality, difference and heterogeneity support Bakhtin's view of 'polyphony'. Consciousness is in a state of ceaseless flux, so Bourgeois class ideology as well as the Proletarian class ideology is in a dynamic state. In discussing Lukács' concept of ideology, Terry Eagleton judges the complexity and instable nature of ideology:

Social classes do not manifest ideologies in the way that individuals display a particular style of walking : ideology is, rather, a complex, conflictive field of meaning, in which some themes will be closely tied to the experience of particular classes, while others will be more 'free floating', tugged now this way and now that in the struggle between contending powers. Ideology is a realm of contestation and negotiation, in which there is a constant busy traffic : meanings and values are stolen, transformed, appropriated across the frontiers of different classes and groups, surrendered, reposed, reinflected.

(Eagleton 101)

The above passage of Eagleton on the nature of ideology implies that ideology of one class is the genesis of the ideology of opposite class, yet the force and function of ideology is an oppositional one. Even one ideology contains within itself the contesting elements of the other ideology. Correct form of ideology will be attained by synthesizing its rivals, by building up a provisional, dynamic totality of thought. Self-observation is essentially a matter of 'unmasking' one's antagonist's notion, yet one ideology exposes this notion of rival as lies, deceptions or illusions.

Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia* (1929) shows the significance of 'relationism' of ideological ideas. The bourgeois authoritarianism and monological worldview of the

dominant class have been replaced by a 'free' intelligentsia of the early twentieth century. A particular social system gives birth to a particular set of ideas. According to Terry Eagleton, Mannheim thinks that "though ideas are internally shaped by their social origins, their truth value is not reducible to them" (Eagleton 108). Mannheim, with an echo of Lukács's thought believes that any particular stand-point or world view will be 'corrected' by synthesizing it with its rivals'. Mannheim draws a distinction between ideology and utopia. According to him, ideology refers to some beliefs lacking in the demands of a particular age; on the contrary, 'utopia' denotes some ideas ahead of that particular time or age. In Mannheim's views, to quote Eagleton again, "ideology emerges in this light as a kind of failed utopia, unable to enter upon material existence" (Eagleton 109).

Lucian Goldmann, the Romanian, seems to be very much influenced by Georg Lukács. Goldmann speaks of the 'mental structure' of a particular social group or class. This 'mental structure' is reflected in literature and in philosophy. Consciousness, according to Goldmann, is amorphous and arbitrary in nature; but the intellectual persons and gifted people of a class retained a 'pure' structural form of consciousness. This 'mental structure' depends on 'genetic structuralism'. Goldmann makes a difference between two terms 'world view' and 'ideology'. World view is a global concept and typifies a social class at the height of its powers, whereas 'ideology' is the partial and distorting perspective of a class. The question arises: Is a world-view non-ideological and is a world-view stripped off power relation and power interest? Eagleton believes that the answer, according to Goldmann, is "world view is ideology purified, elevated, and largely purged of its negative elements" (Eagleton 111). Goldmann argues that each social class possesses a highly homogeneous consciousness. This consciousness directly expresses the class's social condition. Goldmann, in a vein similar to Lukács, turns to the theory of reification. He attaches equal importance to the notions of commodity- fetishism and of world views which co-exist in ideology.

The positive concept of ideology, that was initiated by Lenin and confirmed by Lukács, is given a healthy fulfilment with a solid ground by Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist. Gramsci does not agree with Marx's view of the economic 'base' on which ideological 'superstructure' is founded. He, on the other hand, puts emphasis on the material factors which are perceived through consciousness. The material sphere is itself a structure. This consciousness of material sphere is institutionalized in 'civil society'. He opposes the notion of ideology as false consciousness, and asserts the positive notion of ideology saying "all systems have an historical validity, and are necessary" (Gramsci 138). He contends that these systems, or ideas or consciousness of history are more important than economic system. Gramsci's concept of ideology is connected with his notion of hegemony. Hegemony which works within a broader range of 'civil society'— institutions, states and economy — is carried in cultural, political and economic forms, in non-discursive practices as well as in rhetorical utterances:

Privately owned television stations, the family, the boy scout movement, the Methodist church, infant schools, the British Legion, the Sun newspaper: all of these would count as hegemonic apparatuses, which bind individuals to the ruling power by consent rather than by coercion. (Eagleton 113-4)

Hegemonic control is a grave concern because it is pervasive throughout habitual practices of human life. It becomes an integral part of human life because it is accepted by consent. The ruling class through this practical strategy (i.e. hegemonic control) arrests consent to its rule from those it subjugates. Hegemonic control is established by moral, political and intellectual power. Eagleton says, "... any form of political power to be durable and well-grounded must evoke at least a degree of consent from its underlings" (Eagleton 116). The concept of hegemony enriches the notion of ideology. In Gramsci's concept the meaning of ideology is changed from "system of ideas" to "a lived habitual social practice". Ideology encompasses

an unconscious, inarticulate dimension of social experience as well as workings of formal institution. It is largely unconsciousness and institutional. It is an organising force and a structure for controlling an institution. Gramsci made a distinction between “organic ideologies” and “arbitrary ideologies”.

An ‘organic ideology’ is adequate to organize common masses to a specific orientation for action. It helps to lead a specific stage of historical development and a particular political moment. Therefore, ideology is socially pervasive, the source of determined social action. At first, certain consciousness is created, then certain structure or formula for social orientation is needed. Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks* (1996), expressed that ideology is precisely “the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.” (Gramsci 134). Ideology makes different people belonging to different social classes aware of their position in society. The dominant class does not always bulldoze the oppressed class into accepting their ideology, rather it represents its ideology in such a manner that the dominated class is persuaded to accept it. The situation perfectly fits in with the Gramscian idea of hegemony i.e. acceptance of dominant ideology by consent. According to Gramsci, no single class ideology is pure. The ideology of the dominant class can be deciphered after grasping the standpoint of the whole field of class struggle. An oppositional world view is not, according to Gramsci, just the expression of Proletarian consciousness, but a composite affair. Proletarian class-ideology is conscious of the bourgeois class ideology and is formed after keeping in mind the whole field of class struggle. Therefore, ideology is a relational system. A dominant ideology reflects not just the world view of rulers, but the relations between governing and dominated classes in society ‘as a whole’. “... the resultant ruling ideology will be typically a hybrid of elements drawn from the experience of both classes” (Gramsci 123).

Gramsci, Lukács and Nicos Poulantzas are of the same view regarding the relational system of ideology. The formation of unity in society is a structural affair. The unity is not done only by the dominant class. The unity is a result of interrelationship of different 'levels' or different 'regions' of social life under the determining pressure of a mode of production (economic system). The ruling class reality is one level of reality for the formation of society, but not the only reality.

Gramsci's interest in the material institutions which nurture ideology is later developed by Louis Althusser in his concern on Ideological State Apparatuses. His emphasis on the materiality of ideas is the centre of his concept of ideology. Althusser is of the view that ideas are expressed and concretised by any material institution, and so ideas are themselves material. He does not differentiate ideas from matter or material practices. In his influential chapter, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" of the book *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (1968), he says, "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices. This existence is material" (Althusser 112). Ideas do not exist in mind, they exist in material practices. When ideas are themselves material, the subject which has the ideas, and which does not create ideas, is no autonomous subject. Therefore, this is the objectified subject. An individual is controlled by already existent ideology of the society. Individual has no ideology. Through 'hailing' or addressing an individual is made to have a 'subject position'. Althusser describes ideology as "the category of the 'subject' is constitutive of ideology, which only exists by constituting concrete subjects as subjects.... *all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject" (Althusser 117).

Therefore, the subject is formed, controlled and composed of material practice, but the subject feels itself independent and free. The experience of the individual in reality is imaginary and not real. The relationship of the individual with the real existence is not real

relationship, rather imaginary relationship. This is defined as ideology by Althusser. His view of 'relative autonomy' of the superstructures suggests that ideas which are formed from material lives, may attain a certain degree of independence. This is, in another way, Althusser's 'departure from crude materialism' (Hawkes 123).

Pierre Macherey, a friend of Althusser, sees the contradictory nature of ideology in reality. Language which is used in everyday world is ideological in nature, and every experience which is inconsistent and contradictory is ideological, because its purpose is to 'efface all traces of contradiction' (Macherey 146). His contribution in firmly establishing relationship between ideology and literature is discussed in the following chapter in detailed.

The Frankfurt School of neo-Marxists appeared in Germany in the second half of the 20th century. The scholars and intellectuals after World War II realised that the traditional Marxist theory was inadequate to explain the emergence of capitalist societies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The philosophers of the Institute of Social Research (Frankfurt, Germany) try to measure up how consciousness is influenced by commodity. Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) and Theodor Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* (1966) are attempts to root the dialectic in an absolute method of negativity. According to H. Marcus, the main target of ideology is to eliminate and remove all social conflicts, differences and plurality through a "totalitarian" system. Ideology, Marcuse believes, ruthlessly expunges individual identity and heterogeneity of things and human existence.

Theodor Adorno suggests that as in the capitalist economy, the specific differences between two different objects are suppressed where their different 'use-value' is less important than the same 'exchange value', so, in the capitalist social framework, there is a mechanism of abstract exchange which denies individuality and heterogeneity of things.



Eagleton, following Adorno's view, sets a suitable example in chapter-5 of *Ideology: An Introduction* (2007):

If this principle reigns in the capitalist economy, it can also be observed at work in the higher reaches of the 'superstructure'. In the political arena of bourgeois society, all men and women are abstractly equal as voters and citizens; but this theoretical equivalence serves to mask their concrete inequalities within 'civil society'.... Is there, then, some way of racking this principle of false equivalence even further up the so-called superstructure, into the heady realms of ideology? (Eagleton 125-6)

This false notion of equivalence or equality is created by ideological strategy. Commodity-form permeates life in capitalist society in lieu of exceptionalism and specialism. Commodity exchange has become the central organizing principle for all sectors of society. To Adorno, ideology is the material structure of commodity exchange. For him, ideology 'homogenizes' the world, falsely equating distinct phenomena, undoing 'dialectics'. Prefiguring the thought of eliminating the binary opposition, Adorno leads to post-structuralist thinking, but he neither "celebrates the notion of difference nor unequivocally denounces the principle of identity" (Eagleton 127). "Ideology for Adorno is thus a form of 'identity thinking' — a covertly paranoid style of rationality which inexorably transmutes the uniqueness and plurality of things into a mere simulacrum of itself, or expels them beyond its own borders in a panic-stricken act of exclusion" (Eagleton 126). Therefore in ideology, individual identity is lost ; the difference between individuals is lost. But, on the contrary, it is the paradigm of art where different and non-identical objects are given space to remain side by side. Adorno wants socialism which will aim to restore the diversity of 'sensuous use-value', the individual identity principle and plurality of objects.

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer wrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) highlighting the distorting effect of the imaginary representation of commodity on the critical faculty (intellect) of the people. It shows how the American people are being fascinated by the quantitative increase of commodities. They speak of two aspects of ideology — representation of facts through which ‘the fact’ is deferred and blind faith in mechanical science. Commodity fetishism comes out of these two aspects of ideology. Both present an example of showing the evil result of the commodification of consciousness: the USA statistics shows that the young black men are the majority in committing crime. Adorno and Horkheimer say that it is a ‘fact’. They regard it as ‘ideological thinking’ if this ‘fact’ is taken out of the context; then the black people will be regarded as dangerous and out of control. But if the fact is taken in totality, ‘in the context of slavery and segregation, policing tactics and media representation, the education and welfare systems’(Hawkes 133), then the reality will prove just the opposite of the appearance.

Jürgen Habermas, the later Frankfurt School philosopher, emphasises the resources of communicative language. Habermas claims that ideologies “replace traditional legitimizations of power by appearing in the mantle of modern science and by driving their justification from the critique of ideology” (Habermas 99). Therefore, ideology in the guise of modern science communicates and ultimately justifies power. It is legitimized through a discursive system which is somehow deformed. It works as extra-discursive force which distorts language and discourse. If the communicative structure is ‘systematically’ distorted, it will appear as normal or just. Eagleton clarifies Habermas’s ideas in a very analytical way:

A systematically deformed network of communication thus tends to conceal or eradicate the very norms by which it might be judged to ‘be’ deformed, and so becomes peculiarly invulnerable to critique. In this situation, it becomes impossible to raise ‘within’ the network the question of own workings or

conditions of possibility, since it has, so to speak, confiscated these enquiries from the outset. (Eagleton 129)

What Eagleton tries to explain in the above lines is that a ‘successful’ ideology makes its ground logical and reasonable in such a way and makes its universe in such invulnerably pervasive manner that one cannot be allowed to go ‘outside’ that ideology to critique it. In Habermas’ view, all language is inherently structured to communication and tends towards human consensus. But social and ideological domination does not allow such unconstrained communication. We should transform this situation, otherwise truth is bound to be deferred.

Terry Eagleton, in *Ideology: An Introduction*, begins the Chapter 1 “What is Ideology” as :

Nobody has yet come up with a single adequate definition of ideology, and this book will be no exception. This is not because workers in the field are remarkable for their low intelligence, but because the term ‘ideology’ has a whole range of useful meanings, not all of which are compatible with each other. (Eagleton 1)

Prior to embarking upon a detailed discussion on ideology let us have a close look at sixteen widely circulated and quoted definitions of ideology propounded by Terry Eagleton:

- (a) The process of production of meanings, signs, and values in social life;
- (b) A body of ideas characteristic of a particular social group or class;
- (c) Ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- (d) False ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power;
- (e) Systematically distorted communication;
- (f) That which offers a position for a subject;
- (g) Forms of thought motivated by social interests;

- (h) Identity thinking;
- (i) Socially necessary illusion;
- (j) The conjuncture of discourse and power;
- (k) The medium in which conscious social actors make sense of their world;
- (l) Action-oriented sets of beliefs;
- (m) The confusion of linguistic and phenomenal reality;
- (n) Semiotic closure;
- (o) The indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure;
- (p) The process whereby social life is converted to a natural reality. (Eagleton 2).

This list of several definitions of ideology proves a broader perspective of the meaning of ideology. Though Eagleton has a contribution in establishing relation between ideology and literature, his comment on the politics of ideology cannot be overlooked. His view on interest of power and legitimization of the ruling class is very much noteworthy. Therefore, Eagleton is relevant here. The term 'ideology', according to Eagleton, refers not only to belief system, but also to questions of power. This power is obviously a legitimised power of a dominant social group or class and this legitimization involves at least six different strategies:

A dominant power may legitimate itself by *promoting* beliefs and values congenial to it, *naturalising* and *universalising* such beliefs so as to render them self-evident and apparently inevitable; *denigrating* ideas which might challenge it, *excluding* rival forms of thought, perhaps by some unspoken but systematic logic; and *obscuring* social reality in ways convenient to itself.

Such 'mystification', as it is commonly known, frequently takes the form of masking or suppressing social conflicts, from which arises the conception of ideology as an imaginary resolution of real contradictions. In any actual

ideological formation, all six of these strategies are likely to interact in complex ways. (Eagleton:2007,5-6).

So, ideology is commonly associated with dominant political power which operates through masking. These six strategies work in a complex way in the formulation and perpetuation of ideology. The important point is that in the process of 'naturalising' its own beliefs and in 'denigrating' rival forms of thought, the dominant power takes the forms of 'masking'. This masking creates a gap between appearance of society and reality of society. Though the dominant ideology makes a false presentation of society before us, yet the dominant ideology perpetuates because in order to be truly effective for the dominated people 'ideologies must make at least some minimal sense of people's experience, must conform to some degree with what they know of social reality from their practical interaction with it'(Eagleton 14). So, it is a fact that no ruling ideology can be perpetuated for a long time, if it does not persuade people to hold these beliefs.

Therefore, the process of 'universalising' the beliefs depends on rendering the beliefs plausible and attractive to the people subjected. The narrow concept of 'false consciousness' of ideology is now discarded by contemporary Marxist critics. About 'false consciousness', Eagleton accepts a positive standpoint that ideologies must engage significantly with the wants and desires of people. To him, ideologies cannot be simply unreal. Ideology must be 'real' in order to provide a strong basic ground on which individuals can construct a coherent identity, a solid motivation for effective action and it must make some feeble attempt to 'explain away' (Eagleton 15) contradictions and incoherencies. Eagleton's realisation is that the only key to success of any ideology lies in the persuasive power of that ideological system to make its subjected people think that the situation they are living in is real and the most logical one:

In short, successful ideologies must be more than imposed illusions, and for all their inconsistencies must communicate to their subjects a version of social reality which is real and recognizable enough not to be simply rejected out of hand... Any ruling ideology which failed altogether to mesh with its subject's lived experience would be extremely vulnerable... (Eagleton 15)

It is palpable from multiple examples cited by Eagleton that ideology can be deceptive, by its effective force, but it is true in its empirical content. Such statement as, "Prince Charles is a thoughtful, conscientious fellow, not hideously ugly" is true, but the sentence can be used to evoke a power of royalty. When a sentence is powered by an ulterior motive to legitimize certain interest in power struggle, the statement is ideological. Therefore, the above sentence in its factual content is true, but it is deceptive in the sense that it exercises a dominant power over common people. Like Eagleton, Althusser thinks of human individual in relation to society as a whole. For him, an individual can be studied simply as occupying a place in a mode of production. But, it is not all the way we actually experience ourselves. We tend to see ourselves rather as free, unified, autonomous and self-generating individuals. For Althusser, what allows us to experience ourselves in this way is ideology.

However, Eagleton himself was confused to come to any conclusion about the nature and function of ideology. Ideology is attached with so much wider range of meanings, that it is very difficult to fix the specific nature of ideology. Yet, a specificity which may be attached to this concept is that ideology refers to false ideas in the direct interest of the ruling class. Secondly, signs, meanings and values help to reproduce a dominant social power. Thirdly, it is a significant conjuncture between discourse and political interest. Fourthly, it consists of partly true consciousness and partly false consciousness. Eagleton explains this point in this way:

Much of what ideologies say is true, and would be ineffectual if it were not; but ideologies also contain a good many propositions which are flagrantly false, and do so less because of some inherent quality than because of the distortions into which they are commonly forced in their attempts to ratify and legitimate unjust, oppressive political systems. (Eagleton 222)

Teun A. van Dijk argues that discourse plays a fundamental role in the daily expression and reproduction of ideologies. Ideologies are expressed, constructed or legitimated by discourse. On the other hand, ideology influences intonation, syntax and images, many aspects of meanings — coherence, presupposition, metaphors and argumentations.

Fredric Jameson argues that literary texts are symptoms of the suppression of History. Texts are repository of unconscious and suppressed desires of History. Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981) shows that literary texts, in the late capitalist era, contain “rifts and discontinuities”, its “non-dit” (its not-said, in French phrase) which are repressed by dominant ideology. But this repression is seen by Jameson not only for the dominant class (individual level), but for the dominated common mass (collective level). The function of ideology in the text is to repress ‘revolution’. As ‘revolution’ brings unrest and unbearable existence in both dominant and dominated classes of people, so attempts are made to repress ‘revolution’. Therefore, the ‘hidden’ elements are to be found out to analyse a novel. Jameson holds the view that every text is a political allegory where the text may be seen as “the reconstruction of a prior historical and ideological “subtext”. That the opposed ideology is repressed is determined not only by current ideology, but also by the long-term process of true ‘History’. Jameson believes in social and cultural heterogeneity in reality and he thinks that the textual heterogeneity is just the reflection of this outside heterogeneity. Like Althusser, Jameson also views the social

totality as ‘decentred structure’ in ‘relative autonomy’. So, the complex structure of heterogeneity of history is reflected in the heterogeneity of texts.

According to Jameson, the semantic enrichment and material enlargement of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks —

- (i) a text within the historical and political horizon;
- (ii) a text within the semantic horizon;
- (iii) ideology of form i.e the symbolic messages transmitted to readers by the coexistence of various sign which are themselves traces or anticipation of modes of production.

Therefore, ideology according to Jameson, is something which creates an aesthetic effect by means of symbolic act or of sign with a purpose to invent “imaginary or formal ‘solution’ to unresolvable social contradictions”. So, aesthetic act is an ideological act in its own right.

With Friedrich Nietzsche, the meaning of ideology is changed. His nihilistic thought dispels the traditional notion of distinction between truth and false, between reality and appearance. Greek rational philosophy, notion of civilised nation, and Western Christianity — everything, as Nietzsche thinks, speaks of the limitation of ideology. Everything is a void which is very difficult to be filled up. His view of the ‘death of supreme authority’ (God) may be extended to his concept of abolishing ideology. Ideology, in his thinking, is meaningless and obsolete because there is no standard truth by which false consciousness can be judged. The postmodern approach of ideology, thus, changes the Marxist concept of ideology.

The Slovenian-Lacanian school, to which Slavoj Žižek belongs, is highly influenced by the Lacanian notion of the ‘point de capiton’ — the concept of ‘fantasy’, ‘identification’, and ‘jouissance’ for the fundamental ideological operation. According to Žižek, social reality



cannot be unmixed of or detached from the ‘imaginary’, it is interwoven with fantasy. Here, reality and appearance are intermixed. Therefore, this social field is structured around the fundamental split or ‘antagonism’. According to Ernesto Laclau, “fantasy becomes an imaginary scenario concealing the fundamental split”. That is why, Žižek argues that “the only way to break the power of our ideological dream is to confront the Real of our desire which announces itself there”. Žižek also holds the view that it is very difficult to detach ourselves from these fantasy-objects. As ideology clings to various objects relating to the unconscious and as it has a capacity to yield enjoyment to us, we cannot detach ourselves easily from fantasy-objects. “Identification” is conceived as a process through which an ideological field is constituted. Thirdly, ideological field is also supported by a “kind of non-signifying ‘surplus’ which is enjoyment or ‘jouissance’”(Eagleton 184). Moreover, influenced by Freud’s view of ‘illusion’, Žižek moves to the view that ideology is such a kind of ‘mask’ or ‘illusion’ that men and women feel comfortable in lieu of feeling helpless in the society. Eagleton, following Žižek’s view, says —“If ideology is a condition of reality suffused and supported by our unconscious desires as well as by our anxiety and aggression, then it conceals a utopian kernel” (Eagleton 184). So, ideology creates a utopian state of joy and happiness (though this is a false state of the unconscious) within individuals, and that is why individuals love to grapple with ideology.

Slavoj Žižek, in his seminal work, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (2008), deduces the definition of ideology from Lacan’s concept of ideological fantasy and ‘dream’. Lacan thinks that the function of the dream is to enable the dreamer to prolong his sleep. In other words, dream prevents the dreamer from waking and being acquainted with the reality. A sleeping person constructs a dream, a story which helps him to lengthen his sleep in order to avoid awakening into reality when the dreamy-reality (i.e the reality of his desire) which he encounters in dream is more terrifying than so-called external reality itself, then the person

awakes. The Lacanian 'Real' is the state of nature from which we have been forever severed by our entrance into language. Dream is the Lacanian 'Real' which escapes insupportable reality (external reality). Lacan in his Seminar on the *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (1979) shows that 'Reality' is a fantasy-construction which helps in the process of 'masking' the Real of our desire.

Žižek, based on Lacan's view of 'Reality', tries to define ideology as "a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our 'reality' itself: an 'illusion' which structures our effective, real social relations and thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel ... The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real Kernel" (Žižek 45 ). Here, fantasy construction does not mean mere dream /illusion, rather 'fantasy' acts as a support to Reality. But it supports that reality which the dominant ruling power tries to create, and at the same time it masks the crude insupportable reality. Therefore, this ideological construction hinders us from seeing the real state of things. Though with a post-ideological objective view, we try to free ourselves of the so-called ideological prejudices, "We remain throughout 'the consciousness of our ideological dream'" (Žižek 48). Žižek views, "The only way to break the power of our ideological dream is to confront the Real of our desire which announces itself in his dream" (Žižek 48). Pre-ideological level of everyday experience is necessary for shaking the so-called ideological prejudices.

Žižek, in chapter 1 named "How Did Marx Invent The Symptom?" raises a question about the reason of this misrecognition of the social reality (or 'false consciousness') even in today's world. The reason is that ideology's dominant mode of functioning is 'cynical'. This view is actually put forward by German philosopher and theorist, Peter Sloterdijk, who in his renowned book, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (1983) says that a cynic is aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality; yet he still retains the mask in order to

please his own position. Sloterdijk formulates the idea that “ they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it”. This ‘cynicism’ is different from ‘Kynicism’. ‘Kynicism’ as Sloterdijk terms it, is the rejection of the authority, or the renouncement of the ruling official ideology by means of irony and sarcasm. “It subverts the official proposition by confronting it with the situation of its enunciation; it proceeds *ad hominem* (for example when a politician preaches the duty of patriotic sacrifice, cynicism exposes the personal gain he is making from the sacrifice of others)”(29). But ideology persists even in post-modern, post-ideological world, because of cynical attitude of human subjects. Here Žižek supports Adorno’s conclusion that “... ideology is, strictly speaking, only a system which makes a claim to the truth — that is, which is not simply a lie but a lie experienced as truth, a lie which pretends to be taken seriously”( Žižek 30).

Though not used in its present sense and terminology, the idea of ideology is as old as the time of Aristotle. In the earlier societies it was conceived of as ideas, matter, materiality, representation, concept of reality, structure of ideas on human consciousness. It has been discussed from this standpoint by Aristotle, Machiavelli, Bacon, Locke, Descartes, Milton and by many others. Yet it may appear that this chapter lays too much emphasis on Marxist concept of ideology, as major part of this chapter has been devoted to the discussion held by theorists in connection with Marxism. A discussion on ideology from Marxist point of view need be detailed and elaborated and it can never be ignored as the majority of it has been done by Marxists throughout the ages.

The concept of ideology starting from Destutt de Tracy, is developed by different views of Karl Marx, Fredrick Engles, V.I. Lenin, Georg Lukács, Karl Manheim, Lucian Goldmann , Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, Jurgan Habermas, Louis Althusser, Pierre Macherey, Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, Slavoj Žižek, and Peter Sloterdijk. The survey carried out in the preceding section reflects that most of the critics

discussed ideology from political and historical points of view. Political and historical perspectives of ideology consolidate the idea that ideology is seen as a social and mental structure of individuals who having been directly and indirectly influenced by the dominant institutions are subjected to the dominant ruling class. Actually ideology acts as a support system to reality, but itself is a mask and hides the crude reality in such a way that the individuals are persuaded to accept it as real. Therefore, this ideological construction prevents individuals from seeing the truth of the reality. So, Žižek puts forward a psychological view that the crude desire of the unconscious state of mind is concealed by the mask of civilized consciousness, and by confronting the reality of desire, human beings can dismantle the power of ideological construction. Now, the question is — how can ideological construction be dismantled? The first point is that a ‘successful’ ideology cannot be easily broken down because an ideology becomes ‘successful’ when it creates its ground in a reasonable way and thereby attains its universal acceptability and none feels the urge to critique it. Jürgen Habermas states that the legitimization and justification of power is done by ideology which is supported by modern scientific communicative language and through ‘a discursive system’, which undoing ‘dialectics’ homogenizes the world.

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## CHAPTER II

### Ideology and Literature

The general discussion of ideology from historical perspective throughout the ages, carried out earlier, leads us to the present chapter on the theoretical discussion of ideology from the point of view of literature. The relationship between art (in general)/ literature (in particular) and ideology starts with Plato, who is of the view that poetry incorporates lies and it creates a false consciousness within human subjects removing them manifold times from reality, a view countered by Aristotle. *An Apology For Poetry* (1595) by Philip Sidney, points out that “he [the poet] nothing affirmeth, and therefore never lieth” (Enright and Chickera 31). Aesthetic statement does never claim to be true in the ordinary sense of the term. A poet does not imitate reality; he is a ‘maker’— a ‘creator’ who improves upon reality. Therefore, reality can never be expected to be directly reflected through art and hence the relationship between ideology and literature (poetry in particular) is not one of linear variety.

Liberal humanism denies the historical, political, material and social influences on art. Art’s own identity is given emphasis by the romantic and aesthetic group of critics; art’s relation with ideological discourse is negated by them. They develop a view that a work of art is self-sufficient and it incorporates no moral, historical, and political purpose outside its own being. Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgement* (1790) says that art is a disinterested contemplation of an object without reference to reality. As a reaction to this stance that shows a detachment of art from ideology, Marxists show the role of ideology in the formation of art. A close relationship between ideology and literature is established by the earlier Marxists, whose belief of ideology as ‘false consciousness’ or an ‘illusory belief system’ includes an idea that ideology exists in relation to power. Art, as one of the social practices, becomes a manifestation or one of the many manifestations of ideology.

According to Marx, literature as imaginative creation, is made up of statements which have no truth-value in this empirical world. Ideology, in Marx's view, as 'false-consciousness' of the world, may be applicable to the analysis of the imaginative creation. Literature, as perceived by Marx, is the misrepresentation of the empirical world or "empirically false statements". George A Huaco, in discussing Marx's concept of ideology and literature, suggests that Marx's concept of ideology as falsity or distortion may be replaced by the notion of ideology as "the analysis of mythical patterns" which is found in the works of literary fiction. "... myths are a major feature of literary structure because mythical patterns organize fictional universe"(Huaco 423).

Georg Lukács, the Hungarian Marxist, develops a concept of ideology which is attached to the conception of historical 'totalities', and his view of the novel involves both society and individual. These totalities are seen as historical and they form a meaningful and coherent structure in novel. In the early 1930s, he says that a work of art or literature captures the essential features of universal qualities of man, so it is an 'intensive totality'. "Lukács claims that a great literary writer is one who somehow takes over the ingredients of the actual and possible consciousness of a given class, organizes them into unified and coherent meaningful totalities, and embodies these totalities in his works" (Huaco 427).

According to Althusser, the French Neo-Marxist, ideology is not a matter of true or false consciousness, rather it is a 'self-misrecognition'. It is an 'imaginary' dimension of human existence. Here 'imaginary' is not false or unreal. It is used in Lacan's concept of pre-linguistic stage of development when the child cannot attain the power to distinguish subject and object, self and other, but identifies and feels itself at once before the mirror. Therefore, it is a stage when "subject and object glide ceaselessly in and out of each other in a sealed circuit" (Eagleton 142). Eagleton illustrates Althusser's concept of 'imaginary' in such a way that in ideological domain, human subjects feel their existence and see their image in the



‘mirror’ (mechanism) of a dominant ideological discourse. This is the ‘imaginary’ dimension of human subject in Althusser’s view. Althusser in *On Ideology* defined ideology as “a representation of the imaginary relationships of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser, 2008, 36).

What is clear from the above definition is that the real existence of individuals is represented through imaginary relationship. Relationship between individuals and their conditions of existence “presupposes both a real relation and an ‘imaginary’, ‘lived’ relation ... In ideology, the real relation is inevitably invested in the imaginary relation” (Althusser, 2005, 233-234). What is the reason behind this imaginary representation? The unpalatable truth of the real condition of human relationship must be masked by ‘the register of the imaginary’ (Eagleton 143). This imaginary representation is one way to veil the truth that a small group of dominant-class people is exploiting other class(es) of people. Behind this imaginary presentation, the dominant-class serves the purpose of enslaving the other people. So, the imaginary representation is false in this sense. But, according to Eagleton, “it is not false in the sense of being mere arbitrary deception, since it is a wholly indispensable dimension of social existence, quite as essential as politics or economics. And it is also not false in so far as ‘real’ ways we live our relations to our social conditions are invested in it”. (Eagleton 143)

Ideology, according to Althusser, is so much integrated with human life and human existence in society that individuals cannot realise that they are controlled by some social forces. Ideology always exists and works through social apparatuses and practices. One such social practice is ‘hailing’ or ‘interpellation’, which leaves its action on subjects and on the consciousness of the subjects. Ideology is a medium through which society ‘interpellates’ or ‘hails’ us, creates an illusion within the individual of the individual’s value. It becomes a way of turning an individual a subject. Eagleton sums up in this way — “In thus ‘identifying’ us,

beckoning us personally from the ruck of individuals and turning its face benignly towards us, ideology brings us into being as individual subjects” (Eagleton 143). So, ‘hailing’ or ‘interpellation’ is similar to the existence of ideology in terms of its function. When ‘hailing’ takes place in the street (outside ideology), in reality it takes place as a criterion of ideology, and similarly, when something (power relation, power struggle) takes place within ideological framework, it seems to take place outside it. “That is why those who are in ideology believes themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical ‘denegation’ of the ideological character of ideology by ideology” (Althusser,2008,49). This is the power of ideology which creates such effect that ideological power is not exercised. But in the eyes of ideology, bad subjects are ones “who on occasion provoke the intervention of one of the detachments of the (repressive) State Apparatuses” (Althusser, 2006, 181).

The ‘Repressive State Apparatus’ (RSA) functions in society through ‘violence’, whereas the ‘Ideological State Apparatus’ (ISA) functions through ‘ideology’. According to Althusser, State Apparatuses work massively and predominantly by ‘repression’, while function secondarily through ‘ideology’. If the ruling class applies the policy of ‘repression’, the ruling class will lose power easily; so, it must apply the policy of ideology because it (ideology) works as a mask. Therefore, application of ideology is more dangerous than the direct ‘repression’. In the similar way, the ISAs function massively by ‘ideology’, but there must be always a space for ‘repression’. Here, ‘repression’ is also needed for the sake of ideology because to a certain state or moment, the ruling class must have to deny the space of considering the ideology of the other class. Another point to be noted is that the ruling ideology realises that the oppositional force comes not only from the opposite class ideology, but also from its own ideological limitation and realising this ideological limitation, the ruling class ideology faces contradiction within it.

Althusser in “A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre” (included in *On Ideology*) discussed the relation between art and ideology. According to him, a real and authentic art does not impart knowledge to us in the strict sense. What art gives us, it does in the form of ‘seeing’, ‘perceiving’, and ‘feeling’. The work of art is to ‘make us see’, ‘make us perceive’, ‘make us feel’ something which alludes to reality. A careful examination of the novels of Balzac or Solzhenitsyn, makes us experience that they created the form of ‘seeing’, ‘perceiving’, and ‘feeling’ in their novels which allude to reality. This form is ideology, from which art is born, in which it bathes, and yet from which it detaches itself as art and to which it alludes.

Althusser is of the view that ideology is identical with the ‘lived’ experience of human existence itself. So, the form in which the novelist tries to create the effects of reality in great novels, has as its content the ‘lived’ experience of individuals. Ideology will contain individual ‘lived experience’ within its limitation of structure. Althusser gives one example that the reactionary political position of Balzac occupies a large part in Balzac’s novels, yet the novels are not completely political. His novels are detached from political ideology. Similar is the case of Tolstoy’s novels. Tolstoy’s personal ideological position forms content of his work, yet the content is detached from the political ideology and sometimes makes us ‘feel’ a distance from inside ideology. This is the greatness of Tolstoy that he sticks to his political ideology, but he produces in his novels an internal ‘distance’ from his ideology and this gives us critical ‘views’ of it.

Althusser argues that ideology of ‘art’ produces aesthetic effect. Accepting the views of Marx and Lenin on ideological role in every ‘spontaneous’ language, Althusser takes a position that like language, art has its own ideology which produces an aesthetic effect. He speaks of in the earlier part of the letter that the issue of ‘rupture’ is synonymous with the issue of ‘internal distantiation’. The point that Althusser makes is that art grows out of

ideology, but essential to the process of creation is the ‘rupture’ with ideology. Now the ‘rupture’ does not mean departure, rather creating/attaining a position whereby that particular ideology can be critiqued. Attaining this position is important on the part of the artist and it can be done by adherence to the demands of that particular art form as opposed to the demands of ideology. This rupture or distanciation is necessary as it provides the artist with a very enviable stance. So, a work of art is born of a particular ideology, but because of this rupture it becomes an internal critique of that ideology.

Pierre Macherey, who was the first Althusserian critic, in his book *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966) shows the application of Althusser’s central concepts of ideology and scientific knowledge to the literary work. Macherey proposes that literary language is essentially different from other modes of expression. It does not present the truth or the false; rather it evokes an image which creates a sense of reality. It evokes something; it says nothing concretely. A space, therefore, remains between the readers and the language. In the chapter “Illusion and Fiction”, Macherey comes to the conclusion:

Then we would speak of a literary space, the scene of this mystification. All writing would be furrowed by this elision; at best, as in Mallarmé, it might manage to reveal the truth of its absence. Then the differences between the various types of writing finally reflect back to a common nature which constrains them equally : they speak and says nothing. The writer sends empty messages, whose only reality is the specific code in which they are expressed.

(Roland Barthes also puts forward similar argument in *Writing Degree Zero*) (Macherey 71)

He offers us integrating ideas about ideology, history and literature. In Althusserian vein, Macherey argues that ideology is the shapeless, amorphous stuff of everyday experience. It

always contains within its framework a contradictory condition. “By definition, an ideology can sustain a contradictory debate, for ideology exists precisely in order to efface all traces of contradiction” (Macherey 146). Ideology has always a tendency / inclination to break down when reality comes and contends with it; ideology must not allow itself to face questions of reality. So, ideology has an imperfection, and its imperfection is its perfection. Ideology will exist as long as it will be able to retain its falsified version (mask) of reality. According to Macherey, “In so far as ideology is the false resolution of a real debate, it is always adequate to itself ‘as a reply’” (Macherey 146). Ideology creates such a concept of reality, that it must not answer the question of reality and prolong its imperfection. To know Macherey’s concept of ideology and of the relation between literature and ideology, Macherey’s article on “Lenin, critic of Tolstoy” (in *A Theory of Literary Production*) is of immense help. What Lenin has contributed to Marxist aesthetics, Macherey argues, is that he connects Marxist aesthetics with scientific socialism. Lenin’s reflection on Tolstoy’s work shows that aesthetic and political theories are closely linked. Literature cannot be seen in isolation from historical period. Literary work and historical period are coherently related, but the affinity between the two is not simple. As the writer proceeds to produce his work, he is preoccupied with the material condition of history. Tolstoy’s individual position does not determine his relation to the history, rather a specific ideology mediates the relation. This does not mean that the writer builds up ideology in his work; in fact, ideology is constituted independent of him. Just as a writer faces ideology in life, similarly the work ‘encounters’ an ideology. So, a writer does not construct ideology.

A double perspective works in a literary work — the work’s relation to history and the work’s relation to an ideological version of that history. Ideology is limited strictly by literary forms. An ideology is always to some extent incomplete, it gets completed through its manifestation in literary forms. Literary form and ideological content are interdependent on

each other. The literary form, which is the 'artistic gift' contains a specific 'perception' of the historical process. Ideological content is used in a literary work not for the propagation of a specific ideology, but for the elaboration of a specific form. So, the specific form is the substitute for the ideological content and one helps the fulfilment of the other. According to Macherey :

We might say that the great writer is one who offers a clear 'perception' of reality. But this idea of perception raises all kinds of problems. It is obviously not the same as a theoretical knowledge; the writer's version of reality cannot be confused with the scientific analysis which the Marxist Party would give, simply because the writer uses his own special methods. (Macherey 130)

Therefore, this specific literary form which is the choice of the writer manifests the 'perception' of reality. The relationship between literary form and ideology is grounded up in the presence of real elements of society. It is neither historical reality, nor ideological concept which makes a literary work great, but it is 'literariness' which makes a work great. But it is not an easy task to make a balance between the divergent and at times contrasting elements. To make a perfect balance in historical reality, ideological concept and literary forms are the work of a writer, yet a literary work is not the product of the writer; it emerges, develops and gets the fullest form by itself. On the other hand, a work, according to Macherey, is certainly determined by its relation to ideology. A literary work is built 'from ideology' as much as it is 'against ideology'. The book's function is to present the ideology in a non-ideological form. This non-ideological form expresses its insufficiency, differences and discordances.

Macherey views :

Science does away with ideology, obliterates it; literature challenges ideology by using it. If ideology is thought of as a non-systemic ensemble of

signification, the work proposes a 'reading' of these significations, by combining them as signs. Criticism teaches us to read these signs.

(Macherey 149)

Textual form or narrative style acts as a safeguard to the ideological contradictions, discordances or gaps, yet it does not mean that a work of art helps to propagate ideology only. "A work is established against an ideology as much as it is from an ideology. Implicitly, the work contributes to an exposure of ideology, or at least to a definition of it; thus the absurdity of all attempt to 'demystify' literary work ..." (Macherey 149). But a critic (a tenacious reader) tries to find out the work's particular process of 'demystification' and locate the 'silence' for which the work is made. The work presents itself as something well-ordered, but it is a false or imagined order, rather "a fictive resolution of ideological conflicts" (Macherey 174). According to Macherey, "It is no longer a question of defects but of indispensable informers. ...The work derives its form from this incompleteness which enables us to identify the active presence of a conflict at its borders" (Macherey 174).

The distinction between high culture and low culture (culture usually silenced by the dominant society) is blurred by Raymond Williams, the influential twentieth century thinker. Raymond Williams' concepts of culture, literature, politics, ideology and communication are interrelated ideas. According to him, 'literature' is "full, central, immediate human experience, usually with an associated reference to 'minute particulars'" (Williams 46). This concept of 'living human experience' occupies the central stage in the scheme of literary theme. Other related concepts, such as 'politics', 'sociology' and 'ideology' are given a mere helping status to the process of literature. Literature as a concept becomes actively ideological. It is such a composition that in it social and ideological struggle finds expression through language. Williams has put forward three definitions of ideology:

- (i) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group

- (ii) a system of illusory beliefs — false ideas or false consciousness which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge.
- (iii) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.

These three meanings of ideology are actually conceived by earlier critics. But of the three versions, he prefers the third definition. Accordingly, when the whole lived social process is organised by specific and dominant meanings and values, it is ideology which plays a decisive role in this social process. “ideology, in its normal senses, is a relatively formal and articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as a ‘world-view’ or a ‘class outlook’” (Williams 109). In its relatively formal and articulated system of meanings and beliefs, human consciousness is important which must be controlled and expressed.

As human consciousness is relatively mixed, confused, incomplete or inarticulate, society needs to be overruled in the name of a generalized system. The fully articulate and systematic forms are recognized as ideology. On both dominant and subordinated class consciousness, the application of this sense of ideology takes place in an abstract level. The definite form of social consciousness rises to the foundation of economic structure, just as legal and political superstructure rises to the foundation of economic structure which is, on the other hand, constituted by the sum total of the relation of production. According to Raymond Williams, “It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness” (Williams 75). Williams shows a relation of ideology with “structure of feeling”. Daily life experience of human beings is connected with ideology and this connection is delicately done — the view of ‘structure of feeling’ held by Williams. This term is first used by Raymond Williams in his *A Preface to Film* (with Michael Orrom, 1954), developed subsequently in *The Long Revolution* (1961), and extended and elaborated throughout his works, particularly *Marxism*

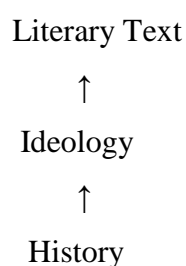


*and Literature* (1977). He first used this phrase to characterize the lived experience of the quality of life at a particular time and place. It is, he argued, “as firm and definite as ‘structure’ suggests, yet, it operates in the most delicate and least tangible part of our activities”. Later, he describes structures of feeling as “social experiences in solution”. Thus, a “structure of feeling” is the culture of a particular historical moment, though in developing the concept, Williams wished to avoid idealist notions of a “spirit of the age”. It suggests a common set of perceptions and values shared by a particular generation, and is most clearly articulated in particular and artistic forms and conventions. The industrial novel of the 1840s would be one example of the structure of feeling which emerged in middle class consciousness out of the development of industrial capitalism. Each generation lives and produces its own “structure of feeling”, and while particular groups might express this most forcibly, it extends unevenly through the culture as a whole. Raymond Williams defines this structure of feeling “as a combination of sympathetic observation and of a largely successful attempt at imaginative identification” (Williams 88).

The omnipresent invisible force of ideology permeates our whole way of life. These social experiences are the result of collective beliefs, values, meanings and individual collective sentiments. Just as individual psychology reconstructs social psychology, similarly individual psychology is reconstructed by social psychology. According to Raymond Williams, ideology is now used in a broader sense. ‘Ideology’ takes the dimension of social experience in which meanings and values are produced. He emphasised ‘practical consciousness’ which is intrinsic to the fundamental processes of social signification — intrinsic also to the ‘conception, thoughts and ideas’. Therefore, the ubiquity of identity of ideology in human life cannot be denied.

A literary text, according to Terry Eagleton, is a determinate product of a particular ideology and history. The intrinsic connection of history, ideology and literary text can never

be overlooked. Just as a literary text shows its internal relation to ideology, in the similar way ideology exhibits its relation to history. History is expressed in the form of ideology and similarly ideology is revealed following the form of the text. In this way historical and ideological elements become the elements of a text. A text grasps ideology “as an inherently complex formation which, by inserting individuals into history in a variety of ways, allows multiple kinds and degrees of access to that history” (Eagleton 1978:69). Therefore the relationship is as follows —



But, it is not that a text allows us to grasp the ideology easily because, according to Eagleton, a text creates an effect of aesthetic form which prevents the readers from easy access to ideology. In Eagleton’s language, the effect of aesthetic forms “distantiate ideology as to light up the shady frontiers where it abuts, by negation, onto real history” (Eagleton 70-71). A text does not express the real directly, but works upon the real through certain significations which create the effect of the real in the text. “Within the text itself, then” according to Eagleton, “ideology becomes a dominant structure, determining the character and disposition of certain ‘pseudo-real’ constituents” (Eagleton 1978:72). By ‘pseudo-real’ he, of course, means the imaginary figures and events. “The pseudo-real of the literary text is the product of the ideologically saturated demands of its modes of representation” (Eagleton 74). Eagleton views literature as imaginary production of the real. The significations worked into fiction by a literary work are the representations of reality not reality itself. Therefore, a literary text becomes a ‘tissue of meanings, perceptions and responses which inhere in the first place in that imaginary production of the real which is ideology’ (Eagleton 75).

Thus, Ideology is a multidisciplinary discourse, and involves cognitive and social psychology, sociology and discourse analysis. Ideology is the sum of social cognitions that are shared by the members of a group. The relation between groups and institutions is involved in the development and reproduction of ideologies. The discourse dimension of ideology shows the relationship between ideology and discourse — how ideologies influence discourses (text and talk) and how discourse is involved in the reproduction of ideology in society.

Fredric Jameson echoes the equal view of Pierre Macherey when he conceives of literary texts as ‘symptoms of the suppression of History’. Texts are repository of unconscious and suppressed desires of History. Jameson in his *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (1981) shows that literary texts, in the late capitalist era, contain “rifts and discontinuities”, its “non-dit” (its not-said, in French phrase) which are repressed by dominant ideology. But this repression is seen by Jameson not only for the dominant class (individual level), but for the dominated common mass (collective level). The function of ideology in the text is to repress ‘revolution’. As ‘revolution’ brings unrest and unbearable existence in both dominant and dominated classes of people, attempts are made to repress ‘revolution’. Therefore, the ‘hidden’ elements are needed to be brought out to analyse a novel. Jameson holds a view that every text is a political allegory where the text may be seen as the reconstruction of a prior historical and ideological ‘subtext’. That the opposed ideology is repressed is determined not only by current ideology, but also by the long-term process of true ‘History’. Jameson believes in social and cultural heterogeneity in reality and he thinks that the textual heterogeneity is just the reflection of this outside heterogeneity. In a vein similar to Althusser, Jameson also views the social totality as ‘decentred structure’ in ‘relative autonomy’. So, the complex structure of heterogeneity of history is reflected in the heterogeneity of texts.

According to Jameson, the semantic enrichment and material enlargement of a particular text must take place within three concentric frameworks —

- (i) a text within the historical and political horizon;
- (ii) a text within the semantic horizon;
- (iii) ideology of form i.e the symbolic messages transmitted to readers by the coexistence of various signs systems which are themselves traces or anticipation of modes of production.

Ideology, in Jameson's view, is something which creates an aesthetic effect by means of symbolic act or of sign with a purpose to invent "imaginary or formal 'solution' to unresolvable social contradictions". So, aesthetic act is an ideological act in its own right.

Thus, the interrelationship between ideology and literature that emerges out of the views of the eminent theoreticians is that each and every literary text contains an ideological content upon which the text is built. The nature of this ideological content determines the selection of the narrative form. This narrative form, in another way, partly functions in accord with the demands of the ideological content up to a relatively autonomous level of ideological formation, but the moment the demands of narrative form come in clash with the demands of ideological content, a 'rupture' takes place. This rupture is essential for the essence of the germination of the literary text. In this way, ideology and literary text are both interdependent and run independent of each other.

Postmodernism fundamentally ignores or interrogates authority. Its main focus is more on challenging the 'sacred' and 'sacrosanct' nature of the institution than on individual. From ideological perspective, postmodernism can be viewed as critical and contradictory, for it has provoked political reaction. Postmodernism has ironically tinged the long-standing notion regarding ideology with historical sense and hence, the theory becomes politically

ambivalent. The genesis of 'postmodernism' can be traced back to German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche who is instrumental in proclaiming the demise of the divine God. This proclamation hints at the subversion of a centre. Therefore, the fixed structure is to be dismantled. With the death of God any unitary sense of history disappears. Nietzsche dispels the notion of truth and undermines man's enslavement or submission to supreme power and value. He wishes that society should bid an adieu to the concept of absolute truth. In God he perceives an oppressor and hence, if God is not dismantled and ignored, the oppressive effects of his domination would never come to an end. Thus, postmodernism decentres the centre and never laments for the loss of the supreme value.

Attainment of autonomy becomes the specific focus within the framework of postmodern novels which are concerned with material affairs rather than spiritual ones. But they do not strictly conform to the fixed ideologies, rather subvert and undermine them with a view to deconstructing stereotyped notions. These novels, being site for ideological interplays, provide us with a solid parameter of collectivity for the judgement of individual action. Bakhtin thinks that the postmodern novels does not begin "by presuming a verbal and semantic decentring of the ideological world" (Bakhtin 367); rather it begins by creating a world (a fixed world) and then contests that fixed ideological world. According to Linda Hutcheon, the postmodern condition requires a new form of novel, must fittingly called 'historiographic metafiction' and this is certainly not an 'ideological novel'; it is not that through the fictional elements, the historiographic metafiction persuades the readers to right ('correct'?) way of explaining the world of reality, rather the metafiction prepares the readers to question their own interpretation of reality or to question their own ideology of the world.

The interplay between ideology and literature is not so much systematic, mechanical and prominent in the text always as the postmodernist view of discourse and ideology shows. Postmodern fictions, as they come after 1980s, prove that they are not following any single

strategy and style of ideological content and narrative form. One cannot ensure any homogeneous narrative construction about the formation of postmodern fiction. Postmodern fiction is a site where the game of ideology and 'autonomy' of the fiction takes place, but it cannot be given any fixed status so that one or the other may dominate each other. Indeed, it can be said that in the postmodern 'metafiction', the ideological and the aesthetic become very close and inseparable. For Hutcheon,

... the novel is potentially dangerous not just because it is a reaction against social repression, but because it also works to authorize that very power of repression at the same time. What postmodern fiction does, however, is to reverse that doubled process: it installs the power, but then contests it.

Nevertheless, the contradictory doubleness remains. (Hutcheon 180-181)

When realism fails to represent the life of postmodern man, as life is too absurd and horrific to represent through the method of realistic novel, magic realism emerges as a style of writing postmodern novel. The grim reality is combined with the surreal elements of fantasy and dream to present human life where the centrality is not based on ideology. When one moment back the twin colossi stood at the centre of World Trade, merchants and businessmen were working and thinking of future investment, common people gazed in surprise, the emblems of economy and civilization find no trace in the twinkling of an eye by the strength of another dominant power; then the question pertaining to the limitation of ideology in life and literature as well comes out. Who is dominant and who is subordinate — these kinds of query now arise. The hierarchical power structure is gradually getting dismantled in the postmodern era. The central position of ideology in the construction of literary text is getting loosened.

Thus, the elaborate discussion on the interrelationship between fiction and ideology makes us deduce the general view that ideology, in general sense, is a system of ideas or

structure of ideas. It is, therefore, a constituent element and a controlling factor in every sphere of knowledge and without it the concept of society, politics, economy, and literature can never be built up. From the Marxist standpoint, each text comes out of ideology, which, is, on the other hand, controlled by the literary form. Literary form and ideology are interdependent on each other, but at the same time independent of each other. From the postmodernist approach, on the other hand, the ideological power is put to question, as ideology itself remains in an unstable and a contradictory state. To sum up the relationship between the two, the remark of Linda Hutcheon seems to be apt: "Postmodernism raises the uncomfortable (and usually ignored) question of the ideological power behind basic aesthetic issues such as that of representation: *whose* reality is being represented?"(Hutcheon 182).

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## CHAPTER III

### **Amitav Ghosh vis-a`-vis History, Fiction and Ideology**

The interrelation between ideology and literature remains a very tricky issue. When we turn to a writer like Amitav Ghosh with an enquiry into the possible interplay of ideological belief system and fictional creation, the issue gets even more problematised. Ghosh, born in Calcutta in 1956, was brought up in a constantly shifting environment with his family for his father's administrative job; he got enriched by multiple experiences of politics and history of the world which helped the Indian English literature to have a glittering output from a young man of thirty. He has contributed to the world literature nine novels with innovative style engaging generic experiment and four non-fictional works containing more than twenty essays of contemporary world issues. Besides, ten powerful important essays and articles on diaspora, human culture, international peacemaking, fundamental challenges of the world, history-fiction interface and global unrest came from this humanist thinker. Very few writers attend so many interviews (no less than twenty) and share views on different issues of the world and literature like Ghosh.

The novels of Amitav Ghosh operate apparently on ideology (rather ideologies) which makes them concrete in terms of shape and also lends them fictional status. It is ideology which controls human society, and revolves around the fictional events and characters. Ghosh's novels cannot be regarded as mere imaginary presentations of some pre-conceived organized thoughts, rather they are deeply rooted in social, historical and economic issues and incidents of the world. A detailed go-through of Ghosh's personal interviews and non-fictional works reveals Ghosh's personal attitudes and views about history, fiction, nation, economy, empire and many other issues relating to human existence and human beings in this

world. Besides having a treasure-trove of novels Ghosh has also produced a rich body of non-fictional essays. A journalist in his earlier career, he has perhaps developed a keen interest in facing different audiences and being acquainted with the incidents and experiences of the individuals. Instead of looking at Ghosh's non-fictional works as simply a support for discussions on his fiction, his non-fiction which is usually looked at only in passing should be observed as well-positioned for concerning some common issues of Ghosh's fictions. John C. Hawley in "A Writer Situated In A History And In A Place : Ghosh's Non-Fiction" very sketchily points out the main focus of his important non-fiction:

- The nuclearisation of the subcontinent (*Countdown; The Ghat of the Only World*)
- The Current political crisis in Burma and Cambodia (*Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma; The Global Reservation; Burma: Something Went Wrong*)
- The maintenance of cultural heritage (*Dancing in Cambodia; The Hunger of Stone; The Human Comedy in Cairo*)
- Pre-European commerce between India and Africa (*The Slave of MS. H.6*)
- Fundamentalism (*The Imam and the Indian; An Egyptian in Baghdad; The Fundamentalist Challenge*)
- Anthropology and Economics in local communities (*Categories of Labour and the Orientation of the Fellah Economy; The Relations of Envy in an Egyptian Village*)
- The Diaspora (*The Imam and the Indian; Tibetan Dinner; The Diaspora in Indian Culture; The March of the Novel Through History*) (Hawley 18-19).

Quite interestingly, these subject matters are dealt with in his fiction as well. In spite of these universal issues of diaspora, cross-cultural heritage, economic and political issues, individuality is the most important issue in his novels. In an interview with Biswarup Sen, Ghosh says, "I have always been fascinated by how different people perceive the world, and

how these different perceptions mesh with my own understanding of it. I interviewed hundreds of people in perception for writing..." (*Persimmon* 62-63 ).

Ghosh takes numerous interviews from people of different parts of the world with a view to learning about the incidents pertaining to the lives of the individuals. If his purpose is to learn the incidents of a particular period of time of a particular nation, a close and detailed observation of historical records, documentation and a study of chronicles would suffice to be acquainted with the history and the influence of the historical incidents on human lives of that particular period, but that is not sufficient for his temperament. He seems to be more interested in being familiar with human lives and human stories than in nation's history. He intends to inform the readers of the impact of some important incidents on human life, as historical records and documentations do not always record true incidents. The stories in the major fictions of Ghosh are an exquisite blending of "the novelist's imagination with the anthropologist's meticulous attention to detail and curiosity about people and places". (*Jabberwock*)

The historical part of his fiction is not just the setting and backdrop, but an important part for focusing light on the stories and characters of individuals in different ages and in different countries. It is the view voiced by Ghosh himself about his fictional writing that he is not locked in a painful struggle with the historian / scholar, during the process of writing. The canonical and ideological structure of history brings a limited and a conservative view of history. So, a historian is restricted by limited nature of the canonical structure of history. It is worth-noting that Ghosh is very clear in his view about the function of history and fiction:

For me the research part is fun and easy, because I enjoy looking at documents and things. For all the information that I try to set down in my novels, I'm happy with them being classified as fiction. It is fiction — I made up the

characters and all that staff. I try to be faithful to the historical setting, but I never for a moment would confuse what I do with what historians do — I'm not making the truth — claims that historians make. It's important to acknowledge... (*Jabberwock*)

Though Ghosh is here talking about the historian's general purpose of recording incidents that took place in reality, he is well-aware of the fact that "history in its institutionalized, canonical form has been repudiated and its objective truth claims have been questioned" (Bhatt and Nityanandam 133). Ghosh knows that there is a clear demarcation between 'history' and 'historiography'. History is the actual happenings in the lives of the people; but 'historiography' is the business of writing history in certain ways. So, historiography is an ideological construct. Western or imperialist version of history speaks of the linear form of recorded or documented history. But the postcolonial version of history denies this western version of history. The factual history does not always claim to be true. The truth claim or the objective nature of history is now questioned, rather the fictionalized form of 'history' may prove to be truer than the recorded history. In spite of this postcolonial version of history, Dipesh Chakrabarty, a third-world historian, accepting still the dominance of "Europe" in his famous article, "Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History: Who Speaks for "Indian" Past?", speaks, "The dominance of "Europe" as the subject of all histories is a part of a much more profound theoretical condition under which historical knowledge is produced in the third world" (Chakrabarty 2). According to Chakrabarty, the academic discourse of history, which is produced at the institutional site of the university, is actually theoretical subject of histories — history of "India", "China", "Kenya" and like these third world countries — these historical positions of subalternity are under the sovereign control of "Europe". Therefore, "Third-world historians feel a need to work in European history; historians of Europe do not

feel any need to reciprocate”(Chakrebarthy 2). While the ignorance/deliberate negligence of non-western histories does not affect in the production of any Western work or history; the opposite does not happen. To Ghosh, even, the myth and folk-lore are more effective and play more important role to know the individual stories in society than the recorded form of history. Amitav Ghosh in a letter to Dipesh Chakrabarty wrote:

History is never more compelling than when it gives us insights into oneself and the ways in which one’s own experience is constituted. I do not see my life as separate from history. In my mind my family secrets mingle with the secrets of statesmen and bombers. Nor is my life divided from the lives of others. (*Radical History Review* 146)

‘Family’ plays a vital role in presenting trans local situation. How can family (the smallest unit of human civilization) be related to the world situation? Family is the commonest and the core unit for self and the world. Family stories are the nation’s stories; family disasters are the nation’s disasters and family progress is the nation’s progress. But for Ghosh, family is important for another reason, because nation’s history sometimes subverts and represses family stories and individual incidents. This subversion and repression are the deliberate device of suppressing individual identity and of superimposing institution on individuals. So, in his scheme of things family stories replace nation’s histories. As a writer, finding himself in postcolonial and postmodern situations, Ghosh is aware of strategies of contemporary nation-states and ideology of institutions. Living in America, he is concerned about the imperial policy and ideology of the U.S.A.. Chitra Sankaran in her *History, narrative and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh’s Fiction* includes an interview with Ghosh entitled as “Diasporic Predicaments”, where Ghosh points out the U.S imperialism :

Since the end of the cold war there has been a real and massive revival in imperialist Ideology and it has reached an apex with the Iraq war. Immediately after the II World War, people realized the extent of the disaster that colonialism has brought upon the world. Because really, the I and II World Wars in that sense Imperial Wars; they are fought over imperialism, imperial policies and so on. Fifty years after the II World War, people have come to forget ... Colonialism. I'm very aware of it, living in America, where really this ideology has an almost childish grip upon people. Almost childishly, Americans embrace this idea of a new empire. (Sankaran 3)

Ghosh is aware of the U.S imperial policy and ideology in the guise of democratic mission for establishing peace and democracy in Iraq. This ideology is not only followed by the U.S, but also by all developed countries which have gathered arms, ammunitions and bombs. Ghosh is very much conscious of the imperial ideology of the West which pretends to perform the part of 'Pacification' in the world, but which in reality exercises dominance over less powerful nations:

Pacification ... but it's not. It's an open war of aggression. And you know, while I was writing, I had to struggle with these worlds ... I had to struggle because there's such a weight the English language places upon you to accept these words — to call 'pacification', what they call 'pacification' rather than to call it occupation, the name that it deserves. I realise that even for someone like me, who's so aware of this history, it is still a struggle". (Sankaran 4)

In his characteristic postmodern approach, different discourses of nation, empire, history, fiction and economy are mingled up and each is related to the other. He always tries to subvert these meta- discourses for the cause of individual person, individual passion,

suffering and individual stories. He does not sound too bothered about the burden of history or the weight of the west. He has a strong distaste for compartmentalisation. To Ghosh, the concept of border is an oblivious concept in postcolonial schematization. Yet, in reality, one nation wages war with the neighbouring nation for demarcation and extension of the borders. With a view to having a clear knowledge about the ideological strategies upon which the nations work and to learning the ideological policies which propel one privileged social group to exercise dominance over other unprivileged social groups, Ghosh attempts to record with sincerity the incidents happening in reality. Ghosh travels a lot in different parts of the world and comes in direct contact with the common mass and the intellectuals. Therefore, his wide range travelling and learning about the culture, custom, language, incidents, and experiences of the people of different nations are the pedestal on which his novels are built up. He says to Neluka Silva and Alex Tickell in an interview, "...for me, travelling is always in some way connected with my fictional work. It's a very close link, I would say". (reprinted in Brinda Bose 214)

He travels a lot in order to know the truth of history and to retrieve the history which remains unravelled to the world. Through individual stories, he searches for the history in which the individual is set. His purpose is to delve deep into the suffering of the people, the power-politics of the ruling class, and ideological mask of neo-colonialism. Ghosh in his *Dancing in Cambodia* (1998) explains how neo-colonialism works. He refers to Auguste Rodin, a French artist who illustrates his encounter with the dancing troupe of Cambodia while visiting to Marseilles (France) in June of 1906 with King Sisowath of Cambodia. The ironic descriptive presentation of the king and the dancers in the contemporary French newspaper proves the prejudiced notion of the Orient and a campaign to the global empire of

their past colonial possession. Ghosh refers to the French newspaper reporter and an observer's account:

The onlookers were taken by surprise. They had expected perhaps a troop of heavily veiled, voluptuous Salomes; they were not quite prepared for the lithe, athletic women they encountered....An observer wrote later: 'With their hard and close-cropped hair, heir figures like those of striplings, their thin, muscular legs like those of young boys, they seem to belong to no definite sex. (DC 3)

These are sharp insults on the part of a nation and the Orient by the Europe. Yet, the King Sisowath in order to appease the former colonizers brings the dancing troupe, whereas Nordom, the king's brother has nurtured an annoyance for the French for forty years. Ghosh relates the past history to the recent history of Khmer Rouge revolution. He narrates the life-story of Molyka (Ghosh's friend), who informs us of the tragic life of some families. In 1975, when Molyka is thirteen, the Khmer Rouge has taken Phnom Penh and fourteen people of her family are evacuated to a labour camp. Three years later ten of them along with his father are killed. Naturally, Molyka is quite hesitant to meet Chea Samy, since the dancer is Pol Pot's sister-in-law. During the Pol Pot's reign, near ninety percent of the revolutionary artists are killed. Ghosh recovers the history, "No regime in history had ever before made so systematic and sustained attack on the middle class" (DC 9). Ghosh hints at the French support for the dictatorship of Pol Pot whose extreme racism spells doom form Cambodia's Vietnamese minority. Ghosh ends the essay by recording that the dance tradition of Cambodia that has been brought to France by King Sisowath and that Pol Pot succeeds to obliterate by killing the dancers, is restored by few dancers who retains their glory by performing in 1988 in Phnom Penh. In this way, Ghosh demonstrates the forgotten history by



a story in relation to his own friend. In *At Large in Barma* (1998), Ghosh shows how Burma is struggling for democracy under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi. The essay reflects the present unfortunate history of Burma which was a golden land in the past. The history is presented as a journey of ups and down, of progress and failure which is the greatest attraction of Ghosh.

Different social and political events which determine human life severely become the concerns of his writings. "The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi" in *The Imam and the Indian: Prose Pieces* (2002) records the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi in India. The horrific almost nightmarish recollection of the incident leaves such a mark on the adolescent psyche that he always fears that he may be attacked by the rioters as he is in the group of Hindus protecting the Sikh neighbours. The violence and the destruction of humanity in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious country like India are painful incidents. This is obviously an inglorious chapter in the nation's history. But according to Ghosh, a writer like him must bear some responsibilities to prevent the communal riots and violence. He expresses his observation about the common people that they think the joining of any anti-war campaign as the waste of time. A pamphlet "Who Are the Guilty?" comes out considering the role of the politicians and the police in instigating and allowing the rioters to cause a havoc. Therefore, the investigation of such violence is of no value to the common people. But a major role may be played by the consciousness of the civil institution which asserts itself against the adverse state of the society. Even the writers cannot keep themselves aloof from the politics of situation, though they may be desirous of doing so. In such situation, words play important role, and 'It is only appropriate that those who deal in words should pay scrupulous attention to what they say' (*ITI* 59). Ghosh, being influenced by the Bosnian writer, Dzevad Karahasan refers to his essay, *Literature and War* which shows a connection between modern literary

aestheticism and the contemporary world's indifference to violence that perceiving everything literally as aesthetic phenomenon regardless of its truth and goodness is 'an artistic decision'. Karahasan thinks that this artistic decision started in the realm of art, but it gradually becomes the characteristics of the contemporary world. In November, 1984, Amitav Ghosh had an experience of the panorama of violence of which he gave an aesthetic shape in his novel, *The Shadow Lines*. "It became a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them." (*ITI* 59). Ghosh confesses that he is unable to write what he experiences, and even other writers cannot do so, because, according to him, writing what they experience is another means of adding inspiration to the problem and 'words cost lives' (*ITI* 59). Following Karahasan, Ghosh is of the view that mere presentation of detailed events of violence is a kind of 'indifference', instead of resisting the violence.

"The Slave of MS. H.6" appears as an essay in *Imam and The Indian*. These are Abraham Ben Yiju's letters which appeared in Hebrew journal *Zion* and which Ghosh translated from Judaeo-Arabic in 1991-92 when he was a fellow of Centre for the Study of Social Sciences in Kolkata. Abraham Ben Yiju was the twelfth-century North African merchant whose friend, Khalaf ibn Ishaq wrote a letter to him about his family. At the end of the letter, he mentioned briefly the slave of MS.H.6. Ghosh points out that the slave's second appearance occurred twenty-four years later in a collection of letters. Here, Khalaf ibn Ishaq presented a long list of household goods that Ben Yiju wished to send him to Mangalore. The slave is mentioned as "Yiju's slave and business agent, a respected member of his household" (*ITI* 171). Who is this unnamed slave? What is his relation with Ben Yiju? Why does most part of the letter not mention about the slave? — these are Ghosh's focus of research in the manuscripts of the Ganiza. A clue to the mystery of the slave's name is found in the

document which has a set of three consonants, B-M-H. The name of the slave is conceived of as ‘Bama’ or ‘Bamah’ who came into Ben Yiju’s service in the Malabar Coast. But another mystery is — where does he come from? It may be that he is brought from the slave markets of Africa or the Middle East or from the steppes of Asia. Multiple investigation and researches prove that the name Bamma was a common one in the twelfth century, at least in the region to the north-east of Mangalore. Wherever his origin may be, it is clear that the document speaks of the history of slavery and the unnamed slave plays an important role in Ben Yiju’s business. Ghosh’s research on the relationship between Ben Yiju and Bomma comes to such conclusion that their relation is beyond the relationship between a master and slave:

...slavery was the principal means of recruitment into some of the most privileged sectors of the army and the bureaucracy. For those who made their way up through that route, ‘slavery’ was thus often a kind of career opening, a way of gaining entry into the highest levels of government. (*ITI* 259-60)

Ghosh’s anthropological investigation into Egypt of which the product is *In An Antique Land* (1992), shows his obsession with having a distinct acquaintance with the life of the subalterns. It does not matter who Bomma is, but what matters most is the subaltern consciousness and the representation of the subaltern by the master and the ruling class. Ghosh himself faces some embarrassing questions by the Egyptian people about the Indian culture and customs. This book is a generic experiment which blends ‘an anthropological record with a travelogue, a diary, and perhaps some imagined sections’ (Hawley 89). It is a history in the guise of a traveller’s tale which is the subtitle of this narrative. Most of his writings are stories in the form of history. In an interview, Ghosh says about his novel — “within the parameters of history, I have tries to capture a story, a narrative, without

attempting to write a historical novel. You may say, as a writer, I have ventured on a technical innovation”(Dhawan 24). It is a product of his personal experience in Egypt, his deep observation to the surrounding, and his study of documents, books and factual records which are finally tinged with imagination. He is an outsider in a foreign country where he has gone for his research work. He projects himself as learned and having knowledge about the ancient and the present incidents of Egypt. But the inhabitants of Nashawy, being conservative Muslims, regard the non-Muslim culture and customs as odd and inferior. They act in such way as if he is an excluded and a marginalised person who generally remains ‘speechless’ before the powerful majority. Therefore, he feels that travelling and visiting a place is completely different from getting information from a document.

His travelling is not just for writing fiction, but his instinct drives him to know the real happenings of any event. On 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1998, five nuclear devices were tested at the Pokaran site. Some three months later Ghosh paid a visit to the site which has been mentioned in *Countdown*, a non-fictional piece. Here Ghosh states how Mr. Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister, was overjoyed and a part of the B.J.P’s members celebrated, danced and handed out sweetmeats on the streets. “There was talk of sending dust from the test site around the country so that they whole nation could partake in the glow of the blasts. Some of the B.J.P’s leaders were said to be thinking of building a monument at Pokaran, a ‘shrine of strength’ that could be visited by pilgrims” (*CD 2*). But Ghosh visited the villagers and came to know their shocking and terrible experience:

... on 11 May, they told me, at about noon a squad of soldiers had driven up and asked the villagers to move out of their houses to open ground. They guessed what was going to happen. They carried these out of doors and sat

them down in the sand, under the noonday sun. Then they sat under trees and waited. It was very hot. The temperature touched 48 degree centigrade.

(CD 4-5)

Ghosh's journalistic approach and his enquiry into the real incident from the people who were experiencing the incident helped him to find out the state and ideological policy of the ruling Govt. He expresses the hollowness of India's claim to be the greatest 'democratic' country. Different issues of democracy, nation and freedom are being questioned by him. He is astonished to know that even the villagers at Pokaran do not know what is going to happen at their place and what is the significance of this testing of nuclear devices. The rulers do not care whether the indigenous people were burnt in scorching summer sun; they do not care to take any public opinion from the native people of that place. The ruling party knows that the disaster and the break-down of houses and property can be compensated by giving them a small amount of money. The rulers never attach value to the opinions and suggestions of the indigenous people, on the contrary, they ascribe immense importance to the scientific and experimental views of some scientists and the defence mechanism of the soldiers of a squad. The ruling class ideology in every society in every age is the same i.e an exercise of domination by undermining the common mass in respect of knowledge, experience and culture. Though the common people are aware of the real situation, they have nothing to do against the ruling class instantly. This is manifested to us by the experience of a young man at Pokaran:

The only people who benefit from these tests are the politicians, said a young man. They bring no benefits to anyone else in the country ....This young man was very articulate and the elders had handed him the burden of the conversation. He was a villager himself, he said, but he held a clerical job and

his salary was paid by the government. He wouldn't give me his name and nor did I press him (CD 5).

The above passage makes us acknowledge the limitation of democracy and the position of an individual in the entire structure of democratic domain. Democracy gives an individual the freedom of speech, but in reality the individual's voice is throttled down. Even, the individual feels threatened to voice his/ her identity. Ghosh, at the beginning of the speech said that the young man was very articulate yet, at the end, he said, "He wouldn't give me his name and nor did I press him" (CD 5). Why did the young man not disclose his name? Because he knew that he was a Govt. employee and so he may fall prey to Government's anger. Though *Countdown* shows Ghosh's engagement with politics and encounter with political leaders and social activists for knowing history, "this book is a part of Ghosh's larger project to imagine a "moral" history: not a history of morality, but a moral way of imagining history" (Hawley 31). Ghosh's own response as a reaction to the question of whether or not a sense of political engagement accompanies his sense of history is clear in the speech — "A lot of the people I had to meet in order to write *Countdown* were horrible, as was the subject itself" (Hawley 30-31)

Ghosh, himself being an Indian, knows how politics and ruling party at every level of Indian society control lives of the individuals. In response to Lila Azam Zanganeh's question of role of political quest in the creation of fiction, Ghosh says:

I think all important writing comes out of some sort of passionate engagement with the world around it. ... I mean, I think you know the political world is very important. And that's also a part of being Indian. Whenever I'm in India, just growing up in India, half your conversations are political, as it must be with Iranians. (*Guernica*).

In Indian social system, politics and political leaders dominate every sphere of human life. According to Ghosh, the Partition, Morichjhanpi incident, Maoists insurgency and Singur-Nandigram revolt are all related to politics and to literature as well. To him, all these incidents are similar in so many ways. He said, “Here, you have this party claiming to be the party of the dispossessed, actually savagely turning upon the dispossessed. So, you know, it’s a strange sort of swansongs for a certain kind of Stalinist left’’. (Nandini Krishnan’s Blog)

Ghosh later met Asma Jahangir, Pakistan’s leading Human Right lawyer and a legend among democratic activists of the world. Asma talked to Ghosh about the difference of perceptions of India and Pakistan. According to Asma, Indian scientists seem to believe that they should encourage the testing of nuclear devices in order to have a prestigious position in the world. She thinks that Indian people are more rational than the Pakistanis and they try to assert their identity as a nation:

India is a very large country. India has political ambitions in the region. Ours is a smaller country, but because of our past history of being aligned with the U.S.A and the policies we have had a hand in, we have got used to having an influence. We’ve got used to a strategy where we like to be seen as a very influential country. Then there is a problem of perception. India wants to push if South Asian identity; Pakistan wants a South Asian identity and yet does not want it. It wants to leave the door open to an identity as a Middle Eastern Country ...” (CD 59).

According to Asma, the political leaders of both the countries are retaining their animosity between them. As the political decision is made for particular political purpose, not for the betterment of political environment, the political leaders are irrational. The people of both the countries are easily deceived by the political ideology of the leaders, and, in this way enmity

increases. “We have this whole emotionalism of jihad against each other – on our part it is jihad; on your part there is a lobby that will never accept the existence of Pakistan” (*CD 61-62*).

In her humanist view, Asma is like Ghosh, as both the social activists believe that in decision-making, the voice of common people is not heard; even the view of ordinary man/woman is not allowed to be voiced. It is palpably clear what she really means. She means that the leaders do not want to think of the basic needs of common people:

Our decision-making is done by a few opinion-makers on both sides. It's not the ordinary woman living in a village in Bihar whose voice is going to be heard, who is going to say, for God's sake I don't want this nuclear bomb, I want my cow and milk for my children. She is nowhere, she doesn't figure anywhere. It worries me. (*CD 62*)

Asma, a Human Right lawyer is aware of the real social, political and economic situation of the countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Ghosh is very much aware of the lacuna in the Indian democratic set-up. His love for his motherland urges him to voice against these injustices and falsities.”We talk of India being a democracy and this and that. But within this area, people cannot actually exercise their democratic rights. They have no property rights, they have no democratic rights” (Krishnan's Blog). Ghosh wants the Indian writers to be voicing against the imperialist ideological policies and the newer version of imperialism designed by the rulers and the West. In an interview with Lila Azam, Ghosh expressed his experience when he wrote in *The New Yorker* in March 2003 against the U.S imperialist venture on Iraq, but after a week, the authority wanted him to change his writing completely. The authority wrote a paragraph of its own argument and sent it to him. Ghosh said, “They



dictated a paragraph to me and said we want you to put this in” (*Guernica*). The argument what they put forth was indicative of their view of imperialism:

The modern connotations of the word ‘empire’ also show how the context of imperialism has changed. For many, especially in America, it is a reminder of an image that played a significant part in discrediting the Soviet Union: the ‘evil empire’. This is not a purely rhetorical anxiety; the unease goes deeper than that. A substantial proportion of America’s population remains unconvinced of the need to undertake a new version of a ‘civilizing mission’. This is what distinguishes America from the imperial nations of the past. (*Guernica*)

This is an alarming signal for to the people of the contemporary world of which Ghosh is well aware. Ghosh knows the constant tendency of the imperialist rulers to whitewash the burden of the imperial past of the colonized country. Ghosh’s role is instrumental in bringing out the real motive of the imperialist rulers in deceiving the intellectual persons. As a case study, we can cite the incident that propels the writer to reject the ‘Commonwealth Writers Prize’, as he smelt some motives of the Administrators of Commonwealth Writers’ Prize.

According to him, the term ‘Commonwealth Literature’ is a misnomer because it excludes many other languages that sustain the cultural lives of some countries and it prioritizes only the writings of English language and writers belonging to a region that was ruled by Imperial Britain. He realises the reasons by which a book’s merit is judged and he cannot accept these purposes. He also expresses that athletes would have his grudges “It is surely inconceivable, for example, that athletes would have to be fluent in English in order to qualify for the Commonwealth Games. Moreover, the term ‘commonwealth’ refers to the disputed aspect of the past. Therefore, this is also a kind of remembrance and tribute to the

British Imperialism which the authorities would not allow the countries to forget”. (Ghosh’s letter to Administrators of Commonwealth Writers Prize)

By withdrawing his novel, *The Glass Palace* (2000) from the Eurasia regional winner for the 2001 Commonwealth Writers Prize, he came in direct conflict with the Administrators of Commonwealth Writers’ Prize. Time and again, he asserts his views and does not hesitate to express himself in the face of imperialist ideology and rulers. In relation to the Commonwealth Literature, Ghosh refers to the role of language in perpetuating power structure. Knowledge of language is the most important for an intimate knowledge of a culture sincerely. Without knowing the language the culture cannot be known truly.

As a response to the question of the role of language in writing Indian novels, Ghosh views that “Location is important. But I think much more important than location actually is language. For example, the idea that what you see increasingly nowadays, of say Englishman, or English Indians living in India, writing about India without knowing the language, or any of the languages, it just seems so odd to me. I mean I think language is much more important than location” (*Guernica*). The important thing about Indian language is that India is not one place. In Indian nation state, there are many Indias where diverse cultures and languages exist side by side with complete reconciliation. According to Ghosh, one of the wonderful things about being Indian is that it gives one a ‘wonderful chameleon-like quality’. “Any statement you make about India, whatever you say, the opposite is also true!” (*Guernica*). This is a liberal stance of Indian society where a diverse culture exists peacefully and there is hardly any clash between grand narrative and meta-narratives. Ghosh himself was influenced by the ‘huge Indian family’. The stories of Indian people and families are the theme of Indian fictions.

This is the ‘story telling’ method which brings a direct link to the past and a close intimacy with the people. Most of India’s influence on the world comes through stories. Even many of the *Arabian Nights* and Aesop’s *Fables* come from Indian stories. According to Ghosh, of all Indian literatures, Bengali literature exerts the most powerful influence and makes a distinct position because the Bengali storytelling voice is a very inviting and warm voice. Ghosh confesses “I don’t really know how to explain it to you but it’s a very intimate voice which invites you into the story. And whenever I get struck in my work, I always try to listen to that voice”( *Guernica*). The important thing about the Bengali story telling voice is that this voice is very easy and comfortable to attract common mass and its approach is very straightforward. But, it performs a deliberate subversion of the ‘grand historical narrative’ through a domestic vision and it creates simply a space in which we can make our connections. Therefore, this story telling mode is very innocent in its face value, but it performs an anti-establishment job in its own way.

Ghosh prefers the artist’s power of observation to life. He loves Satyajit Ray’s films because they reflect human feelings, and emotion of daily life in a vivid way. Ghosh’s interest in science-fiction and his interest in history are shaped and influenced by Ray. “His films had a profound effect on me. I think they formed my way of looking at things” ( Bose 216). Regarding *Kshudhito Pashan* (*The Hunger of Stone*, as translated by Ghosh), the translation published in *Desh* in 1998, Amitav Ghosh opines “As an allegory of the colonial condition, it is a work of extraordinary suggestive power and atmospheric richness. I finished the translation shortly before I began writing *The Calcutta Chromosome* and it was to have a profound influence on that novel, as well as its successor, *The Glass Palace*” (Acknowledgement written by Ghosh in *ITI*, xii) .

Amitav Ghosh, the relentless seeker of human perception, is always interested in explaining the individuals and the predicaments of the individuals. His keen interest is to acknowledge the truth of life for which he travels a lot and studies voraciously various journals, chronicles and historical records. He excels in presenting history in the form of human story. If we subscribe to the Marxist view that every text comes out of some ideological concerns/engagements, Ghosh's novels may prove to be an interesting site for it. The ideology of Ghosh's writings as manifested in his non-fictional writings partakes chiefly of different 'realities' of life and deception and exploitation of common people by the ruling class and the dominant structures of power. As his pieces of work speak to the world, they are directly linked with socio-political reality of the world. Ghosh, being a novelist, aims at something more profound and creates a better and sweeter world beyond the appearance of things which are happening in reality in the present time. Ideology of each of his fictions is so solid and coherent that each novel attains the shape of 'historical reality' more by his creative imagination than by his fidelity to fact. His presentation of characters, and story elements in the novels provide the readers with a transparent and comprehensive vision of reality. Literary or narrative form, in this respect, helps in presenting the ideology of the text in case of Amitav Ghosh. Ghosh's fictional world and non-fictional world are not two water-tight compartments. The Ghosh of history, fiction and ideology is the same as the Ghosh of non-fiction. Hawley's comment sounds similar to the view, "Outside the world of fiction, ...Amitav Ghosh is heavily engaged in the political and cultural wars that shape a postcolonial and globalised world" (Hawley 45).

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## CHAPTER IV

### **Amitav Ghosh's Novels and Interplay of Ideologies**

Human perceptions and consciousness cannot be constructed independent of the effects and forces of society, though it is conceived of as private and independent creation by the individuals. To use the terms by Louis Althusser, ideology is the imaginary version of human existence. The mechanism of ideology creates such an impact on every individual that the individual begins to think himself/herself as free and independent being. Althusser argues, “one of the effects of ideology is the practical ‘denegation’ of the ideological character of ideology by ideology” (Althusser 49). Writers are aware of the intriguing nature of ideological structure of language, discourse, structure of text and fiction. The body of the texts produced by Amitav Ghosh questions the traditional notion regarding the equivalence of ‘fiction’ to the ‘unreal’ and that of ‘history’ to the ‘truth’ and by sticking to that position his novels try to partake of some postmodernist preoccupations. That the opposite of what is true can also be true, is the opinion of Ghosh in every branch of knowledge. Anshuman A. Mondal pointed out in the similar fashion :

In the case of history, in particular, Ghosh shares the postmodern disavowal of ‘universal’ historical narratives that encode ideas about modernity, development and progress, focusing instead on those ‘fragments’ of human experience that have been occluded from the historical record, and which find no place in such grand design. (Mondal 21)

The postmodern concept of ‘history’ includes the idea that ‘fragments’ of human experiences which find no place in the so-called traditional historical record constitute the ‘history’. Most of Ghosh’s novels give recognition to the unheard and unrecorded version of

history through fictionalised forms and each novel shows how different ideologies work in each version of history.

### **Ideology-Fiction Interplay in *The Shadow Lines* (1988) :**

In this section, our purpose is to examine how ideologies of different characters in *The Shadow Lines* influence the narrative structure and events; how individual ideology clashes with the ideology of the nation, and how the clash of two different ideologies results in an unenviable experience in the life of the individual. An attempt is purposed to examine how the organic structure of *The Shadow Lines* and its ideology of time, space, border, nation, identity, memory and reality lead to create an ultimate aesthetic effect. In *The Shadow Lines*, the novelist's purpose is not merely to present the traumatic experiences of Partition, war, or communal violence, but to draw readers' pity or sympathy to the tragic heroes who become the victims of the communal or racial riot. Here, Ghosh's purpose is to discard the illusive views on nation, nationality and identity under the garb of an old theme of partition and nationalism. Therefore, Ghosh does not touch the nationalist ideological technique which novels like *Train To Pakistan*, *Ice Candy Man*, *Azadi*, *Sunlight on A Broken Column*, *Dark Dancer* or *A Bend in the Ganges* have already touched upon in presenting social realism.

In Althusserian notion, ideology is that form of art which helps in 'seeing', 'feeling', and 'perceiving' the reality to which the novel or art tries to allude. In *The Shadow Lines*, the novelist builds up a national ideology through non-nationalist ideological technique. At this juncture, literary form is important to mould the ideological content of the novel, as



literary form and ideological content are interdependent to each other. The literary form used by the artist helps in choosing the characters, setting, and mode of the text.

Ghosh uses in *The Shadow Lines* the first person narrative through an unnamed narrator in presenting the incidents covering the past and present reality. The question is — why does he use the ‘I’ narrative when usually third person narration is used by earlier writers in presenting the traditional theme of war, riot, partition and so on? Here, the novelist’s purpose is to show the narrator’s mental growth, changing philosophical views, revelation of identity and nation within a particular national and social setting with the influence of some incidents and characters of his family. The unnamed narrator’s ideology of life and the world is being influenced by the ideology of Thamma and Tridib. He seems to be equated with the individual inexperienced readers who, like the narrator, undergo the same insightful perceptions and experiences that the narrator does. Moreover, it is clearly noted that as the narrator is the youngest of his family members, each incident relating to his family is unknown to him; so he becomes acquainted with each national and familial incident with the help of his elders — either from grandmother, father, mother, Tridib or from May Price, Robi, or from newspaper reportings. Therefore, the actual happenings come to his consciousness through memory, invention and imagination of others. Tridib once told the narrator that “We could not see without inventing what we saw, so at least we could try to do it properly ... we had to try because the alternative wasn’t blankness — it only meant that if we didn’t try ourselves, we could never be free other people’s inventions” (SL 31). Therefore, it is not any official/ western version of history which creates the ideology of nationalism, rather it is a narrative of questioning this recorded version of history that moulds this ideology of nationalism. As the most part of the narrative depends on the memoirs of different characters, it adopts stream-of-consciousness technique and

fragmented psychological narrative intermingled with several linear narrative, stories, stories-within-a story, newspaper reportings of public events. The total effect of this complete narrative technique helps in dismantling the traditional concept of nation and national identity.

If nationalism promotes the idea of freedom and sovereignty of one's own country, devotion to the material resources, cultural heritage, and passion for sharing common interest of the community, Thamma of the narrator represents the concept of nationalism. Thamma's concept of nationalism is presented as a complete contrast to Tridib's concept of nation and in this way, the novelist tries to prove Thamma's concept to be wrong as her illusion ultimately leads her to death. Thamma's questions regarding the fundamentals of her idea of nationalism assert that she is being disillusioned :

But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then ? And if there's no difference both the sides will be the same: it'll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta... (SL 151)

The essence of the concept of a 'nation', as the West projected it, lies in differentiating itself from others. The idea of a nation sustains itself by emphasising the difference rather than similarity with the geographical neighbours. The 'difference' that Thamma wants to find out between the regions after the partition and after 'crossing the border' is not an exceptional expectation even from ordinary common people who, like Thamma, also nurture the same ideology of nationalism. It is not only ignorance, but the common consciousness of mind that the readers expect some different administrative rules, different social rituals, customs and languages in another nation. It is not the fault or ignorance of the common people, it is

a part of the ideology of nationalism and nation-formation that in the time of constructing nation through narrative discourse, nationalist ideology tries to impose a homogeneous concept of national tradition, history, culture, language etc and expect the whole population to subscribe to it. Therefore, the signifiers of homogeneity deliberately used by the national leaders, politicians, press, media, and other state apparatuses create a sense of ‘oneness’; in another way, they form a feeling and sense of ‘difference’ from the culture and tradition of neighbouring country. By creating this myth of ‘nationhood’ masked by ideology, the dominant ruling class of the nation actually serves double purposes —

- by denying and negating the diversity of the indigenous national community, the ruling class tries to consolidate the unity, fraternity and sovereignty.
- by creating a nationalist spirit and patriotic zeal, it tries to build up a resistance to the threat of violating sovereignty and freedom of nation.

Therefore, it is clear that Thamma is a mere puppet in the hands of nationalist ideology and, we, the common people think rarely different from Thamma. Ghosh’s purpose is to deliver a severe blow to it and that is why, he creates characters like Thamma, Tridib and the unnamed narrator. In this trio- relationship, the narrator is the mediator, positioned in the middle state, who ‘sees’, ‘hears’, ‘feels’ and ‘understands’ from both of his superiors since his childhood, but in his adult stage, he realises who/what is true. Three different ideologies motivate the novelist to create three different types of characters for his fictional purpose.

- Thamma’s notion of nation and national identity is formed by fundamental national ideology which prones to deceive an individual in such critical situations in the life of nation as communal riots, partition, civil war within a nation. So, the fictional character of Thamma, is the creation of that ideological purpose.

- Tridib is the fictional product of the ‘alternative’ concept of the fundamental ideology of the nation. He has the insight, intellect and emotion to rise above the traditional concept of life, and nation. Tridib, not only ‘imagines’ his own ‘community’, but also ‘imagines’, and ‘feels’ the spirit, attitude, rituals, customs on the globe. Tridib has the belief that desire can carry one beyond “the limits of one’s mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one’s image in the mirror” (SL 29). Therefore, it is clear that Tridib believes in the ideology of universalism and ideology of humanism which stand as a threat to the parochial concept of nationalism which limits itself within the boundary of land. “Most critics have seen Tridib as either a figure of abstract cosmopolitanism, an advocate of a universal and transcendent liberal humanism, or an equally cosmopolitan postmodernist. Either way, he represents a position that is critical of nationalism” (Mondal 92). Tridib, therefore, represents a particular kind of ideology which is “a critique of nationalism on the one hand, and an affiliation to a particular kind of nationalism on the other” (Mondal 93).
- The narrator, as a child is placed in grandmother’s acquaintance. Thamma being a school teacher and practical woman, exercised her authoritative matriarchal rules and regulations within her family. On the other hand, the narrator, from his age of eight, starts to be familiar with Tridib, because Tridib attracts every listener surrounding him with his extensive knowledge of the world. Therefore, the narrator is placed within two divergent views of using time and its significance in life. He is positioned between two opposite ideological strains — Thamma’s clearly defined world of morality, values, goals and labour, and Tridib’s imaginative view of seeing

and travelling-place mentally by researching, reading and extending knowledge and sharing views through ‘addas’. The narrator is placed in an in-between-space of two contradictory ideological worlds, because, the novelist’s purpose is to situate the narrator in a situation of contradiction in life and to observe the individual’s attempt for searching the truth to be triumphant in life defending falsity, restrains, superstitious beliefs in which the society tries to bog him down. The narrator, like all individuals, is baffled and affected by the affectations of Nick and Ila in his childhood. But the novelist shows the way the narrator attains maturity in thought being influenced by Tridib’s philosophy. “Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eye to see them with” — it is the imaginative vision and insight which is opened up by Tridib, who helps him realising the truth of life — “all identity is imaginary”. Language, discourse and narrative are important factors in the construction of individual identity.

The novelist has endowed the unnamed narrator with simplicity and transparency and he, according to Meenakshi Mukherjee:

...lets different persons, events, places luminously enter his story, and find new configurations there; or, altering the metaphor it is possible to see the narrator’s consciousness as a porous space that absorbs other lives and other experiences until their colours leak into each other to reveal a pattern which ever metaphor is chosen, the narrator remains not only the ‘large lucid reflector’ but also the agentive site where random shards of memory are realigned towards some measure of coherence (Mukherjee 140).

The novelist creates the unnamed narrator's character in such a way that he can experience two contrary realities. One reality which is politically recognised is that there exists a fixed land-demarcation of each country, so there must exist a boundary between India and Bangladesh. But the eternal reality is that there is no dividing line as such, because in mental mapping (or on memory of human beings), there is no dividing line. Lines are drawn only to be effaced, structures are formed only to be destructured. Hence, multiplicity of meanings and plurality of thoughts, beliefs and views come within the purview of our knowledge.

What the novelist tries to prove is not anything new, but the way he tries to assert it, is innovative, in the sense that there is an innate structural contradiction in the fiction. The whole narrative is manipulated by a narrator who himself is inexperienced in the world of reality, but the narrator, on the other hand, is controlled by his 'memory' of his family members. Sometimes he himself cannot remember some incidents; then, he tries to fill these gaps with guessing and imagination. "I didn't mind particularly" (5), "Over the years, although I cannot remember...(3), "I could not remember him" (3) — these are several statements found present in the fiction. Yet, it is surprising to note that 'memory' is the single narrative device used here, through which the narrator shows his growth, revelation and maturity through conflict in ideological views.

Memory is a loose, fluid and shapeless kind of construct. It cannot be bound into some shape and structure. But the novelist seems to establish an ideology resulting from the conflict of two different ideologies which are systematic and organized in construct, and which work through the technical device of memory. Though the device is memory, the narrative appears to the readers completely authentic, sincere and real. It becomes possible only because the novelist matches the setting, characters, and narrative structure with the

desired ideology and nowhere in the fiction, it appears incoherent. Everything runs parallel to ideology. According to Chhote Lal Khatri,

The recurrent images of maps, charts, of journey, of house not only carry multiple layers of meaning but also help to give organic structure to the narrative. Movement of time back and forth and intrusions do not make the narrative less compact or cohesive. There is no loose string in the novel. Every digression is related to the main plot. (Bhatt and Nityanandam 105)

Some digressive episodes which strike the readers most are Ila, Tridib and the narrator's journey to Tridib's grandfather's house at Raibazar, Ila's hiding in a mysterious musty large room and playing 'house-house' with the narrator and their amazement on finding out a large wooden table. Primarily they appear to be digressive, but they are also integral parts of the main narrative structure. This serves the novelist's purpose of informing the readers about Ila's awkward psychology in enjoying the mysterious dark place, Ila's chance of introducing Nick to the narrator and glorifying Nick's physical beauty to the narrator. This entire episode is important and consistent in the sense that the novelist tries to reveal a sense of spiritual and mental intimacy and union among the people living in Calcutta and London and a psychological impact of one individual on the others. Therefore, it merges with the fictional purpose of exposing ideology of universalism. At the same time, it serves the narrator's purpose of presenting familial history which is to be discovered through narratives by the familial members; otherwise the larger version of the familial history i.e the national history will also be lost.

Therefore, it is clear from *The Shadow Lines* that the aesthetic effect of the text depends on the perfect balance of literary form, ideological content and historical reality.

The aesthetic perfection comes only when the fictional characters, settings and narrative structure serve the aim and purpose of the fictional ideology. An attempt has been made in the above section to expose how the structure of the novel woven by the novelist aiming at the ideology of nation and nationalism creates true senses of historical realities. So far as the presentation of characters, mainly the character of the protagonist of *The Shadow Lines* is concerned, the process of change and growth that take place in the unnamed character's life is actually evolved as participation of and engagement with the ideological structure through memory and imagination. The traditional concept of time and space gets questioned by the artist's presentation of memory and imagination and by the artist's awareness of realities which are revealed through different incidents, characters and settings to make it a perfect work of art.

### **Ideology-Fiction Interplay in *The Glass Palace* (2000) :**

Though Ghosh himself recognised *The Glass Palace*, as “wholly fictional world” (*GP* 549) we, the readers know very well that Ghosh's novel cannot be detached from historical or anthropological contents. With reference to the *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh wrote in “Author's Notes”:

The seed of this book was brought to India long before my own lifetime by my father and my uncle, the late Jagat Chandra Dutta of Rangoon and Moulmein ... By the time I started work on this book, the memories they had handed on to me had lost their outlines, surviving often only as patterns of words, moods, texture. In attempting to write about places and times that I knew only at



second-and third-hand, I find myself forced to create a parallel, wholly fictional world. *The Glass Palace* is thus unqualifiedly a novel and I can state without reservation that except for King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat and their daughters, none of its principal characters bear any resemblance to real people, living or deceased. (GP 549)

It is right that other principal characters may not have the direct resemblance to the characters of that place, time or history, but these individuals are placed in such a historical situation of time and place, that they do not seem completely fictional ones, rather they are very perfectly situated to and matched with the ‘patterns’, ‘moods’, and ‘texture’ of history and ideology of Burmese economy, politics and culture.

*The Glass Palace*, is based on the political history of Burma from 1880s onwards. The fiction incorporates, within its body, the historical and fictional qualities in such an organic and integrated way that fictional elements also sometimes seem to be historical ones. Moreover, the novelist, with a perfect balance, matches the ideology of the two completely different worlds — the fictional and the historical. The exploitative ideology which the British colonisers superimposed on Burma and the Burmese people is also maintained by the Royal Thebaw family on the people of the country. The same ideological relation is applied in the relationship of the fictional characters between Ma Cho and Raj Kumar, Ma Cho and Saya John, Rajkumar and Dolly, Dinu and Allison, Neel and Manju. But the two mostly affected intellectuals, Beni Prasad Dey, the district collector, and Arjun, the British Indian Army soldier, fail to come out of their individual ‘selves’ which are moulded by the ruling class ideology. They are entrapped in the snare of the duality in colonisers’ ideology. These two characters are the fictional versions of the system or the pattern of colonial ideology.

For the historical sources, Ghosh is indebted mainly to Walter A. Desai's *Deposed King Thebaw of Burme in India, 1885-1916*. The Burmese history says that King Mindon, in many ways a model ruler, was the father of King Thebaw who himself was an ineffectual king. After the death of King Mindon, Thebaw, the junior prince, killing his elders, came to the throne, but he felt insecure in his position from his rivals. Fourteen brothers and four sisters, together with sixty one other relatives met their deaths over a four day period of February 1879 by the order of Queen Supayalat, the wife of Thebaw. The queen was very cruel and tyrannical. When she lifted up her finger, the whole city trembled. There was the breakdown of the relationship with the British who set up a new regime so as to control his people and foreigners in similar way. The indigenous people set up a blockaded at Residency and evidence was witnessed regarding the massacre of the inhabitants. Thibaw was defeated, Mandalay was conquered and looted. King Thibaw and his family involuntarily migrated to India. This is the Burmese Royal history which the novel narrates within it. Ghosh in his *The Glass Palace*, has delineated this Burmese history in detail in fictionalised form. But what is the need of narrating such historical detail for the fictional purpose? Why did the narrator place these fictional characters and their activities in the Burmese Royal historical setting? The narrator's purpose is to show how both imperialist ideology of the British colonizers and the ruling-class ideology of the Royal family try to drain out the individuals' independent selves and make them subject people. Both fictional elements and historical elements are merged and mingled together, because one is dependent on the other logically and both serve the single purpose of presenting the spiritual and psychological dilemma of individuals by the ideology of the dominant power group. An attempt is made to see how ideology of the ruling class determines most important conditions of the text and simultaneously how that ideology is questioned by the fictional incidents through — (a) selection of the characters, and (b) setting of the text.

**(a) Selection of the characters:** In the novel, *The Glass Palace*, characters are chosen according to the central argument of the text. The central focus of the text is to bring out how individuals are turned to 'subject people' by the influence of the dominant ideological state apparatuses when the individuals remain in illusion that they are free and independent in selves. The novelist creates in this novel two sets of characters — (i) Characters who realise the hegemonic control of the imperialist rulers on the individuals and directly challenge this hegemonic influence, and (ii) Characters, being moulded by the illusive influence of ideology, fail to survive in reality, (they fail because they are spiritually crippled by the clash between two opposed ideological strains).

**(i) Characters defying the Ideological influence of the rulers:** Queen Supayalat in this novel is such a character who plays the dual role of the ruler and the ruled; the roles of the dominant and the dominated. As a ruler, she knows the secrets of the ruling ideology for perpetuating power by regulating the ideological state apparatuses. When the news of the first Princess's pregnancy without a licensed marriage is brought to the notice of the Empire's agent, Beni Prasad Dey, his instant reaction against it perfectly fits in with the ruling ideology that it is an unethical, immoral and a scandalous act for the royal family. But the reality is that the conception without a legal marriage hints at the violation of law and legal system, and further, flouts the dominance of the rulers. So, the 'appearance' of this ideology is illusive, in the sense that it poses itself in the form of morality; but the Queen is quite aware of the spurious appearance of this ideology. The Queen, who was earlier a ruler, realises the mechanism of the ruling class ideology and so, she keeps herself free from the mental set up of colonised servitude. She spits venom against the exploitative nature of dominant class as she could not enjoy liberty to her heart's content. She challenges the ruling ideology face to face:

There is no ‘scandal’ in what my daughter has done. The ‘scandal’ lies in what you have done to us; in the circumstances to which you have reduced us; in our very presence here. What did my daughters ever do, collector-sahib, that they should have to spend their lives in this prison? Did they commit a crime? Were they tried or sentenced? We have heard so many lectures from you and your colleagues on the subject of the barbarity of the Kings of Burma and the humanity of the Angrez; we were tyrants you said, enemies of freedom, murderers. The English alone understand liberty, we were told; they do not put kings and princes to death; they rule through laws. If that is so, why has King Thebaw never been brought to trial? Where are these laws that we hear of? Is it a crime to defend your country against an invader? Would the English not do the same? (*GP* 150)

It is clear from the Queen’s speech above that she does not fall into the pattern of the ruling ideology, and she keeps her individual self intact. That this is the main argument in the fiction is clear in the recurrence of this argument by other characters also.

Ghosh has intentionally chosen the character of Uma as the wife of Beni Prasad Dey. The ideology for which Mr. Dey gets shattered mentally and falls into psychological dilemma and commits suicide, makes Uma popular and respectable to the Indian Nationalists. In defence of the same ideology, Uma emerges to be a social and intellectual activist after the death of her husband. Her living with her husband who is a govt. employee does not provide her with adequate space for her individual intellect to flourish. When she tries to make Dolly conscious of her own life at the time of living at Residency, we see that Uma herself is conscious of the ruler’s ideological policy of which even her husband is not quite conscious. Uma, time and again, urges Dolly to leave the queen’s family: “The life

you've known at Outram House will end. Dolly, you've got to leave while you can. You are free to go: You alone are here of your own will" (*GP* 119). We see Dolly is a born Servant and her obsequious attitude is inherent in her nature. Had Uma not been with Dolly, Dolly would not have come out of the trap of the Royal Queen and married Rajkumar. Uma expresses the same view to Mrs Dutt, "How was it possible to imagine that one could grant freedom by imposing subjugation? That one could open a cage by pushing it inside a bigger cage? How could any section of a people hope to achieve freedom where the entirety of a populace was held in subjection?"(*GP* 189)

**(ii) Characters moulded by the illusive influence of Imperial Ideology :**

Ghosh has created in this novel another type of characters who prove to be the victims of the imperial project. Beni Prasad Dey, the collector-sahib, and Arjun, the soldier, fail to come out of their selves which are formulated by the socio-ideological structure. They cannot free themselves from their 'acquired' selves. Mr.Dey thinks highly of his career because of his English education in England and his attachment to the English. His wife, Uma regards the collector as, 'a man of great intelligence and ability who happened to have been born into a circumstance that could not offer him an appropriate avenue for the fulfilment of his talents' (*GP* 186). His tragic fate does not provide him with an appropriate 'job' and a 'fitting' wife — 'To live with a woman as an equal, in spirit and intellect'. The collector has such a 'racial' prejudice that he thinks, a woman with 'equal spirit' and 'intellect' is 'not yet possible, not here, in India, not for us' (*GP* 173). He segregates a keen sense of 'Indianness' from his personal identity, yet his public position contradicts his personal ideology. He is trapped within himself as much by the circumstances of colonial dependency as by his personal ideology of 'Indianness'. The colonial Government has given him position, not power; even he is always 'haunted by the fear of being thought

lacking by his British colleagues'(GP 186). Therefore, the English rules, rituals, and etiquette and above all the coloniser's ideology by which he builds up his life, give neither honour in 'British colleagues' nor peace and satisfaction in his marital life. That he is a tragic self is clear to the Queen, — Collector Sahib, Sawant is less a servant than you. At least, he has no delusions about his place in the world' (GP 150). So, Mr.Dey finds no way out.

The ethical dilemmas in Arjun as a soldier lie in his ideological core. His shift from a loyal colonial subject to a rebel soldier is a step leading him to truth. After joining the Indian Military Academy he feels happy and thinks himself as 'the first modern Indian', but the situation gets problematized when his notion proves to be false. For instance, Hardayal Singh, his friend in the battalion, is punished, because of his disliking for 'English' food and preference for 'dal-roti', which he used to eat somewhere in the town. Arjun is befooled by the duplicity of coloniser's ideology. What Arjun cannot realise, is easily understood by Dinu. "The English lived in their own enclaves and followed their own pursuits : most of the day-to-day tasks of ruling were performed by Indians (GP 279). Dinu realises it well that Indians are servants who work under the British Govt. The complexity in Arjun occurs because the colonial ideology makes him think about his superiority among the native Indian masses on the one hand, and makes him feel his 'mercenary' role under the British Govt on the other. In Singapore, Arjun and his friends found that 'they were often mistaken for coolies'; they were called 'just hired killers'. Hardayal accepts this truth easily, but Arjun cannot, because he is the victim who falls in the trap of coloniser's ideology. The British colonisers retain colonialism in the name of protection and promising freedom through befooling the so-called 'educated', upper-class young people in India, while in reality they deny freedom. This duality in colonisers' ideology acts as a safeguard to colonialism.

**(b) Setting of the Text :**

The setting of *The Glass Palace* revolves around three erstwhile British colonies — Burma, India and Malaya. But why does Ghosh choose Burma as the central setting of the novel? In a non-fictional article, *At Large in Burma*, Ghosh puts forward his idea of Burma which he borrowed from his aunt and uncle. Ghosh learns a lot from their knowledge about Burma. His uncle said, “It was a golden land. The richest country in Asia except for Japan. There are no people on earth to compare with the Burmese — so generous, so hospitable, so kind, so strangers. No one goes hungry in Burma : you just have to ask and someone will feed you” (*GP* 59). So, this is Burma in Ghosh’s knowledge and he wants to observe what it turns out to be after the British colonialism in Burma. We find the same observation in the speech of Queen Supaylat that Burma being the reservoir of such natural resources as ‘gems’, ‘timber’, and ‘oil’, the Britishers and other foreigners come and make the best use of all the resources there. The result of imperial invasion on Burma is so drastic that even the common masses can realise the derogatory effect :

Fifty years earlier, Burma had been the most developed country in the region, with an impressive agricultural surplus and a superabundance of natural resources — oil, timber, minerals. It had been an important petroleum industry, a highly educated population, almost universal adult literacy... Now it was one of the most impoverished countries in the world’s fastest developing region... (*DC* 60)

The discovery of a writer’s intention is very important in analysing a literary work as a mirror of specific values of a particular period or social, political or cultural milieu, as the author’s own attitude performs a very crucial part in upholding reality. Here, Ghosh has

deliberately exercised his control over the characters and settings, as his chief aim is to expose the evils and dark facets of colonialism. In *The Glass Palace*, Amitav Ghosh shifts Rajkumar, an orphan, poor, helpless boy of eleven, from the port of Chittagong (then in Undivided India) to Malaya city. Circumstances have brought him to the port of Irrawady as a Khalsi's apprentice. He may have gone to any other country, but the novelist through chances and coincidences brought him to Burma in order to show him economically developing gradually by taking the advantages of the economy of the British colonialism. The colonizers use the land of Malaya and Burma and the labour of the Indian coolies and workers for plantation and business. People like Saya John and Rajkumar take advantage of the British plantation. Saya John, by his power of foresightedness, comes to know:

...land and labour were what a planter needed most; seed and saplings were easily to be had. And of the two principal necessities, land was the easier to come by: of labour there was already a shortage. The British colonial Govt. was looking to India to supply coolies and workers for the plantation ...

(*GP* 183)

As Rajkumar is selected by the company as a contractor for supplying railway slipper, he needs coolies, raftsmen, agents, and assistants to provide thousands of ton of teak. He starts business by hiring coolies from the remote villages of India by offering a minimal amount of money. It is a transportation of indentured labourers and Rajkumar acts as a master. Gradually he becomes a successful merchant in Burma. So it is natural for him to convince that in the absence of British Empire, Burma's economy will collapse. The problem that Rajkumar faces is that living in Burma and having a prosperous life because of Burma's natural resources, and engaging Indian coolies and labourers, Rajkumar actually exploits the



land of Burma. Here, Rajkumar is just a representative of colonizers, but the life of Rajkumar, and his struggle in life create in us a sympathetic outlook to judge him. That the Indian people are enemies to the Burmese people is clear to the “Royal Proclamation”, issued under the Burmese King’s signature announcing that:

To the Royal subjects and inhabitants of the Royal Empire : those heretics, the barbarian English Kalaas having most harshly made demands calculated to bring about the impairment and destruction of our religion, the violation of our national traditions and customs, and the degradation of our race, are making a show and preparation as if about to wage war with our state. (*GP* 15)

This is another side of the same coin where the Burma’s king realises how the ‘English Kalaas’ [Indians] are doing harm for a sovereign country like Burma. Here both the historical and the fictional purposes merge proportionately into single ideology of domination and power politics.

Rajkumar’s emergence into success and position presents the ideology of common man’s success of life defying the ideology of the rulers. *The Glass Palace* presents a story of the displacement of kings and queens by the commoners, though it is a product of the history of the kings. It manifests the journey of an ordinary marginalized common man, Rajkumar whose life is affected by socio-political and historical events of the world, yet who, instead of succumbing the oddities of life, rises to the pinnacle of success by his never-say-die spirit and his will to survive. His prudence and shrewdness in challenging and competing with the ideological policy of the British colonizers help in the success of his business life. He, taking labourers from Indian villages, engaged them in the rubber plantation and earned money.

Ghosh speaks for Rajkumar as a product of a new, turn-of-the-twentieth-century era. Ghosh's view is:

That's right. You saw so many of those figures in that period, you know — people who pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and who were very very clever and who figured out how to handle the world. And they made their fortune ... I find those things [ those characters] weirdly interesting". (Ghosh's interview with Frederick Luis Aldama)

It is Ghosh's special intention to merge individual life story with national and international political, social and economic history. As we see, Rajkumar's life covers a large area of India, Burma and Malaysia and covers different phases of nation's history, he and his family was always influenced by national and international situations. The graph of Rajkumar's economic life rises up in the middle stage of his life. But with the changes of the situation, his life is also changed. When the original Burmese people evacuate the migrant Indian people, Rajkumar's life is at stake. For this slipping identity Rajkumar shifts from business life to domestic life, from public to private life and he confines himself to his house. Rajkumar's shifting position gradually causes the shifting of the fictional standpoint. The fictional content speeds up going through familial incidents of marriage — child birth — death of parents — child's marriage. The fictional elements are confined to Rajkumar's family description. Here ideology of nation and nationhood is less important to the description of Rajkumar's family life as the fiction is busy in delineating Manju-Neel marriage, Manju's pregnancy, Jaya's birth by Manju.

Facts and fictions, history and story are so proportionately mingled up that the novelist's purpose of presenting ideology of domination and power politics is successfully

met up. To sum up, the function of ideology in the creation of *The Glass Palace* is to focus on the structure of the novel where the family story of Rajkumar attaining the centre stage of the novel is shown to be influenced by the national and international history, politics, economy and business strategy. That Ghosh's fundamental interest is 'individual', 'people', and their specific predicament, as manifested in the interview with John.c.Howley in 2004, is ensured here by the story-line of Rajkumar's life and family. But it is not merely a story; rather it is a fictional version of history. The relevance of the novel, therefore, lies in its functioning as a social force having ideological weight which a reader can easily recognise and which can stir mankind.

### **Ideology-Fiction Interplay in *The Hungry Tide* (2004) :**

As the novel, *The Hungry Tide* begins with the arrival of Piya and Kanai in the native land the Sundarbans for satisfying their individual needs and interests, they seem to be the 'intruders' to the native land. Piya and Kanai, representing the 'west' and the modern upper class society respectively, enter the land with their own ideologies and pre-conceived notion about the natives. They do not feel the urge of being acquainted with the history of the individual human beings, and for that reason they do not succeed in attaining their target. In order to create the impression of universal human value and man's struggle against the oddities of the environment, Ghosh purposefully selects the setting, the characters and the incidents which are acting and reacting with each other with a view to proving that knowing the individual identity and individual past history is essential for proper communication because trans-cultural communication is not possible without the knowledge of language and culture.

In this novel, Ghosh creates such a situation through characters and incidents that increases the necessity of ‘interpreter’ or ‘translator’ of language, but the incidents in the novel highlight the failure of the attempt of translation of language. Therefore, the novel attempts to emphasise upon the necessity of the urge of the full knowledge of history and culture of a community. Ghosh expresses his view on language:

I think the world has been globalizing for a long time. It is not a new phenomenon, but one that has achieved a new kind of intensity in recent years. The only real barrier to a complete uniformity around the world is not the image but language. Images can be exchanged between cultures, but the domain where globalization has truly been resisted is that of language. We can send e-mails, which can be instantly translated, but that is shallow communication. For any kind of deeper, resonant communication, language is essential. All such communication is always deeply embedded in language.  
(Ghosh’s interview to the UN Chronicle)

Moreover, it should be noted that the acquaintance with the ecological system of the Sunderbans is more important than the acquaintance with the language of the inhabitants of the local people. Bibhas Choudhury rightly puts, “Ironically, the ecological communication in the Sundarbans is so deep-rooted that it almost always supersedes human communication” (Choudhury 144).

That the fictional ideology is controlled by the two dominant persons is clear from the novel when Piya and Kanai are seen to enter the Islands at the very beginning of the novel as if they will initiate the thematic flow to carry on. These two persons representing the West and the upper class society will control the function of Nature and the Fiction

according to their own ways. Specially, it is on Piya's discretion that the entire incident is controlled. Whether the translation of language is needed or not is completely manipulated by Piya, so it is she who takes the entire responsibility. She does not take Fokir's views of language under her consideration and the whole expedition becomes one-way process on the part of Piya. She does not even feel the need of taking Fokir's view in their discourse. But, she needs to know that the ecological communication is the most important to know, otherwise, life in the tidal region would have no existence. The foreigners who do not know the environment, must acquire knowledge about the ferocity of the storm, tide and the ferocious nature of tigers and crocodiles. The novelist wants the readers to be informed of the environment of the Sundarbans:

The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater only to re-emerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily – some days the water tears away enter promontories and peninsulas; ... Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles. (*HT* 7-8)

The controlling organizing factors of the content of the text can be pointed out in the following sub-divisions:

- The Sundarbans as the locale of the text.
- Necessity of knowing community history and individual history.
- Oppressing Ideology of the then ruling Govt..

- **The Sundarbans as the locale of the Text :**

Ghosh sets the novel, *The Hungry Tide* in the tidal region, the Sundarbans, where borders — geographical, social, linguistic, religious, community, class — are always illusive creating an image of borderless space of universal philosophy of life — a space where the opposition between ‘culture’ and ‘nature’ is gradually subsided with a proportionate balance of ecology and life. Religion, community, culture, language — everything is merged and mingled as the sea washes away the topographical border that separates the land from the sea. In the Sunderbans, human life is completely uncertain and the only certainty about it is the struggle. This uncertainty of life has been evoked largely in the environment of the Sundarbans, which is the right place of meeting the West and the Other, because the novel wants to show how ‘culture’ and ‘knowledge’ of the so called West work in ‘Nature’, which function predominantly in the novel. The West is represented by Piya Roy, an American scientist, who has come to observe the rare Irrawaddy dolphin; the upper middle class Indian Bengali society is represented by Kanai Dutt, the nephew of Nirmal and Nillima, and the local culture and the Other is represented by Fokir, the fisherman of the Sunderbans. These three persons are brought together not only to show the interrelationship within the trio, but also to serve the ideology of the fiction which tends to project that individual human being cannot be categorised into known patterns with characteristics according to the class, creed and locality, rather an individual is formed of the interactive process with history, culture, nature and community. Therefore, when Fokir is seen in oversimplified way by Piya and Kanai, their notions invariably falter.

The laws of human communication through translation and its possibilities and limits are the pivotal points of the transcultural communication, hence, the ideology of the cultural dominance is revealed at the failure of the attempt of the translation of language. In analysing cross-cultural communication in *The Hungry Tide* what is essential is that the triangular

relation of Piya, Fokir and Kanai and their concepts of language and translation are to be cross-examined from a neutral point of view. Piya wants to efface her sense of superiority and linguistic, cultural, and class hiatus, being driven by her pre-conceived notion of the nature of the research community. She has fully realised that as a researcher she must break all kinds of barrier if she has to elicit information and knowledge from a human community which is conscious of the difference of class and culture. So, Piya, with her ‘enlightened’ thought, generates within herself a liberal and border-free mindset in order to achieve a sense of commonness with a fisherman and align with his feelings. Fokir, is recognised as a genuine ‘site’ for carrying out her research work. Therefore, Piya realises what Moyna, Fokir’s wife, does not. To Moyna and Kanai, Fokir is ‘a peculiar, sulky fellow’ (*HT* 217), and ‘illiterate’(134) one, but to Piya, “ His knowledge can be of help to a scientist like myself” (*HT* 212). Kanai realises that Piya can be able to communicate intuitively with her research guide Fokir : ““ I think you’ll be able to manage perfectly well without a translator””(HT 333). Piya also feels, “There was so much in common between us [ Piya and Fokir]...”(*HT* 268). But in course of reading the novel, we see that Piya is compelled to reverse her own thought of commonness with Fokir after experiencing the tiger expedition. The conversation between Piya and Kanai is as follows :

‘You know’, said Piya. ‘What you said about there being nothing in common between — ?

‘you and Fokir ?’

‘yes’, said Piya. ‘You were right. I was just being stupid. I guess it took something like this for me to get it straight’. (*HT* 296-7)

Piya is apparently baffled, because she has over-simplified and homogenized her research community being driven by her pre-conceived notion of culture. She does not realise that this sense of commonness may not be evoked from the unprivileged ‘local’ people even

though she herself has broken all barriers. Piya places Fokir in the homogenizing pattern of her concept of location of culture. Piya may prove right if someone within this lower cultural community shares view and communicates with her. Piya does not sound too bothered in spite of the reticent nature of Fokir. That is Piya's fault. She only once mentions that point: "Isn't there any way we could pull Fokir into the conversation? It's him I really need to talk to" (*HT* 209). Kanai also once tries to make him speak; but fails and comments that Fokir has no interest in pursuing conversation. Piya should at first think of the taciturn nature of her guide in locating places; instead she thinks to overcome the problem by her intuition and common humanity. As Banibrata Mahanta observes "She gives no thought to Fokir's ability to communicate with her but makes much of her own ability to communicate with Fokir in spite of linguistic and cultural barriers"(Mahanta 64). Piya fails to realise that the gap of perception, worldview and mental state between two individuals is an essential factor in establishing hindrance in cultural communication; it can never be overcome through one-sided effort by common human sense, when the other-side is a passive agent. Ghosh himself feels the problem with the character like Fokir, whose practical knowledge is valuable for the progress of science and civilization, but whose knowledge cannot be heard and translated into word. Ghosh observes:

...Fokir is almost completely speechless and that's exactly the issue I wanted to address. These are the circumstances becoming increasingly prevalent around the world. How do people who have very little words communicate with the rest of the world? There is such a gap. (Ghosh's interview with Chitralkha Basu)

But Fokir's lack of language cannot be accepted as an individual exception in his cultural community and he is not to be blamed for his reservation in speech because his silence acts as



a defence against the world of speech. He is conscious of the fact that the traditional concept of speech and conversation must fail to carry the weight of his experience and knowledge of life. Moreover, he knows that his interest and knowledge are of little significance to the materialistic world and vice versa. Fokir must not be criticized for his effort of living in isolation, because his innate nature and his broadened perception of Nature lead him to an intuition that seeks solitariness. Fokir is easily misunderstood because of his appearance. Though he is 'spirited', 'tough' and full of power inwardly, he is apparently lifeless. His posture of squatting on his haunches evokes laughter in Kanai, "I thought only parrots could sit like that' he said to Piya in a whispered aside"(HT 208). It happens so because this type of squatting posture does not suit the concept of life- style of civilized society. Actually, Fokir always remains in his own world; his innate nature of biorhythmic adjustment with physical Nature is constantly working in him. According to Banibrata Mahanta:

His life is an example of how man can develop a worldview, which does not treat nature just as another frontier. Rather it calls for extension of ethics — the broadening of human's conception of the global community to include non- human life forms and the physical environment. (Mahanta 66)

This broadening view of the human and non-human world that Fokir builds up within him , is only inculcated by the tide country itself. The setting is the centre of Fokir's nature which controls his thought, views, language and activities.

- **Necessity of knowing the Community history and the Individual history:**

Though the refugee history is typical of mass plight for the Partition, this community history is a part and parcel of Fokir's individual and family life. Fokir's mental and spiritual make up cannot be assessed if we do not know his past family history. Why he is so much reticent,

why he is introvert, why he finds mental peace in folk lore and in Nature — all these may be answered in the family history and community history. In course of reading the novel, we see that Piya is compelled to reverse her own thought of commonness with Fokir after the tiger expedition. She admits that there is nothing in common between them and her concept of communication is wrong and Kanai is right. Fokir cannot be understood with a generalised view. To know Fokir, it is necessary to know Fokir's community history and familial history. Fokir has seen and heard a lot from his mother and Horen (uncle) in course of informing Nirmal of the incidents. The history of the refugees, displacement from Bangladesh, the starvation, disease and death, roofless and foodless condition of the refugees, seize of Morichjhapi, and successive military attack by the ruling party — all these histories of a community are interrelated with the life of individuals (Fokir and Kusum). Fokir has witnessed the tragedy of his mother — how Kusum is rigid in spirit in face of the military attack. Nirmal's diary informs us the detail :

We are amazed to find her still in good spirit. We spent the rest of the night trying to persuade her to leave, but she paid no heed. “Where will I go?” she said simply. ‘There is no other place I want to be’...We told her about the rumours, the men gathering in the surrounding villages, preparing for the impending assault. Horen had seen them; They had come busloads. ‘What will they do?’ she said. ‘There are still more than ten thousand of us here. It's just a question of keeping faith’. ‘But about Fokir?’ I said.... “If you won't leave, let me take him away for a few days.” (*HT* 277)

Fokir is the witness of this history and this history has made him silent, but, this history has no value to his wife, Moyna and to the modern people. Fokir feels free to talk to Nirmal according to his own choice and interest. When Nirmal informs him about the storm and the

earthquake in 1937, Fokir becomes curious to know the nature and the consequence of the storm. ““Imagine, Fokir, I [ Nirmal ] said, imagine the lives of your ancestors... imagine how they cowered in their roofless hut and watched the waters, rising, rising... ‘And were there other storms, Saar?’ ... ‘Was that the worst storm of all, Saar? ... ‘When Saar? ... ‘Go on Saar’”(HT 203). These questions are enough indications that Fokir is not reticent by nature. Fokir’s interest for the life of his ancestors and Nature is satisfied by Nirmal. The myth of Bon Bibi and Dokhin Rai are related to Fokir’s maternal grandfather and Fokir has witnessed his mother’s respect for her ancestors and Nature. In their trip to Gorjontola, everybody witnesses the child’s adeptness and power of adaptation with the adverse nature. “Even though the water came up to his neck, the boy quickly put his shoulder to the boat and began to push. No one else was surprised by the child’s adeptness. His mother turned to me and I saw she choking with pride: ‘See, Saar: the river is in his vein’”(HT 245). Therefore, the history which is related to Fokir’s life is important for the purpose for which Piya has come. But it is important to note that the novelist informs the history to the readers using a narrative technique by which he easily escapes from the knowledge of Piya and through the failure of the purpose of Piya, he wants to make its necessity as a most important factor.

- **Oppressing Ideology of the then Ruling Government :**

The narrative technique that the novelist adopts is the diary writing where history is shaped and documented in the written form. The pertinent question that strikes us is — what is the purpose of the novelist to inform the history of Morichjhapi through diary? History, as we know, is a weapon for exposing and highlighting the truth. The truth that is recorded in the diary, is the result of Nirmal’s silence with his wife, Nilima, who is a social activist and an NGO worker, but her activism is of a nature that does not allow her to go beyond a certain

limit and hence she cannot participate in the life of Kusum as her husband does. The Leftist Government did not support the refugees who fled from the dense forest of Dandakaranya of Madhya Pradesh and started to live on the island of Morichjhapi clearing the land for agriculture, fishing and farming. The Government was alarmed by the presence of the refugees and issued orders to evacuate the islands. But Nirmal's silence or his speechlessness is significant, because the oppressed are naturally turned to become silent in the history of civilization. Nirmal's empathy with the oppressed people and the failure of their struggle before the military oppression by the powerful Government and Nilima's misinterpretation on his relationship with Kusum depress his spirit and Nirmal equates himself with the defeated mass and becomes silent. But his silence helps to record the history of silence through his diary. As it is the history of the dominated and the oppressed people, it is consciously overlooked and is not well documented. What the state Government did from May 14 to May 16, 1979, was recorded by Ross Mallick in a journal:

Muslim gangs were hired to assist the police as it was thought that Muslims would be less sympathetic to refugees from Muslim-ruled Bangladesh. The men were first separated from the women. Most of the young men were arrested and sent to the jails and the police began to rape the helpless young women at random. At least several hundred men, women, and children were said to have been killed in the operation and their bodies dumped in the river.  
(Mallick 104-125)

Therefore, it is a terrible and inhuman incident of history which the state Government intended to sweep under the carpet. Moreover, Nirmal knows that the history of Morichjhapi that his diary contains will not be truly valued by Nilima, who, as Nirmal knows, is rigid, practical and business minded. Nirmal wants it to be read and discovered by Kanai, the

educated and modern man. But Nirmal cannot imagine that Kanai is also a representative of modern upper class society and he has not had such heart and spirit to penetrate into the heart of the history. But, again that history slips into silence when the diary is washed away and lost in the high tide after Kanai's reading of the diary. The loss of the diary is significant because this history of oppression and silence will have no value to the modern civilized society.

Against these three organising factors controlling the narrative, we find diary writing as one way of interrogating ideology in the novel. The impression of postmodern reality of cross-cultural and multi-lingual aspect is evoked by the content of the novel. The conventional method of writing appears inadequate to evoke this sense of postmodernism. The novel incorporates letters, manuscripts, note writing in the form of diaries, journals and excerpts from poems which become a part of postmodern narrative strategy. Inclusion of these fictional elements shows the constant shift in the boundaries between fictional and non-fictional works and between literary and non-literary works. In *The Hungry Tide*, the diary written by Nirmal (meant only to be read by Kanai) acts as a means of recasting the past incidents for substantiating an incident of near future. The diary writing in the novel plays the role of a counter narrative strategy to question the dominant ideological power structure.

When viewed from the theoretical assumption of ideology as base, *The Hungry Tide* may be seen as a determinate product of history and ideology for which the locale is set in the Sundarbans; Nirmal's diary is placed as a tool for the knowledge of history of the colonial and the postcolonial setting of the 'tide country' to the present generation of readers, and incidents like Fokir's death in the terrible storm take place as a part of challenging the overarching ideology of the text. From the beginning to the end of *The Hungry Tide*, the

weaving of the story is so minute and perfectly balanced that ideology is presented as coterminous with literature in the text.

Nirmal's Diary is not merely a narrative strategy for shaping and documenting history in the written form, but it itself is a literature *per se*. Diary within the fictional structure of *The Hungry Tide* is included as postmodern narrative mode. In this novel, Nirmal's diary is incorporated in italicized letter, highlighting a difference from the other parts of the novel. The diary starts with the abruptness of a story or a novella. The notebook narrating the story of a marginal woman with a group of marginalized and refugee people presents a glimpse of life which is equated with the vision reflected in the poem of Rilke's "Duino Elegies". The diary records the poet's word :

*beauty is nothing*  
 but the start of terror we can hardly bear,  
 and we adore it because of the serene scorn  
 it could kill us with ... (HT 69).

At the very beginning it creates an unknown terror within which Nirmal falls and experiences life against all oddities and adversities. The first part of this diary ends with such a curious intensity of reading as — “ It concerns, rather, the only friend you made when you were here in Lusibari : Kusum. If not for my sake, then for hers, read on” (HT 69). But this diary could not have been written if the diary writer could have the chance of sharing his views with his wife, Nilima, who has a strong dislike for Nirmal's engagement in the revolutionary activities against the Government policy. Therefore, the novelist's presentation of the diary writing by Nirmal is legitimised by the demands of ideological content of the text.

Moreover, it presents the myth of Bon Bibi, Shah Jongoli and Dakkhin Rai which became 'Bon Bibir Karamoti orthat Bon Bibir Johurnama' in the hands of Abdur Rahim.

Multicultural and multilinguistic aspects of the history of the Sundarbans are revealed through the mythical story of Bon Bibi and Shah Jongoli, who are sent to the Sundarbans from Madina, a city of Arabia with a mission to establish a new settlement for the refugees in the Mangrove forest. The deities of Muslim origin come for the safety of the Hindu people who, also, lay profound faith on the two divine entities in battle with beasts and demons. This ancient mythical story is set and examined in the present socio-political reality, where the ruling Government denies any shelter for the refugee people, treating them as a threat to environment in the context of natural divine support of Bon Bibi. Therefore, pointing to the role of history in Ghosh's fiction, Brinda Bose comments, "Ghosh's fiction takes upon itself the responsibility of re-assessing its troubled antecedents, using history as a tool by which we can begin to make sense of — or at least come to terms with — our troubling present" (Paranjape 235-45). Thus, Nirmal's diary becomes a space where myth, legends, anecdotes and history of the oppressed 'other' coincide to build up a counter ideology of the 'west' and ideology of the ruling Government of the then time.

Therefore, it is evident that the setting, the characters and the incidents are chosen and worked upon with the purpose of fictional ideology which the novelist tries to highlight in the novel. The ideology of language in transcultural communication, the ideology of cultural dominance, the opposition between nature and culture, — all these issues are controlling the incidents and the structure of the novel.

### **Ideology-Fiction Interplay in *Sea Of Poppies* (2008) :**

Ghosh, as a social anthropologist and a historian, is always interested in the real incidents of the society and as a writer of fiction, he makes his writings the fictionalized form of reality. Most of his interviews prove his fondness for the issues of the world and various incidents affecting human life. In an interview, Ghosh said:

I don't think there's a big difference between writing fiction and writing non-fiction..... my fiction is also founded on very extensive research. The world interests me. Sometimes the world interests me as fiction and sometimes it interests me as non-fiction and I don't see a distinction.

(Interview to *The Sunday Statesman, Literary*, 3)

Pierre Macherey, the first Althusserian critic, in his book *A Theory of Literary Production* (1978), shows how literary form and ideological content are interdependent on each other. The literary form, which is the 'artist's gift' contains a specific 'perception' of the historical process and ideological motives. The ideological content in a literary work helps in the elaboration of a specific form and vice versa. A double perspective works in a literary work — the work's relation to history, and the work's relation to the ideological version of that history.

Literature cannot be seen in isolation from historical period. But, the affinity between history and literature is not simple. A specific ideology mediates the relation between the two. This ideology does not refer to the personal ideology of the writer, but to the ideology of the text. In a great writing, ideology of the text is formulated independent of the writer. According to Macherey,



We might say that the great writer is one who offers a clear ‘perception’ of reality. But this idea of perception raises all kinds of problems. It is obviously not the same as a theoretical *knowledge*; *the writer’s version of reality cannot be confused with the scientific analysis* which the Marxist party would give, simply because the writer uses his own special methods.(Macherey 130)

Therefore, this specific literary form, which is the choice of the writer, manifests the ‘perception’ of reality. But whatever the specific literary form may be, the writer’s work is to make a perfect balance among historical reality, ideological concept and literary forms in his work, yet a literary work is not a product of the writer; it emerges, develops and gets the fullest form by itself.

The writer’s selection of places, characters and incidents of the text, *Sea of Poppies* depends on satisfying the demands of the controlling ideology i.e. the ideology of power and Empire. A large scale cultivation of poppies to satisfy the demands of the British colonizers and the devastating effect of the opium-ball-processing on the native people are the central themes around which the incidents of the text revolve. This theme is directly linked to the history of immigration of a group of ‘giritiyas’ by a schooner ‘Ibis’. But the novel presents simultaneously the personal history of some individuals and this is done purposefully by the text. The novel, *Sea of Poppies* revolves around two factors — ideology of Power and Empire, and necessity of presenting individual history.

- **The Selection of Places, Characters and Incidents Determined by Ideology of Power and Empire:**

The Indian subcontinent (in the period of 1930s) was colonized by the British colonizers and was confined to some blind irrational superstitious beliefs and systems which

corroded Indian society internally. Discriminations in gender, caste, class, colour, and religion affected human beings. Ghosh situates the characters of Kalua and Deeti in this situation and perspective where Kalua, the low-caste man, is needed most for the life of Deeti. Deeti, the central female character of the novel, is the wife of Hukam Singh in Ghazipur. On the night of her marriage she has been administered opium by her mother-in-law, and sexually exploited by her brother-in-law, Chandan Singh, and she becomes 'Kabutri-ka-ma'. The patriarchal structure of society tries to produce another male child by Deeti, but she continues her struggle to prove her chastity. After the death of her emaciated and wounded husband, she is forced to the burning pyre to offer herself as a 'sati'.

Half dragged and half carried, she was brought to the pyre and made to sit cross-legged on it, beside her husband's corpse. Now there was an outbreak of chanting as heaps of kindling were piled around her, and doused with ghee and oil to ready them for the fire. (*SOP* 177)

The very situation of the then orthodox society nurturing its own prejudices, as depicted in the novel, tries to bulldoze Deeti into embracing death on the burning pyre and this inhuman situation encountered by the sharply intelligent and courageous cart driver Kalua makes his character significant in the context of the novel as he is moved by a sense of pity and humanity to save Deeti's precious life from the jaws of death. The way Ghosh narrates the incident in third person narrative structure, impresses the readers, and makes one feel the helpless condition of a widow in our motherland. At last, the sharp intelligence, courage, and sense of humanity moved Kalua, the cart driver to save Deeti from death. Now "she knew that it was with Kalua that this life would be lived, until another death claimed the body that he had torn from the flames" (*SOP* 178). They get married, but society labels them 'whore', 'outcast', and 'bastard'. These blind and superstitious systems of the then society which hurt

humanism, act as ‘mechanism’ or ‘ideological tool’ to deceive human beings and as a result, the victims of these systems want to escape from this tortuous society, because they cannot have the power to challenge the upper class powerful leaders. Similar is the case with other indentured men and women, who wish to leave for Mauritius Islands. Ratna and Champa, two sisters, marry to a pair of brothers whose lands are contracted to the opium factory and ultimately occupied by the British masters, and decide to be indentured as a way out — “Rather than starve, they had decided to indenture themselves together — whatever happened in the future, they would at least have the consolation of a shared fate” (*SOP* 241). Heeru’s story is a story of separation from her husband. Dookhanee, another married woman, being tortured by her mother-in-law decides to join the migrant group with her husband. Munia, a foolish maiden, being deceived by a male who enjoys her body and makes her conceive an illegitimate child is ostracized by powerful leaders who burnt her baby and parents to death. Rugoo, a washerman; Gobin, a potter; Cullookhan, a retired sepoy; Jhugroo, a drunkard — all are victims and marginalized in respect of social position. The social background against which these individuals are set up, as depicted by Ghosh, is a dark side of the native society where a large number of people are tortured. These people — Deeti, Kalua, Heeru, Jadu, Ratna, for example, — are so much spiritually subjugated that it can be said that the society itself acts as a colonizer over its own people. Bibhas Choudhury in his article properly points out:

Ghosh uses different modes to engage the contexts in which they are placed — sometimes language, sometimes the stereotype and more importantly, the rhetoric of political agency. Informed as these people are by condition of culture that cannot be disengaged from their selves, Ghosh create separate

frames through which each one of them appears distinctly individual and unique. (Choudhury 166)

- **Necessity of Presenting Individual History :**

When society poses a threat to the mundane life of the individuals, 'Ibis' becomes a safe shelter to them. They think that in the 'Ibis' they will not be subjected to any discriminatory attitude. "Caste doesn't matter, said the duffadar. All kinds of men are eager to sign up — Brahmins, Ahirs, Chamars, Telis. What matters is that they be young and able-bodied and willing to work" (*SOP* 205). As a result, what is shown in the novel, is a large number of people marching towards the ship. Ramsaranji, in the novel says —

They are girmityas ...They were so called because,in exchange formoney, their names were entered on 'girmits'— agreements written on pieces of paper. The silver that was paid for them went to their families and they were taken away, never to be seen again : they vanished ,as if into the netherworld. (*SOP* 72).

Therefore, 'Ibis' assumes the image of an ideal container for containing all people irrespective of all religious communities, castes, classes, and gender. The single identity which the immigrant people carry is the identity of 'slaves'. There can be no other divisions or boundaries. The illusory borders among human beings are all obliterated from the minds of the workers. For example, when Paulette is questioned about her losing of caste as she is on the ship with so many sorts of people, she replies, "From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship-siblings — *Jahazbhais* and *jahazbahens* — to each other. There will be no

differences between us” ( *SOP* 356). So, the ‘Ibis’ on the borderless sea creates within itself a society where the deceptive ideology of power structure is destroyed by the working class people.

Now, the question is — what is the need of informing us of the individual past history, when a generalised identity of the ‘slaves’ is most important on the ‘Ibis’? Is it only Ghosh’s personal inclination towards the individual history or is it the demand of the text? It is the ideological version of history which demands the relation of history to the literary text. This is very clear in the text of *Sea of Poppies*. The ‘Ibis’ cannot be an innocent representation of multicultural nation, rather it is a microcosmic presentation of traditional concept of nation-states. The ideological power structure and relation are endorsed by the masters of the ship. The deceptive ideological policies which are dominant in modern nation-states, are also present in the social structure of the ‘Ibis’. Just as the myth of nationhood, masked by ideology, speaks of ‘oneness’ and perfect equality, and, in practice, represents and consolidates only the interests of the dominant power groups, so does the social-scenario of the ‘Ibis’. Masters of the ‘Ibis’ are conscious of the unity among the lascars, so, they try to make a fissure among the workers. If the relation between the masters and the indentured slaves is one of money, agreement and physical labour, then what is the need of their knowing that Azad Naskar (Jadu) as a Muslim is trying to make a relation with Munia, a Hindu maiden? Bhyro Singh, the mastermind creates violence in the peaceful habitation among the workers. The masters present themselves in such a way as if they are worried about the dignity of the maidens, but the real purpose is to remind the workers of their past cultural and religious legacies and the divisions according to the roots. Bhyro Singh asks Deeti, “ Why weren’t you worried when she was whoring herself to a lascar ? A Muslim at

that?" Deeti's instant reply is "Malik,... Let her come back to us, and we'll settle the matter amongst us. It's best that we deal with our own" (*SOP* 472).

Similarly, in the text there are many incidents which underline the individual cultural and familial history. For example, the First mate, Mr.Crowle tries to snap the intimate relationship between Ah Fatt and Neel Ratan Halder, who are chained by their legs and treated as convicts. He allures Ah Fatt by promising that he would be given opium to consume, if he urinates on Neel's face. He does this because he is aware of Ah Fatt's addiction to opium in his past and knows Neel's role in recovering him. As Neel is aware of the strategy of the masters, Neel does not get angry, rather he tries to make Ah Fatt alert of the fact that his behaviour does not suit the civilized manner and he becomes a butt of ridicule. Ghosh has divulged the inner thought of the masters, "Could it be that there was something genuinely rare in such a bond as theirs, something that could provoke others to exert their ingenuity in order to test its limits?" (*SOP* 456). But, the lascars take time to consolidate themselves against the law of whip which is employed by the Captain, Chillingworth, Mr.Crowle, Subeder Bhyro Singh and gomosta BabooNob Kissin. The moment the lascars realise that they are treated as dogs by rulers of the 'Ibis', they dare to challenge and murder the powerful rulers. Kalua murders Bhyro Singh and Ah Fatt kills the First mate, Mr.Crowle.

Amitav Ghosh follows a form in weaving the plot that, on some particular junctures, the plot demands the narration of individual history of the characters who also, at the same time, unveil the ideological policies of the dominant class. In this text, literary form, ideological content and historical process are merged and mingled in a perfect balance. Therefore, *Sea of Poppies* is seen as a novel which contains the ideology of power structure and power politics of the ruling class of society. How the native Indians, their health and

their economy are severely affected, as presented in the novel against the historical backdrop of opium trading. The argument of this section supports Bibhas Choudhury's view,

The conditions that facilitate and organize the characters' cultural associations, impinging upon and situating them as individuals, are never engaged in isolation. Even in stages when political and mercenary priorities occupy centre-stage, traces of one's cultural location surface and position the individuals in specific ways". (Choudhury 175)

### **Ideology-Fiction interplay in *River of Smoke* (2011):**

*River of Smoke* (2011) is not exceptional in the fictional structural formation controlled by ideology like Ghosh's other novels. As human life is most important to Ghosh, he in his novels presents how human life, community, and countries are controlled by dominant power and politics. Ghosh has taken this ideological position vis-à-vis the prime issue of colonialism confronting society at that time. *River of Smoke*, a sequel to *Sea of Poppies* is supposed to present the next stage of journey of opium trading, but in reality, the course of narrative is changed because Ghosh's purpose in *River of Smoke* is changed. His focus is changed from 'Ibis' to 'Anahita', from Deeti to Bahram Modi. Here through Modi's character Ghosh gets into the main issue of opium trading. But, *River of Smoke* is not a novel, of opium trading in the 1830, rather it is a fictionalized history of the Chinese power challenging the British dominant power.

A historical epic, *River Of Smoke* presents the history of conflict in ideologies between two powerful countries Britain and China in the 1830s and the history of failure on

the part of the subjects and agents who work in-between these two powerful ruling countries. Here, the novelist creates a storm-tossed atmosphere where all characters are visualized as struggling to come out of the situation and reach a state of certainty. *River of Smoke*, with its neatly woven narrative, blurs the distinction between fiction and history and Ghosh represents the history in such a fictionalized form that sometimes the readers are bogged down by the fictional episodes namely Bahram-Chi-mei, Paulette-Zachary, and Robin-Paulette episodes. Again, sometimes, in the text, historical elements of colonizers and colonized are so detailed and elaborative that readers are confused to imagine whether it is a historical novel or historical record. As Vivekananda Jha observes:

Bahram is only a pretext for the illegal opium trade in the text. Bahram is the canvas on which the novelist paints the intricate pattern that underlay the opium trade and the colonial spirit that fuelled and steered it. Amitav Ghosh has fictionalized history with a purpose. The purpose is to reclaim a history that was suppressed by the colonizers to promote their hegemonic ventures camouflaged as civilization and Free Trade.( Jha 184)

As a post-colonial text, *River of Smoke* is written back against the colonizer's policy of freedom, democracy and Free Trade; but Bahram is delineated as a marginal trader in the illegal trading process of exporting opium in China. These conflicts of history have made the fiction charming and interesting.

The colonization of a vast country like India is linked with the vast cultivation of poppies and the inhuman torment inflicted on the labourers engaged in the opium processing and embracing premature death. The colonizers earned a colossal amount of profit from opium trading in India. After that, processed opium is shipped to the countries from where



economic profit will be high by selling opium. As opium is more dangerous than drug for individual and nation's life, it is a perfect tool to destroy a nation's healthy economic, social and cultural state. Therefore no weapon is more dangerous than opium or drug to damage the prosperity of a developing nation in this modern civilization. Individual as well as the entire nation is wrecked by this addiction which causes financial drain and moral degradation. So, the Chinese law made a prohibition against the import of opium. The history of opium banning is that Peking first issued an edict for banning the drug in 1729 and subsequent edicts for banning were issued in 1780 and in 1796.

Opium-like prohibited goods are also banned in England. "... British law states that any person found harbouring prohibited goods shall forfeit treble their value? Need I add further that British law also states that any person who is found guilty of the offence of smuggling shall suffer death as a felon?"(ROS 516). Therefore, the question naturally arises what is wrong in case of China in banning the import of opium, when the Britishers themselves prohibit opium for their own interest? Why will the Free Trade system not be judged equally in case of all nations in the world? It is the colonizer's (the Britisher's) ideology to mask the 'reality'/ the 'truth' in the name of 'civilization', 'freedom', and 'democracy' which are so illusive and deceptive that human beings are easily misled. In this way, their social existence determines their consciousness which is 'false'.

The Chinese merchants and common people are made to feel that the Chinese Government is doing injustice by curbing their freedom and liberty and by imposing a totalitarian regime. Therefore, they are driven by their 'false consciousness' and they are made enemies of their own Government. This is the success of the ruling ideology, but in the eyes of Charles King, an honest and upright white British administrator, the activities enacted by the Britishers were condemnable:

Justice forbids that the steps taken by the Chinese, to arrest a system of wrongs practiced on them, under the mask of friendship, be made pretence for still deeper injuries. Interest condemns the sacrifice of the lawful and useful trade with China, on the altar of illicit traffic. Still more loudly does it warn against the assumption of arms in an unjust quarrel, against — not the Chinese government only, but the Chinese people . Strong as Great Britain is she cannot war with success, or even safety, upon the consciences — the moral sense — of these three or four hundred million people. (*ROS 537-538*)

Charles King's letter to Charles Elliott goes against the ideology and the practice of the white Britishers . Charles King unusually tries to hint at the moral ground and conscience of the British Govt. "It is estimated that there are 80,000 chests of the drug in existence. Under this enormous accumulation, it is evident that the cultivation of the poppy, throughout India, should immediately cease". (*ROS 539*)

Ghosh speaks about the defence mechanism of China, "The Chinese were extremely knowledgeable about the curative properties of their plant wealth and fiercely guarded their secrets. The British had been trying to steal the plant for a long time but could transplant them to India much later" (Ghosh's interview with Samita Bhatia). Ghosh informs through the letter series of Robin regarding China's practical stand point of challenging the whole Europe:

From then on the Chinese knew the Europeans would stop at nothing to seize their land — and one thing you have to say about the Chinese is that unlike others in the East they are a practical people. When faced with a problem they try to find a solution. And that over there was their answer: Fanqui-town. It

was built not because the Chinese wished to keep all aliens at bay, but because the Europeans gave them every reason for suspicion. (*ROS* 380).

It proves that the Chinese authority is very much conscious of the wealth of its country so that the country may not be easily deceived by other powerful countries of the world. The success from the Chinese Govt. comes by the Commission Lin, appointed as the new representative of Chinese Govt. in Canton. Lin has been bestowed with special power and position to uproot opium from China where millions of people are destroyed by the addiction of opium. Lin with his exceptional ability, integrity and determination curbs the ego of the powerful country. The opium smugglers like Dent, Bahram and Jardine are compelled to surrender and twenty thousand chests of opium are disposed in the trenches of the Pearl River. "The chests are opened, balls of opium are broken up and mixed with salt and lime and then thrown into the water filled trenches..." (*ROS* 534).

Here, Ghosh reveals the suppressed history that the Europe can be defeated in war by Asia when consciousness is properly built up. It is China which is conscious of its own position in relation to other countries of the world and the success of Chinese Government lies in the success of the Chinese ideology. Therefore, *River of Smoke*, as a counter narrative to the grand hegemonic history of the Colonizers, successfully consolidates the tradition of writing novels foregrounding history of the subjugated people. It is true that the British merchants become victorious by creating a huge economic damage of the Chinese Govt. which, on the other hand, gets success morally showing a cultural resistance to the British ideology.

But in between the war of two powerful nations, there remains an in-between class of people who live by supporting one or the other nation. In *River of Smoke*, Bahram represents

this parasitic class of people who depend on the decision of the upper class. People like Bahram are motivated by a 'false consciousness'. As ideology is not an individual and independent process, it is, according to Marx and Engels, socially determined consciousness. Therefore, the ideology of this class (a labour class) is made up of the perception or understanding the way the upper class shows or projects. If this labour class of people are controlled by their own class interest or their own class position, this class (here represented by Bahram) would not have seen the failure in society. Bahram, as seen in the fiction, has isolated himself from his own class of people, severed his ties with them. As the real motive of the upper class of people is to keep an individual unknown to himself, Bahram is seen in the similar way to be detached from his own being and identity. The result is what it would be in reality. Bahram takes an overdose of opium to relieve himself of his uncertainty of life. He cannot tolerate the huge economic loss which he cannot recover. So, he is to die and his body is found in the river.

Thus, the five novels discussed in the present chapter portray that ideology in each novel plays an important role in the formation of the novel. Dominant ideology of nationalism in *The Shadow Lines* controls the characters, incidents and setting deceiving common people's notion of nations. Characters fall prey to the 'falsified' notion of nationalism which posits itself as 'real'. Though the ideology of nationalism controls every sphere of human life, it is questioned through the questioning of the recorded version of history. Different views of nation and nationalism are presented through different characters and this is presented through memoir structure. *The Glass Palace*, on the otherhand, is chiefly dominated by colonial ideology. Though some parts of this novel are imaginary, detached from historical and anthropological contents, these parts are moulded according to the ideology of the novel. Characters in this novel are of two types — some characters are

formed by the illusive influence of imperial ideology, some characters defy the ideological influence of the rulers. *The Hungry Tide* is controlled by the dominant ideology of the two intruders to the native land, the Sundarbans. The selection of setting, characters and incidents are dependent on two contradictory ideologies — ideology of the ‘west’ which nurture preconceived notion about the native and the ideology of the natives which nurture the necessity of knowing the individuals with their past history and their identity. The next two novels, *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*, which belong to the ‘Ibis’ trilogy are chiefly dominated by the ideology of the colonial power politics and the clash of two contradictory ideologies of two powerful nations of the world. Though five novels of Ghosh are examined here as ‘sites’ for ideological interplays, as basically formed by ideological interaction, yet his novels simultaneously try to liberate themselves from the dominance of ideology and achieve ‘autonomy as texts’ which is now going to be our focus in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER V

### **Autonomy of the Novels: Absence of Any Over-arching Ideology**

Ideology (ideologies) and the aesthetics (autonomy of the text) turn out to be inseparable in the postmodern metafiction. Though it is seen that different ideologies interact and challenge one another in the formation of the plot, setting and characters of the fiction to some extent, it is not that fictions are ideologically dominated ones. About the relationship between text and ideology, Marxist critics are almost of the same view with slight differences. Louis Althusser is of the view that art is generated or formed from ideology and the selection of the literary form depends on the content of ideology presented in the text. In Pierre Macherey's theory, ideology is the mediation between historical process and literary text. Macherey in the chapter, "Lenin, Critic of Tolstoy" is of the view that a text has its relation to an ideological version of the history. Therefore, it is clear that text works on the ideology of history in order to create an effect of the reality of history. Macherey clarifies that without the literary form within the novel, ideology is incomplete, because ideology in art is presented through literary form. Macherey in the book, *A Theory of Literary Production* (1978) states:

The work contains its ideological content, not just in the propagation of a specific Ideology, but in the elaboration of a specific form. This form, the artist's 'gift', the criterion of artistic excellence, is embodied in a specific 'perception' of the historical process and of ideological motives. (Macherey 130)

But to Terry Eagleton, Althusser's statement about ideology and text is "a suggestive, radically unsatisfactory statement" (Eagleton 83), and Macherey's view is "not the whole truth" (83). To quote Eagleton's statement here:

Althusser and Macherey appear to want to *reduce* and *redeem* the text from the shame of the sheerly ideological; yet in these passages they can do so only by resorting to a nebulously figurative language ('allude', 'see', 'retreat') which lends a merely rhetorical quality to the distinction between 'internal distantiation' and received notions of art's 'transcendence' of ideology. It is as though the aesthetic must still be granted mysteriously privileged status, but now in embarrassedly oblique style. (84)

Eagleton's argument is that both Althusser and Macherey are safeguarding text from being a 'sheer' ideological documentation, but they do not clarify how the text may attain that 'privileged status'. In Eagleton's theory, the text controls ideology of the text. But, Althusser denies the possibility of 'art's own logic' controlling ideology, rather he emphasises the birth of the text from ideology, whereas, Eagleton focuses on the other side of the text. Althusser does not believe that Balzac "was forced by the logic of his art to abandon certain of his political conceptions in his work as a novelist" (Althusser 176). The basic difference between Althusser and Eagleton lies in Althusser's belief in ideology's working upon the text and Eagleton's belief in the contrary. Eagleton's view is "The text establishes a relationship with ideology by means of its forms, but does so on the basis of its 'character' of the ideology it works" (84). But the form, chosen by the novelist, according to the character of the ideological content, has its own logic which Eagleton terms as 'organised signification'. The logic of the form of the text partly functions upon the ideological content up to the relatively autonomous level of ideological formation, but the moment the demands of the form of the text come in clash with the demands of ideological content, an 'internal distantiation' or a 'rupture' (in Althusser's term) is made by the text in order to resolve the ideological conflict aesthetically.

Though it may appear that Althusser and Eagleton are in theoretical conflict regarding text and ideology, it would be proper to say that Eagleton elaborates and clarifies the idea which Althusser hints at. Eagleton clarifies that not only is a text born out of ideology, a text also controls ideology (which Althusser does not illustrate). It is the text which decides the form by which a particular ideology can be presented. Despite the internal bond between the text and ideology, the text enjoys a relative autonomy on the basis of its aesthetic law and internal distantiation from the ideology as the text ‘displace[s], recast[s], and mutate[s]’ (Eagleton 100) ideological significations according to the relatively autonomous law of its own aesthetic mode. Now the focus of the project is to present ‘art’ as the ‘product’ of some preconditions. Though art is not fully a ‘creation’, it enjoys some ‘autonomy’ within its own purview. Therefore, two apparently contradictory ideas “Art as a product” and “Art enjoying relative autonomy” are at the centre of our discussion.

- **Marxist Concept of Art as a Product :**

The Marxist ideology does not conceive of the artist or the author as a creator, rather as a producer. That the author’s choice and writing is circumscribed by some social, political, and cultural milieus and by an ideological un/consciousness is central to the Marxist concept. The author does not initiate to create something for his personal aesthetic enjoyment, rather he is motivated by materialistic purposes. Poststructuralism also denies the authority of the author as author’s position is displaced by the emergence of the reader whose active presence builds up the text. In the process of reading, a text becomes a text. In this logic, the writer plays the role of the first reader who communicates with the text. The text’s communication with the readers is an important condition for a text becoming a text. The condition of the production of a text matches the condition (interest and expectation) of the readers in such a way that the communication process becomes dynamic. According to Pierre Macherey:

Readers are made by what makes the book — though it is a question of two different processes — for otherwise, the book, written from some inscrutable impulse, would be the work of his readers, reduced to the function of an illustration. (This must be taken in the *plainest sense* : the book does not produce its readers by some mysterious power; the conditions that determine the production of the book also determine the forms of its communication. These two modifications are simultaneous and reciprocal ...) (Macherey 79).

The determinants of the production of a book are not directly controlled by the subjectivity of the author, rather the determinants are interdependent on each other. A text is just the outcome, or the product of some components (labour). Though it is confined to some social, political, historical contexts, it enjoys an ‘autonomy’ (not independence) within its confinements. That is why, it speaks of reality, but speaks in such a way that it appears to be imaginary; it speaks of something as true, but it poses everything to be true. Macherey in his chapter “Pact and Contract” says:

The work is a tissue of fictions : properly speaking it contains nothing that is true. However, in so far as it is not a total deception but a verified falsehood, it asked to be considered as speaking the truth: it is not just any old illusion, it is a determinate illusion. (Macherey 78)

This verified falsehood is the characteristic of a fictional work which emerges through its spontaneous but reciprocal interactive process. That is why, a literary work is not a creation, but a production of a system, but there is no determinate rule of this system.

Marxism believes that the purpose of the Capitalist class is to form a fragmented or reified thought within the masses or in the Proletarian class so that the Proletarian class does not realize the whole system and its own position in the whole social system. When

everything is judged and valued in a commodified and mechanized sense, the involvement of labour power and a creative practice in the process of creation are denied. Human subject finds no place in the process of creation or in the creation of an object at the end. This fragmentation or the dislocation of subject from object has a great impact on society. Althusserian neo-Marxist critic, Macherey puts forth the same view:

Now, art is not man's creation, it is a product (and the producer is not a subject centered in his creation, he is an element in a situation, or a system): different — in being a product — from religion... If man creates man, the artist produces works, *in determinate condition*; he does not work on himself but on that thing which escapes him in so many ways, and never belongs to him until after the event. (Macherey77)

- **The Question of 'Autonomy' of a Literary Text:**

The French neo-Marxist, Louis Althusser, in discussing the process of the production of art, states in "A Letter on Art in Reply to Andre Daspre", "What art makes us see, and therefore gives to us in the form of 'seeing', 'perceiving' and 'feeling' (which is not the form of knowing), is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it alludes" (Althusser 174). Now the question is in which way does art detach itself from the ideology which makes possible the genesis of that art.

Althusser views ideology as identical with the lived experience of human existence itself. But the form in which the novelist tries to create the effects of reality in the novel, has its own content, own expectation which reacts with the content of the 'lived' experience of the individual. So, it is very difficult to control over the reactionary process within ideology, structure, structural version of the ideology and ideology of the structure, but the novelist skillfully modifies the situation by bringing ideology within its limitation of structure.

Althusser finds an illustration of his theoretical position in Balzac's novel when he says that the reactionary political positions of Balzac contains a large part in Balzac's novel, yet the novels are not completely political. His novels are detached from political ideology. Similar is the case with Tolstoy's novels. The greatness of Tolstoy and Balzac lies in the fact that they stick to their political ideology, but they maintain in their novels an internal 'distance' from their ideology and this gives us a critical 'view' of it. This 'internal distance' or 'rupture' from the ideology is essential in the process of creation. A great artist can attain that position by paying attention to the demands of the form or structure of the novel as opposed to the demands of ideology. Therefore, this 'rupture' is essential for the autonomy of the art.

Amitav Ghosh in an interview states that he is very much influenced by Balzac's writings. In most of Ghosh's novels, we see that his novels evolve out of strong social, cultural and political ideologies, yet they are not completely political and historical writings, rather they emerge as beautiful works of fiction. Five novels by Ghosh have been examined in the previous chapter to explore the working of ideological structure in those novels. It would be equally interesting to explore whether they present a 'rupture' with the ideological structure, grow out of them to attain a state and status of autonomy.

### ***The Shadow Lines* (1988): Gaps and Silences**

*The Shadow Lines* (1988) is a novel, in which characters, incidents and settings seem to be controlled by the ideology of nationalism as propagated by the history of the dominant authority and as felt by the individuals in reality. This ideology of nation, relating to press, media, newspaper report, notion of 'imagined community', image of the 'border'— all these constitute the ideological content. Without any textual form, this ideological content cannot be presented and according to Eagleton, the 'character' of

ideological content determines the textual form. As the 'character' of this ideological content is the 'microscopic' representation of such cosmic issue, so the content of the ideology demands a subjective narrative mode. Therefore, the text adopts 'memoir' as a structural narrative form, where the incidents are recollected from memory.

In *The Shadow Lines*, the text is controlled by the unnamed narrator who is directly controlled by the family members because as the youngest member of the family, he has no experience about the members in Dhaka and the incidents of the Partition. Therefore, the memory which he recollects is formed not just of his personal experience, rather it is the collective creative experience of the others, thereby, presenting a situation of being doubly removed from reality. When Thamma is narrating from her memory the feelings and personal experiences in Dhaka and Kolkata, her focus is on her parents, Maya's sister, and her 'jathamasai', but when the narrator retells these incidents to us, his focus is Thamma, Thamma's role and Thamma's position in those incidents. The narrator tries to find out and reveal Thamma as an individual victim of the violence. Here 'memoir' is an important narrative configuration, but the narrative is very frequently switching on and off the past, present and future not only from the perspective of the narrator, but from the perspective of Tridib, Thamma, May Price and other members related to the narrator. Memoir is subjective by nature and this subjective element claims the veracity of the nation's history. So, it is challenging the western objective claim for the veracity of history. This ideology of nation's history through individual and family stories is the base on which the form and other aesthetic modes and contents are built up. In this section, our purpose is to show how the narrative of the text attempts to move towards 'autonomy'.

The narrative in *The Shadow Lines* makes the readers confused and puzzled because it frequently shifts from present to past, from the far past to near past, from the narrator's life to other members' lives. Therefore, readers while reading the text, are to draw a

chronological table of the fictional events of *The Shadow Lines* . If we make a table of incidents, it will be like this —

<b>Year</b>	<b>The narrator's Age</b>	<b>Events</b>	<b>Book</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
1890s	—	Huge table of Saheb's father shifted from England to India.	I	48
1902	—	The narrator's grandmother born in Dhaka	II	115
1927	—	Mayadevi married to Shaheb	II	124-5
1931, Sep	—	Tridib born	II	182-5
1940, Oct 3rd	—	Tridib and parents return to India	II	183
1952	—	The narrator born	I	3
1959	7 year	Tridib and May begin correspondence	I	17
1962	10 year	Monitor –lizard snake story	I	24-29
1962, Oct	10 year	May receives pornographic letter	II	137
1963, Dec 27	11 year	Mu-i-Mubarak disappears	II	224
1964	12 year	Riots in Kolkata and Dhaka	II	228
1965	13 year	The narrator hears that Tridib was killed	II	238
1971	19 year	News of grandmother's death	I	91
1978-1979	26-27 year	The narrator's London trip for Ph.D	I	13
1979	27 year	Ila's wedding, the narrator gets drunk	II	154
1979, Oct	27 year	The narrator at Teen Murti House library hears the cause of Tridib's death	II	218
1979	27 year	The narrator comes to realize the full meaning of Tridib's death	II	219



The table has been prepared according to the chronological year which covers from 1890 to 1980. During this long time span, the narrator was born in 1952. While reading the text, sometimes we are confused about narrator's power of memory. Is it really possible for an individual to recall and frame a narrative from the incidents happened in other members' lives? How is it possible to be so much meticulous in relating the incidents that happened more than hundred years back? How is it possible to be so much authentic when the incidents did not take place in his own life? Regarding the context of memory, especially 'memory' as a narrative form Salman Rushdie's own view may be applicable :

This is why I made my narrator, Saleem, suspect in his narration; his mistakes are the mistakes of a fallible memory compounded by quirks of character and of circumstance, and his vision is fragmentary. It may be that when the Indian writer who writes from outside India tries to reflect that world, he is obliged to deal in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost.

(Rushdie 10-11)

Any way, it is not at all possible for the narrator, whose grandmother 'Thamma' controls his life so much so that she cannot allow him to waste time in 'addas' or 'gossip', to know the hundred years' past history mentioning the 'year'. Actually, the novelist's control over the text is of a high level, but as a dexterous novelist, he will not allow the readers to feel his presence. At each moment 'disbelief' arises, but the novelist, following Coleridge's theory of 'willing suspension of disbelief', suspends this disbelief logically. Disbeliefs or questions arising in the readers' mind are resolved by the narrative structure of the text which shows that the incidents come in the text in jumbled order because memory is not a linear process. That is why, all family incidents which are narrated in the story come in a haphazard way. This jumbled form also maintains a line of logic. For Example, in the very first sentence, the narrator writes about 'Mayadevi'. Then he writes "the name comes off my pen as

Mayadevi” (SL 1), who will be his Maya- thakuma. Subsequently, he says that he calls ‘Maya- thakuma’ as Mayadevi because she is to him a stranger, like a film star in the newspaper. He adds:

That explanation seems likely enough, but I know it to be untrue. The truth is that I did not ‘want’ to think of her as a relative : to have done that would have diminished her and her family — 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.(SL 3)

In order to persuade the readers into believing the incident, the narrator most of the times in the novel, speaks, “I cannot remember”, “I remember”, “Do not you remember?”.

According to Vinita Chandra:

The recurring question in *The Shadow Lines* — almost a leitmotif of the novel — is the narrator’s insistent “Don’t you remember?” As the receptacle of stories from the other characters in the novel about the family, the country, and worlds far way, the narrator is persistent in putting pressure on his friends and relatives to probe their memories, to search through their personal archives for material that conforms to his recollections. He finds himself reminding them of forgotten events and supplementing their experiences with stories heard from others. But more important, his insistent questioning serves to disturb the opaque silences that hide the most crucial, disruptive memories. (Bose 67)

The question that still remains is — how is it possible for the narrator to give a detailed life description of Mayadevi’s husband and husband’s father (Justice) and the husband’s relationship with Maya’s father? Are all these stories relational stories? He admits that he does not feel any urge of blood relation. Actually all these relational stories provide material

for the memoir structure which directly controls the ideology of national history. If we, the readers, assume that, the narrator is 26/27 years old, when the narrator narrates and puts this into a fictional form, because after 1979/1980 January, there is no further chronological incidents in the narrator's life, we shall take it for granted that he is narrating the past after reaching the age of 26/27.

*The Shadow Lines* shows that the unnamed narrator is controlled by Thamma, whose idea of 'nation' occupies a lot of space in the narration. The ruling authority tries to impose that one nation is separated from other by border line and a nation enjoys sovereignty by nurturing its own culture, language, habit and characteristics. This notion of nation is also nurtured by Thamma. This ideology of nation and nationhood proves to be false. It may appear that the ideology of Tridib wins over Thamma's ideology. But in course of the narrative, it also presents how Tridib falls prey to communal violence and how he is murdered by a group of violent and narrow minded murderers whose physical strength triumphs over the intellect and imaginative concept of humanism and universalism. One may ask — why did the narrative not project the glory or heroism of Tridib? Is it not the proper place to present the courage, valour and heroism of Tridib through the narrative? The narrator is giving a day-to-day detail of incidents; it suggests that everything is fresh in narrator's mind. He says that on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1964, Grandmother, Tridib and May left for Dhaka in order to fetch Jathamasai of Thamma. After coming back from Dhaka, the narrator did not ask Thamma about Thamma's uncle or Tridib's whereabouts, and at the end of January, the narrator's father tells the narrator of Tridib's death as accident and swears into secrecy about it. But in July, 1965 at the age of 13, the narrator hears for the first time that Tridib is 'killed'. At that moment also, his mother tries to conceal the real incident. But the readers' expectation does not match the narrative incident:

She's [Grandmother] never been the same you know, since they killed Tridib over

there.

‘Killed’ Tridib? I said, as the needle slipped into my arm. Who killed Tridib? You told me it was an accident.

Yes, yes, my mother said quickly. That’s what I meant. Now go to sleep, don’t worry.

Why did you say ‘killed’? I said. What did you mean?

But the soporific glow of the tranquilliser had already begun to warm my body and in a moment I shut my eyes and forgot.

That was the first time I had any inkling that Tridib’s death was the result of something other than an accident. (*SL* 238)

Readers very often wonder at the narrator becoming so casual about Tridib’s death because it is Tridib who teaches the narrator how to see the world and who builds the narrator’s philosophy at the age of eight. In September, 1978, the narrator met Robi in London where Robi narrated the detailed incidents in Dhaka. Readers find here a gap, a ‘silence’ on the part of the narrator about Tridib’s death. Different ideologies which are working and interacting in this novel, cannot find dominance over each others; on the contrary, the novel achieves its own ‘autonomy’ by establishing its own course of presenting narrative.

But the text, *The Shadow Lines* fills up the gap of ‘silence’ on the part of the narrator — whether he deliberately bypasses Tridib’s death or he becomes a victim of the then situation. The fictional narrative poses the narrator as the victim of the then situation. His parents do not want him to get involved in such incidents of communal riots. Tridib’s death is willingly suppressed by the narrator’s parents to the narrator. Their tendency as guardians of a child reflects the tendency of the ruling class to sweep the tragic incidents of the individuals under the carpet in order to keep the people of the nation ignorant of the fact so that no hindrance comes in the way of ideology of nationalism. A long ‘gap’ or ‘silence’

of fifteen years is created deliberately. It is the strategy of national ideology to keep individuals 'silent' by suppressing issues as communal violence, suffering, loss and death of common mass.

Therefore, it is seen that the ideology of nationalism as structured by the dominant nationalist power and system is questioned by such narrative forms as subjective nature of memoir and revelation through personal experiences of the individuals. The demand of these narrative forms, in another way, brings a kind of departure from the demands of the ideological content of the text and the inner conflict of the text is resolved through an atmospheric presentation which initiates in the readers a sense of suppressing disbelief of the incidents of individual life. This is the strategic process that makes the text, *The Shadow Lines* a successful fictionalized text.

### ***The Glass Palace* (2000): Gaps and Silences**

Though *The Glass Palace* is often seen as a product of a rigid structure of ideology of the British colonizers, Japanese invaders, and dictatorial Government of Burma in the later period of 20th century, it is a fiction of family influenced by the socio-political milieu of South-Asian nations. The ideological policy of the colonizers in South Asian countries from 1880s is the central focus and the controlling force of the novel. This ideological content of the text cannot be presented without a proper literary form which through its proper elaboration works upon the ideological content. Therefore, ideological content and a specific literary form are complementary to each other. The literary form adopted for the text is a third person story-telling narrative form but this third person story-telling narrative form is integrated and supported by a historical record. Some part of the novel may appear to be historical and some part of it may appear to be fictional and imaginary. Such historical and political figures as the last king of Burma, King Thebaw, and Queen Supayalat, the

Burmese Princess and contemporary political figure Aung San Suu Kyi are brought to make a realistic presentation in the backdrop of the fictional lives of Rajkumar, Dolly, Uma, Saya John and other members of these two families. It is a family fiction in the garb of national and international colonial and political power relation, which reflects its positive and negative influence on individual life story and family relationship. The narrative of the story which is controlled by the ideology of power politics, seems somewhere deviated from the logic of ideology as it has its own aesthetic law which brings about turns and twists in the story-line needed for the completion of the story and leads to its autonomy.

- **The Queen's 'Silence' Reflecting 'Silence' in the Text :**

Ideology of the colonizers and the then ruling Government and ideology of the common man, Rajkumar, whose success and position defying the ideology of the ruling class have been shown as interplay of ideologies in the previous chapter. But the dominance of the royal family decreases gradually. The whole of Part One – “Mandalay” and first twenty pages of “Ratnagiri” (Part Two) seem to the readers to be the historical presentation of Burmese royal family, its dominance over its people and the loss of dominance after being defeated by the British colonizers. This part of the text shows how the royal family rules so many servants and maids for its own purpose and how this ruling power is gradually losing, but the relationship between the Queen and Dolly is a very intimate and familial relationship, because Dolly rears the princesses and they also love Dolly profoundly. But, the novel shows how Dolly is shifted from the Outram House to Uma's house, i.e the Residency gradually. It is in another way, a shifting from historical sphere to fictional sphere. Dolly starts to spend all the day and night in Uma's company. But, the readers see that the Queen is silent and she does not oppose to live in the Residency. However, one may ask — how does the Queen who is so much critical of and angry with the Collector, Beni Prasad Dey, allows Dolly to live at Collector's house? How does the

Queen allow Dolly to spend days after days with Uma? Why does the Queen remain silent seeing Dolly going out of her clutches? Dolly, who is a maid of the Queen's family for all time and who is very much loyal to her mistress, starts to deny her authority; and the Queen says nothing in spite of feeling her loss of power. At this juncture, the novel shifts its focus from the Royal Burmese family to Dolly-Rajkumar family which will be the next central theme of the novel. Dolly's position is changed from a maid servant to the mistress of a wealthy businessman, Rajkumar, as she comes out of the clutch of the authoritative control of the Queen's family. This 'silence' is the space which helps the theme to continue according to the demand of the aesthetic purpose. This space, on the other hand, proves that the ideology of the Royal family is going to decay, and no ideology is everlasting in reality and dominant in the novel. Autonomy of the novel is being voiced following its own course spontaneously and smoothly without bringing any disorder and damage of the flow of the novel. Similarly, the way the novel ends, brings another 'gap' in the ideologies of the characters — Rajkumar and Uma and this 'gap' is filled with such a fictionalized version of history that helps in completing the movements in the novel.

- **The Ending of the novel consolidating the Fictional aspects of the novel:**

While Rajkumar's evolving career begins to take shape with the help of Saya John, a successful teak merchant, we are given a glimpse into the awkward beginnings of a new life for King Thebaw and his family as they try to settle into the port town of Ratnagiri. King Thebaw is revered by the local community, and in time the family come to feel secure and even happy in their new surroundings. The arrival of a new Collector stirs up feelings of resentment towards the colonial regime, but Uma, the Collector's headstrong wife, is able to help bridge the gap by befriending Dolly.

Meanwhile, Rajkumar has been enduring the hardships of the teak trade, having witnessed man and beast working together on an epic scale as elephants transport large volumes of wood down from the forests for sale into the British Empire's vastly expanding markets. Rajkumar starts to make his own way to world after receiving advice from his new friend and colleague Doh Say. Borrowing cash from Saya John, he makes the journey to India to recruit poverty-stricken village-dwellers into the comparatively lucrative (yet undoubtedly perilous) world of early oil-mining in Burma. Having made enough money this way, Rajkumar does what has been his dream for some time: buy a timber-yard of his own, with Doh Say as business partner. Through an Indian connection in Rangoon, Rajkumar makes contact with Ratnagiri via Uma, finds Dolly and after some drama, finally persuades her to leave the family she has been exiled with, and return with him to Burma as his wife. In Burma his family grows and he lives peacefully there depending on rubber plantation economically. Manju and Neel's marriage, Jaya's birth, Dinu's love making with Allison, Bela's caring for Jaya, Arjun's job in the army, Dolly's spiritual revelation, Uma's social work — all these are narrated to present the story of a complete family. The Japanese invasion on Malaya and Burma and subsequently the loss of lives and properties show how a full and prosperous family comes to an end. Finally, families are scattered after the World War II. The mood of the family is caught in the following lines:

Holding her daughter to her breast, Manju remembered a passage that Dolly had read to her just a few days before: it was from the Buddha's first sermon, delivered at Sarnath, two thousand and five hundred years before ... birth is sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow; contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow ... (GP 344).



These words become the central and pervading mood of Rajkumar's family and the mood of the fiction too. This decaying and receding mood leads to describe many deaths of the family — deaths of Neel, Manju, Hardy, Arjun, Dolly, Rajkumar, Uma, Jaya's Husband, Alison, Alison's parents, Dinu's wife, — almost fifteen deaths occur. The fiction, *The Glass Palace*, moves forward to end with Dinu's success of "The Glass Palace Studio" and Jaya's research in Burmese literature — "She was doing research in Burmese literature, writing a dissertation on *The Glass Palace Chronicles* — a famous nineteenth-century history, written in the reign of King Bodawpaya, an ancestor of King Thebaw" (GP 532). Uma, who is seen to have gained social and political popularity as she actively participates in social and political reformation in New York, Tokyo, Shanghai and Singapore and other countries outside India, wishes to return and settle down at her house in Calcutta. She will visit her friends Matthew and Elsa in Malaya, Dolly and Rajkumar in Rangoon on the way of her return. In Morningside House, Uma is shown the plantation of teak and rubber by Matthew, the son of Saya John. Uma plays a major role here as incidents revolve around her when she asserts herself as a feminist. When Uma, realizing how labourers are oppressed, goes to the house of Ilongo's mother, and shows her rigidity in resisting the crime which Rajkumar did by sexually exploiting a labor woman. Ilongo is the bastard child of Rajkumar who tells the unnamed woman that "his wife had turned away from the world; that she'd lost interest in her home and her family, in him" (GP 236). Therefore he needs another woman to satisfy his sexual urge just as Saya John exploits Ma Cho and gets that unnamed woman pregnant. When the unnamed mother of Ilongo speaks in favour of Rajkumar, as "He wasn't so bad; better than some other. One time, I saw a picture of his wife and I said to him, she's so beautiful, like a princess" (GP 236), Uma retorted, "This is a shameful business. I'll go to the police if I need to" (GP 237). Uma, being awakened by feminist assertion thinks that Rajkumar should be punished for deceiving all. But Uma herself is seen to have a physical

intercourse with Rajkumar. Why is Uma's stand point changed? Is it false ideology? Is it only the way of presenting the unknown history behind Ilongo's birth? The novel ends not in the way it begins and develops, as the last section shows no connection with the structure and mood of the text. The novel *The Glass Palace* ends as a fiction, without any connection with history and ideology. All members after enjoying sensuous pleasure with heart's content. They get 'nirvana' or 'mukti' and the novel completes the circle in terms of its content and mood through the presentation of 'nothingness of life' of Burmese Buddhism. The novel ends thus:

What I saw that morning in my great-great-aunt Uma's bed- room remains to this day the most tender, the most moving sight I have ever seen, and from the day when I sat down to write this book – the book my mother never wrote – I knew that it was here that it would end. (*GP* 547)

The ending is a forceful one because the necessity of presenting the physical meeting of Uma and Rajkumar is completely unlawful and illogical. Uma, who is older than Rajkumar, and who is a social activist and a Marxist, is seen sharing a bed with Rajkumar at the end of her life. This incident serves no fictional purpose except helping in formation of the end of the novel. This last section ends with the narration of Jaya's son with 'I' narrative, where the whole novel is described in third person narrative. Here Ghosh is breaking the traditional path and paving a new way of narrative where the fiction is given an 'autonomy' to flow in any direction it wishes. In relation to Ghosh's narrative, N. Leena comments:

Many other narratives are intricately interwoven into the texture of the novel making use of innovative narrative techniques like polyphony and heteroglossia. The excessive freedom allowed to characters makes it a polyphonic novel. The variety of linguistic registers that the characters use in the novel allows heteroglossia to occupy a prominent role. (163)

Amitav Ghosh, puts forth his view about the ending of the novel:

One night I woke up, and this final scene — this is when I was just half way through the book — suddenly I saw this scene, and I knew the next morning I would have to get up and write it . And that’s what I did. This was way before the book was finished, but I knew that this scene would be the end of the book.

(Ghosh’s interview with Frederick Luis Aldama)

Therefore, it may be said that the novel, *The Glass Palace* posits some ideological ‘gaps’ which contribute to attaining the autonomy of the novel.

### ***The Hungry Tide* (2004): Gaps and Silences**

Of all novels of Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is one which is so tightly woven by ideologies of the novel, that it hardly gives the scope of loosening of ideology, as in *The Hungry Tide*, every incident, character and dialogue centre round the content of the ideology. Fiction, history and ideological form and content are so perfectly blended in this novel that ideological ‘gap’ is hardly seen in this text.

Fokir’s death in the novel, represents the death of the ‘other’, death of the ‘subaltern’. A subaltern is to die for the sake of his master, otherwise the structure of the social system will tumble down. Some critics of Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* think that it is because of spaces of ‘transculturation’ or ‘hybridization’ in the field of multicultural and multilingual social and historical perspectives that “mutual transformation or even an annihilation of one’s identity” takes place, and this is why, “Fokir has to die to protect Piya, shielding her from the storm with his own body” (Ghosh and Bhattacharaya 164). Piyas Chakraborti, in his article “The Tides of History: Changing Currents of History and Identity in *The Hungry Tide*” supports Fokir’s death in the light of justification of ‘transculturation’ or ‘hybridization’.

The point of the argument is that if an annihilation of one's identity is essential for the fulfilment of "transculturation", then why should Piya not die? Why should Fokir die? Does the death of a man mean the annihilation of one's identity? The text shows that Piya cannot die; but Fokir must, because Fokir is the East; Fokir is the Subaltern agent, representing Nature and knowledge of Nature; on the other hand, Piya is representing the West and a guest to the host Fokir. When the West is unable to understand Nature and culture of the East, the West misinterprets the East, as has been shown by Said in *Orientalism* (1978):

... it views the Orient as something whose existence is not only displayed but has remained fixed in time and place for the West. So impressive have the descriptive and textual success of orientalism been that entire period of Orient cultural, political and social history are considered mere responses to the West. The West is the actor, the orient a passive reactor. The West is the spectator, the judge and jury of every facet of oriental behavior. (Said 108)

Similarly, Piya in *The Hungry Tide* misinterprets Fokir's intention of killing the tiger in a village and Piya reveals a completely opposed kind of view about Fokir in relation to the tiger episode. The killing of the tiger by the villagers and Fokir's help in killing the tiger reveal the difference between Piya's philosophy of ecology and Fokir's practical knowledge of Nature and ecology. Piya's knowledge/perception of animal preservation does not match the real life situation in the tidal country 'the Sundarbans'. It is a fact that an upper class man/woman cannot realize what happens in reality when he/she confines himself/herself within the knowledge derived from books, journals or magazines. Tiger, to the native people like Fokir, is not an object of glory and not an animal to be reserved, but an evil spirit for whom political persecution happened in their community (Bandyopadhyaya 24). But, Piya's law of nature does not match with Fokir's law of life. The mental distance between

Piya and Fokir is aggravated by Kanai, who remarks to Piya, “Did you think he was some kind of grass-root ecologist? He’s not. He’s a fisherman he kills animals for a living” (*HT* 297). The author deliberately employs the sentence “He is a fisherman” which makes the readers perceive that both Piya and Fokir are the inseparable parts of the same project. But these sentences draw a borderline between them that one is a researcher and the other is a fisherman, one is a grass-root ecologist while the other is not. If Piya is a grass-root ecologist, what term can be used for Piya’s interest in Dolphin? Why does Piya revert to Fokir’s law after some temporary alienation being motivated by Kanai? Is it because of Dolphin, a less harmful animal which is Piya’s target of project? (Bandyopadhyaya 25). In this context, Piya’s real life experience is just the opposite of what the text actually promotes. The text’s attempt of removing the illusive and false conception about the ‘subalterns’ and revealing the true essence of the East to the West cannot be served if Piya is not enriched by the knowledge of Fokir. Therefore, what the life of Fokir fails to do (to illumine Piya), the death of Fokir can do and by this way the death of Fokir actually caters to the demand of fiction: “She could feel the bones of his cheeks as if they had been super imposed upon her own; it was as if the storm had given them what life could not; it had fused them together and made them one” (*HT* 390). Fokir’s death is a strong ‘silent’ blow to Piya’s ideology of system of ecology and language. Piya is changed after Fokir’s death. In her uncertain diasporic identity, Piya finds herself anew and she decides to settle at Lucibari. She thinks of contributing a fund for the education of Fokir’s son, Tutul and for the training of Fokir’s wife, Moyna. Her suggestion to Kanai “It’ll be good to have him home” (*HT* 399) seems rightly applicable to Piya’s own self. Therefore, at the end, the dominant ideology of the west is replaced by a cosmopolitan humanitarian attitude of life where the difference of class, caste, race, gender and ethnicity blur into a single human community and this is possible by the mysterious way literature and its elements function.

### ***Sea of Poppies* (2008): Gaps and Silences**

The weaving of the fictional characters, incidents and situations is so close in *Sea of Poppies* that it appears to be loose and abrupt nowhere in this novel. The fictional characters appear not to be attached with reality and history, but they are creating an impression of reality of history. The novelist has used the characters of the novel in a subjective manner, but the characters' lives, family histories, activities, attitude, and feelings of life follow and build up a logic of history which creates an image of objective version of history of colonization and exploitation. Siddhartha Biswas in "*Sea of Poppies* and Narrative of Exclusion" comments:

Amitav Ghosh has repeatedly looked at some of these characters / groups and his stance has ever been one of subjective objectivity. He has focused on the personal, but has never lost himself to the accepted logic of history. Therefore, one of the best ways to begin a discussion related to the narrative of the past in Amitav Ghosh, is by borrowing one of his assertions from *The Glass Palace* (2009), an assertion that is presented through the character of Daw Thin Thin Aye, who says, "To use the past to justify the present is bad enough — but it's just as bad to use the present to justify the past" (Ghosh and Bhattacharya 169).

Therefore, a novelist does not want to follow the fixity of history; rather he creates for the characters or individuals the space of individual consciousness and ideology. The dynamic aspect of history and historiography is built up by reality which is dynamic and always changing. Each character in the novel has an individual history and is fulfilled in individual entity. Therefore, though the characters are the creations of the novelist and the subjective projection for the subjective purpose of the fiction, they are logically complete and perfect in their own history, society and family.

The novel shows the power relation between the British colonizers and the colonized Indian people, the exploitation and economic growth through the opium trading by the British colonizers. The form of the novel conforms to the content of the ideology of power. Therefore, the characters, incidents, and situations converge to the fulfilment of that ideology, but fiction has its own course. One such fictional projection is Paulette-Zachery love episode.

- **Paulette - Zachery Story :**

Pierre Lambert, the father of Paulette Lambert, comes to India as an assistant curator of Calcutta's Botanical Gardens. Jadu's mother becomes the wet-nurse of Paulette, whose mother dies after the birth of the baby. Paulette knows French, English and Bengali. Her attraction for Zachary issues out of her appreciation of the charm of his gentleness and decency. Her intention is to come out of the custody of Mr. Burnham for which she wishes to take a journey in the '*Ibis*'. Paulette-Zachery love episode is not the presentation of any historical documentation; rather this is somewhat creating a romantic feeling in the novel. As there are some social obstacles in their love relationship, these obstacles make the episode even more interesting. The narrator of the fiction, at the very beginning of the novel, gives us a detailed physical, parental, and professional description of Zachary. The nautical description is so much detailed and the lascary language conversed between Serang Ali and Zachary is so much obscure that it does not attract the readers. Though Zachary is the second helper of the Schooner — '*Ibis*', he is given a lot of importance by the narrator. Paulette's first love for Zachary makes her romantic — "... of all letters, it was the 'Z' that gave her the most trouble, ... in exploring its shape and size, her pen turned it around and around, shaping it into loops and whorls that seemed, somehow, to want to knot itself with the humble P of her own initials" (*SOP* 210-211). The novelist's choice of words and expression intensify their love relationship. She flies through the wings of imagination to

Zachary — “What would Zachary say if he saw her in it” [wearing a scarlet Benarasi Silk]” (SOP 211). Miss Lambert expresses her wish to Zachary about her journey in the ship ‘Ibis’, but Zachary resists her from going. Paulette says, “I would like to join the crew of the *ibis*, Mr.Reid” (SOP 306), but Zachary expresses the reality — “it’s not only that you’re a woman — it’s also that you are a white. The ‘Ibis’ will be sailing with an all — lascars crew which means that only her officers will be “European” (SOP 307). Here, the ideology of the masters (Europeans) tries to contradict the contrary ideology of an individual (Paulette) who, on the other hand, intends to equate herself with the native lascars — “jahaz-bhais and jahaz-bahens — to each other. There’ll be no differences between us” (SOP 356). Though the ideology of the former tries to overshadow the ideology of the latter, it does not persist for a long time. The story shows how autonomy of the novel is ensured through the interplay of ideologies which tend to dominate the novel. Paulette’s love for Zachary in the dark cabin serves a crucial role in the plot structure of the novel and in translating the plan of the lascars into reality. There must have some fictional purposes for giving so much importance to Zachary. As he is of mixed origin, he cannot be matched with Mr Crowl, or Mr Burnham; he is shown as a sympathetic, affectionate and loving character. The question is: Is there any ideological purpose in projecting Zachary as being different from the conventional Europeans? Whereas Burnham, Mr. Doughty and Mr. Crowl are shown cruel and driven by their own economic and ideological policy, Mr. Zachary is mild and polite in behaviour and the spontaneous course of the novel and expectation of the readers are created for the matching of Paulette and Zachary. But the impossibility and difficulties of the matching between the two are lengthened and in this way the intensity of the attraction is accomplished.



### ***River of Smoke* (2011): Gaps and Silences**

*River of Smoke*, the second of the *Ibis* trilogy introduces a new character Bahram Modi. The novelist's purpose of introducing this new character and of making that character most important in *River of Smoke* is to make the readers acquainted with the history of Indo-British interface at commercial level through the story of an individual. This is the most important technique of Amitav Ghosh to whom community story vis-à-vis individual story is of prior importance. Sajal Kumar Bhattacharya has pointed out in the similar vein:

So far as this China trade is concerned, an influential Parsi traders' community also carried on with this export of opium parallel to the British. This community operated mostly from Bombay and when it came to the issue of trade, it was working in tandem with the colonial masters.... The Parsees were so influential that in the traders guild formed in Canton (the modern day Guangzhou) to promote and safeguard the interests of "Free trade" in China, inclusion of one member of the Parsi Community was a must. (Kar and Maiti 85)

Both the novelist and the readers are conscious of the 'mask' or the illusion that the British coloniser wants to impose upon China. Therefore, the writer creates a logical distance from the Canton leaders who opposed the illogical import system of opium trading and that is why, Ghosh makes the Canton leaders speak about the bad impact of opium on their country and the loss of plants and rare specimen of paintings of the Chinese painters. Ghosh draws our attention to Chinese Flora which was the sole target for the Europeans who tried to transport plants from China to England and France:

The value of China's plants had not been lost on Britain's rivals and enemies across the Channel: the major physic gardens and herbariums of both Holland and France had also been endeavouring to assemble collections of Chinese

flora — and for considerably longer than Britain — but they too had not had much success. ... Their gardeners and horticulturists were among the most knowledgeable and skillful in the world, and they guarded their treasures with extraordinary vigilance ... (*ROS* 101).

After having all such information about China, the readers logically take the side of the Chinese leaders' position of rigidity and their defence against the import of opium. On the other hand, Bahram Modi, an Indian agent of the British trade, falls into difficulty as it would be a huge personal monetary loss if his company fails to export the ship of opium to China. Where should the readers' expectation go? If it is the defeat of the British trade, it is a loss more for Bahram Modi than for the Company. Ghosh creates this tension which is interesting and which carries the theme of the novel forward. In course of the progression of the episodes, the Chinese position and decision are brought to focus through the form of letters. Otherwise the strong challenging position of the Chinese painters cannot be brought out easily. Therefore, the letter series comes as an essential form or structure of 'internal distantiating', which gives the writer an enviable opportunity to reinforce the stance of Modi.

But the structure of letter demands its own ideology. When letters are communicated between two friends, it demands a very informal and casual structure. We observe that the letters are written in a very familial and informal way by Robin Chinnery, the painter and the childhood friend of Paulette, to Paulette and a single letter was written by Mr. Charlie King to Mr. Elliott. Though the letters are written in a familial gossip approach, the content of the letters is not personal, rather the content is related to international affairs. Though the content of the letter is deliberately deferred by the novelist for the purpose of reaching the centre of the content that Chinese authority will not provide other countries with any information, the structure of letter is trying to reach and satisfy its own demand. In these

informal letters, Robin Chinnery addressed Paulette in different names, which reflects his loving relationship with Paulette.

The novel, *River of Smoke* nurtures its fictional character by the story of Fitcher, Paulette and Robin — the story comes in relation to the letter series. For example, the mention of *Camellia Sinensis* for which Paulette and Fitcher are brought and connected with Robin to procure the species and for which the letter series is brought to be communicated is a fictional projection. Both fictional purpose and the ideological purpose are satisfied by this single device. If it just plays the ideology of the Chinese politics, it would not mention the childhood story of Paulette, Jadu and Robin and their intimate relationship. Each time when a painter's name is introduced to the readers, the details are given in immediate subsequence in order to satisfy the interest of the readers. It is clear that the novelist uses the letter series as a tool for Chinese alternative ideology against all challenges of the British colonial ideology, but the fictional traits are not absent here. At almost every moment the readers expect Paulette's reply to Robin, as Paulette is a very serious botanical researcher, but the writer avoids it in order to intensify the interest of the readers and Paulette as well. Only fiction can do this, because fiction enjoys this freedom. It is rather 'autonomy', not freedom, because its freedom is restrained by the ideology of the content i.e. by the Chinese painters' reluctance to give anything to the people beyond their country. Naturally, as the design proceeds, the long journey for the searching of plant proves to be a failure. Robin, at last, informs Paulette, "But you should know the golden camellia was not among them. That is because this plant does NOT exist" (*ROS* 536). Letter series, therefore, function as the tool for providing the readers with an alternative mode which makes the fiction enjoy its autonomous status.

Just as the story of relationship among Paulette, Jadu and Robin comes in connection with the Chinese rigid ideological stance regarding their paintings and plants (botany),

similarly, the illegal love relationship between Chi-mei and Bahram, Chi-mei's deep love for 'Mister Barry', the birth of Freddy (Ah Fatt), the murder of Chi-mei by decoits, Modi's lamentation for his wife are brought to the novel as subsequent fictional elements of Bahram's opium trading as a co-operation with the British company. Therefore, it shows how the fictionalized story elements flow spontaneously in course of narrating China's ideological stance against the colonizer's ideology. The novelist's intention to show the ideological struggle between two powerful countries is successfully presented in the novel, but this text integrates fiction, form and ideology so dexterously that *River of Smoke* becomes a product of all elements.

So, these five novels are viewed from a standpoint that they have reached a state of autonomy through the interplay of different ideologies and refusing to be subservient to any single dominant ideology. Multiple ideologies work in each novel, but no ideology is dominant, in the sense that the impact of ruling-class ideology and the critiquing of ruling-ideology by subordinate ideology (in some cases subversive) is neutralized and an aesthetic feeling and pleasure emerges spontaneously by its own autonomy. Though the literary forms are selected in the novels to support the content of the ideology, the forms have their own structure and own logic. This logical structure of the form of the text acts as complementary to the development of the ideological content of the text maintaining its autonomy, but a moment comes when the logic of the form and the logic of the ideological structure tend to have contrary demands. In *The Shadow Lines*, the ideology of nationalism is questioned by another ideology which emphasizes subjective experiences of the individuals. But no ideology wins over the other as some 'silences' prove the limitation of ideology and ensure the autonomy of the narrative. Failure of the dominant ideology in *The Glass Palace* takes place through the emergence of a successful common man, Rajkumar defying the dominant ideology of the British colonisers. But the common man's ideology is

seen to be scattered as there is no fixity of ideological structure. Changing situation of life determines the change of ideology and the novel presents the reality of life. *The Hungry Tide* contains a diary within the fictional structure for narrating the story of a group of marginalized and refugee people and their experiences against all oddities. The history and ideology of the oppressed 'other' is set as a counter ideology of the ruling Government. *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke* use some fictional elements against the backdrop of the history of opium-trading by the British Empire. Whereas the power-relationship of two powerful countries of the world and their ideologies control the novels, the Paulette-Zachary love episode, and Deeti-Kalua love relationship are instrumental in ensuring the release of novels from the dominance of ideologies.

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## CONCLUSION

The discussion carried on in the earlier chapters leads one to the inevitable conclusion that ideology apparently plays a determining role in the formation of Amitav Ghosh's novels. Characters, events, and situations in the text, in Eagleton's words 'pseudo-real', are determined and controlled by certain ideologies of history. Ghosh's novels show how different ideologies influence one another, interact with one another in the development of the plots and in the progress of the characters, yet sometimes these ideologies question one another in order to bring out the reality of life and history. It is worthwhile to note that in spite of the interplay of multiple ideologies in the production of the events, characters and settings, none of these ideologies is dominant; in other words, the novel retains its own autonomy rather than becoming subservient to ideology/ideologies. In Ghosh's novels, the interplay of different ideologies leads the novels in attaining aesthetic effects. An internal distanciation or 'rupture' takes place in clash with ideology (-ies) in his novels. Attaining a position of rupture is important on the part of Ghosh for critiquing a certain ideology. Most of his novels create this 'rupture' by sticking to the demands of the particular 'form' (e.g. 'memoir' in *The Shadow Lines*, diary writing in *The Hungry Tide*, letter series in *River of Smoke*) of the novels. Sometimes, the demand of the particular 'form' comes in clash with the demand of ideologies presented in the novels, though the course of the narrative itself spontaneously brings the particular 'forms'.

In course of the study, it is seen that the ideological influences in the formation of different novels of Ghosh vary in degree. In some of Ghosh's novels, the intensity of controlling ideology is in the optimum level; but in some of his novels this intensity is in lesser level and text's aesthetic 'autonomy', on the other hand, is in the highest degree. Yet, the optimum level of controlling ideology does not mean that the novel is not of superior



quality. Indeed, 'ideology' in the present dissertation signifies 'structure of ideas' which tightens the whole story line so that events do not spread loosely. From this point of view, Ghosh's novels are very much well-planned, and well-structured. Each event, character, and relation among the characters is designed by the purpose of the dominant ideology which controls reality and society. On the other hand, the 'highest' degree of novel's aesthetic 'autonomy' does not signify that it negates fully ideology. When the novel introduces fictionalized characters, events, settings and episodes, they are structured by their own ideology. Ideological content and fictional form are interdependent, yet the demand of ideological content and the demand of fictional form cause clash between them. So, they enjoy their independent course. It can be said that the conflict between the ideology and the text is not always prominent and intense. It is also viewed that ideology-text and text-ideology relation sometimes remains in an in-between state.

I have held a detailed discussion on the select novels of Amitav Ghosh to have a clear and thorough understanding of his works in the light of the two theoretical perspectives as we have seen in the previous chapters. The attempt has been made to basically drive home the point that despite the strong ideological constrains in the novels, the novels liberate themselves from these constrains in order to attain autonomy. *The Shadow Lines* (1988), a highly innovative and complicatedly structured novel, focusing on a fact of history, the post-partition violence, creates an overall impression of a perfect conglomeration of fact, fiction and reminiscence. In this connection it can be said that the theme or the issue is an important factor in the condition of ideology. Nation, nationalism, Partition, violence and death are very crucial issues for ideology to grip them. Personal experience and public events are woven in such a complex way that it demands a prolific experience and a high level of understanding to perceive the text. *The Shadow Lines* is a novel of history where reality is merged with individual memory and imagination. Multiform and multilevel realities by different

individuals are expressed by different ideologies based on historical realities. Ghosh's prime concern, here, is not with the recording of history, but with the motivation behind the creation of history which is fraught to a large extent with the instances of nation coming into existence. For example, Thamma's personal experience facing the Partition leads her to shape her own ideology of nation which is, if not necessarily, in complete conflict with the ideology of nationalism in reality. The characters like Ila, Thamma, Ila's mother, the Narrator's parents are presented following their own ideologies making striking contrasts to the characters like Tridib and the unnamed narrator. Characterization and weaving the plot of the story are controlled by central ideology of the text which is termed by Terry Eagleton as "General Ideology" (GI). This textual ideology or general ideology of *The Shadow Lines* is created to make the readers feel a contrast to the characters' ideology presented through a set of discourses of thoughts, beliefs and values.

*The Shadow Lines* may appear to follow submissively and subserviently the theory of general ideology of Eagleton. We cannot deny the fact that a text is a product of particular history and ideology, but, at the same time, it is to be kept in mind that a text is not a mere puppet in the hands of ideology and history. *The Shadow Lines* is a case in point. *The Shadow Lines* is a successful art, because it enjoys an autonomy of aestheticism through its subjective stance of memoir structure. The subjective experience of the communal violence and subsequent loss of human lives and property prove that nation does not care much for the loss of human beings, rather it tries to hide the truth instead of recording the truth. It weaves out its narrative against the backdrop of partition which is to be attributed to the intentional motif of the dominant class. But the novel critiques and defies the ruling ideology and embodies the ideological belief that partition creates communal violence which never fits in with the spirit of the nation. This memoir structure is a perfect narrative form in defying the fundamental

concept of nationalism and the novel gains autonomy by conveying a message of humanism which must be universal.

The frequent shifting from present to past, from long past to near past, from the narrator's life to other member's life promotes a complex structure which makes a stumbling progress of reading giving a space of time to judge from an opposite stance. Moreover, several long digressive incidents which deviate the readers' attention from the central focus of the novel, come spontaneously and naturally in course of the story of the novel. These are the textual devices to effect a 'distantiation' from the dominant ideology of the text. These are the devices of the text which help the readers to stop momentarily and ponder over the incidents in a detached way and this is a textual technique to give the text an autonomous status. In this sense, *The Shadow Lines* can be placed in the middle position of the line drawn according to the intensity of controlling power of ideology in the formation of the text.

*The Glass Palace* (2000) is structured by the dominant colonial ideology of the Britishers and the Royal family of Burma. Here, the ideology of the colonial power is shaped in the form of history, which shows the predicament of the common people of Burma and India under the exploitative rules of the rulers. But the 'Author's Notes' denotes that very 'few' characters in this fiction are 'real' people of the Burmese history; therefore, the author moulds other characters, incidents and stories according to the ideology of history and by giving that shape, he creates a feeling of historical truth. This is why, *The Glass Palace*, can be regarded as a novel about history, though most part of the novel is imaginary story. Characters like Beni Prasad Dey, the collector sahib, and Arjun, the soldier of the Indian-British army, are the victims of the falsity of the imperialist ideology which gives them position, but not power and honour. They are trapped by the duality of the dominant ideology of the rulers. But there are some characters like Saya John and Rajkumar who are the fictional product of alternative ideology which does not defy the dominant ideology; on the

other hand, they take the opportunities by making the best use of the ideology of the colonizers which significantly involves the 'wants and desires' of the colonized people. The British colonisers are shrewd; but the colonised Saya John and Rajkumar have more commercial expertise than that of the rulers. After making out the sahib's mental make-up and attitude, Saya makes himself as the situation demands. He realises that 'clothing' is an important marker of identity and attitude. For instance, Saya starts each business trip wearing European dress — 'sola topee, leather boots, khaki trousers'(GP 67), but ends the day shedding all articles of clothing and wears 'nothing more than a *longyi* and a vest'(GP 68). Even he insists on Rajkumar's changing his 'longyi' and 'vest' into suit and black tie when Rajkumar joins a business meeting. Therefore, they perform just the roles of actors. Their authentic, stable identity remains beneath the costuming of suit and tie. They are conscious of the hiatus between their own real selves and their actual experience of performing European roles and attitudes. Saya and Rajkumar are the conscious creations of Amitav Ghosh who seems to prove that individuals can exercise autonomy even remaining in the oppressing dominant ideological framework which tries to subjugate them.

Therefore, the ideological control may appear to be strong in *The Glass Palace*, yet it shows a progression of increasing liberation from its ideological stance. The tightening influence of ideology is seen in the first part of the novel, but the last section shows the gradually weakening control of ideology and the ending consolidates the autonomy of the novel which does not match with the conditioning of ideology.

Though ideology-text and text-ideology contention is obvious in all novels of Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (2004) is the best in the sense that the ideological gap is hardly seen in this novel. Nirmal, a retired headmaster from a local school, in spite of belonging to an upper class elite society, has a natural sympathy for the destitute and suffering people. He believes in the formation of an ideal community where the social and economic discrepancy among

people is less and people may live with full of certainty and peace. He develops a bond with the refugees, who, returning from Dandakaranya, want to settle in Morichjhanpi, an island in the Sunderban delta. The dalit Hindus, most of whom are 'namashudras', after a long miserable experience of uncertainty of life and living in almost life-in-death situation, want the natural resources of food and habitation, which they get in the Kumirmari village. Kusum appears as a refugee woman who, as a representative of the Refugees of Morichjhanpi, shows her struggle for asserting identity and right of living. The story creates an interesting emotional attachment between Nirmal and Kusum, of which Horen is the mediator. On the other side, the opposition of Nilima, whose practical outlook different from her husband's ideology of communism, intensifies the tension of the story — Nirmal's physical weakness, and his emotional attachment with the Refugees, specially with Kusum. Nirmal, being more a romantic in his purpose, thinks of an individual destitute woman, but Nilima, being more a pragmatic, leads a self-help organization called "Mohila Sangathon" which grows up into the "Babadon Trust". Nirmal and Nilima are same in devotion to common people, but with different ideologies. Nilima's project work is more systematic and calculative than that of Nirmal. Nirmal's falling down in mud and spoiling his clothes and face in mud is symbolic presentation of the failure of his romantic communist ideology, but this failure creates pathos, not laughter, by the skilful arrangement of events and narrative style. This is the originality of the novel that it prepares the readers' response and persuades them according to its own intention.

Role and the interplay of ideologies in this novel is very dominant, but subtle. Each and every incident is motivated and motivates other. Clash of ideologies is structured through the inter relationship between Piya and Fokir in the tiger episode and in the storm scene. In the 'tiger-killing scene' Piya's relationship with Fokir reverts, as their philosophy of life differs. Fokir's psychological make-up of natural life is not understood by Piya as Piya from

the very inception of her connection with Fokir observes Fokir in a single way that he is unworldly and always devoted to nature. But the political history of Morichjhanpi, which is the cause of tiger-reserved forest as manifested by the political authority, is fresh in Fokir's mind and he is a part of the movement and a spirit of struggle for existence by obliterating the evil spirit as 'tiger'. That nature in the Sundarban delta is "demonic" and not an object of soothing and pleasure is proved a few minutes later. Fokir's heroic martyrdom in the face of demonic cyclone transforms Piya's law of nature. The novel ends not with the ideological clashes but with a calm resolution, where every difference is resolved by the structure of the arranged events. The 'autonomy' of the novel is established by the systematic structure of the events. Piya's personal project turns into global project, Piya's researched land is transformed into 'home land', individual relationship shifts into collective relationship, thereby making it a glocal community. *The Hungry Tide* has successfully done this.

The novel, *Sea of Poppies* (2008) introduces us with so many other characters, like Deeti, Kalua, Zachary, Hukam Sing, Chandan Sing and prepares the ground for important incidents and setting which are dominated by interplay of different ideologies. The way the novelist describes the *Ibis* shows that it is an object of romanticism; but it is just the opposite. Indeed, it is an object of crude reality. *Ibis* is related to slave trading and opium business. People tortured by different problems of life are drawn to the *Ibis* to escape from their individual sufferings. Here, the ideology of the colonisers instigates them to think and feel that they may have a better life under their supervision; but the mask is revealed to the readers by the incidents of arresting Neel Ratan Halder and Ah Fatt. These incidents occur because of the absolute power of the ruling class. The native Indians who are engaged as 'coolies' in the firms of opium balls are badly affected by opium and the colonisers are making money in the cost of their lives.

Knowledge is power. Lack of knowledge/ignorance of the native Indians is the power of the ruling class to deceive them for their own interest. To challenge the ideology of power is needed the power of knowledge which is represented by Paulette Lambert. The novel shows that the final challenge comes from the intelligent, sweet and resolute Paulette by whom the plan gets success in escaping Kalua, Neel and Ah Fatt from the hands of the masters of the 'Ibis'. Otherwise, they would have been killed by the masters. But, at the same time, the aesthetic purpose is served by the romantic love relationship between Paulette and Zachary. Paulette's entering into the small and dark cabin of Zachary and their conversation reveals their suppressed love which tries to be materialised in reality, but the barrier of race and colour becomes a hindrance in the way of their love making. But, the triumph of humanity over racial, cultural and caste barrier comes through the character of Paulette. Paulette's perception of life elevates us to a universal humanism and an eternal truth that the colour of the skin is just the 'drape of our clothes' and all appearance is deceptive at the end. The success of the novel lies here when in spite of all ideological interactions, the novel transmits the message of universal truth at the end.

Ideology of power is very strong in the structure of the novel, *River of Smoke* (2011). The history of opium trade in the 1830s is the central issue round which the characters, settings and incidents revolve. Ghosh draws the readers' attention to the crucial moment of the Chinese history where the Chinese authority is trying to prevent the illegal import of opium which the British authority prohibits in their own country following their own law because of its dangerous effect on individual and nation's life. The climax of history takes place when the British Raj through some Indian traders is trying to sell the chests of opium to some Chinese traders for their own profit. The climax presents a clash between two powerful countries like Britain and China, but *River of Smoke* would not have been so much attractive, if it would not situate Bahram, a common man, in the political and historical scenario of the

clash. With Bahram's presence the history gets a fictional version where the individual is set at the centre of the narrative. Bahram's ups and down, success and failure, happiness and worried state of life are symbolic of the success or the failure of the opium trading by the British rulers to China. Moreover, Chinese painting (art) and planting (botany) are other strong sources of allurements by the European countries, but Chinese authorities are very conscious of their own creativity. Political and power ideology is very strong on the part of the Chinese law-makers whose strategy is countered by the British traders. *River of Smoke* presents how ideological interplayings prepare the ground which leads to attain the 'autonomy' of the novel. The story of Bahram, his illegal relationship with Chi-mei, his bastard child Ah Fatt, Bahram's legal wife and her love for Bahram and the tension of their relationship bring fictional elements in this novel.

We have, thus, been witness to different aspects of ideology interplaying in the novels. In *The Shadow Lines* and *River of Smoke*, characters, like Thamma, Tridib, and Bahram, in the earlier stage of their lives and in the beginning of the narrative, are controlled by their own ideologies of life. These novels show how the characters are going to flourish in course of the novels intending to attain success, but, towards the end of the novels, the outer reality (reality of society and nation) prevents them from being crowned with achieving success in life. Even the failure of realizing the reality pushes the characters to the jaws of deaths. Ideology is not dominant in the structure of these two novels, though the structure is influenced by different ideologies of the characters; hence, it can be said that the interplay of ideologies enriches and ensures aesthetics of the novels and novels attain their own 'autonomy'.

Apart from characters, setting acts as a part of controlling ideology in *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*. The Sundarbans and Burma, the places and the history of places, of which we are becoming oblivious, come fresh to memory by Ghosh's novels. The form



and structure of the narrative are shaped more by places and their history, and less by characters. History, politics and socio-cultural happenings influence the perceptions and attitudes of the characters, the habits and nature of the individuals, which interact with the contradictory reality of the world. Fokir's perception of life, his reticent nature, his view of nature influence and interact with the contrary view of life and nature of Piya and Kanai. Ideologies generated from the place and the history of the place, enhance the narrative to come out of the confined place and move towards universalism. Piya's perception of 'home' is changed from her native land (U.S.A) to a place where an unknown poor fisherman sacrifices his life for her safety. Thus, 'autonomy' of the novel is attained gradually from the incidents and situations occurring as interplays of ideologies.

To sum up, Ghosh's novels are seen from the perspectives of ideology-text and text-ideology interrelationship, and a pattern gradually evolves out of this interrelation as reflected in his novels. The novels of his later stage, i.e the novels of 'Ibis trilogy' show more intense level of controlling ideology. 'Gaps' or 'silences' in the controlling ideologies are less marked in the later novel of his 'ibis' trilogy. But it is hard to say that his novels are more historical or ideological and less fictional. No such generalised statement or oversimplification is possible. Rather it is wise to leave the debate open as the notion of fixity is dispelled by postmodernism. Ghosh's fictional world is replete with the interplay of ideologies pertaining to history, politics, economy and culture. He has been unanimously regarded as a novelist of eminence and international recognition who has left his indelible mark in Indian English literature.

The present dissertation is restricted to a single purpose, hence, many other possibilities are left for further researches. Researches may be carried out to examine whether any single overarching ideology controls all novels of Ghosh. Researches may be done with a proposition whether Ghosh's repeated objection to the conformity of his works to a specific

ideology is the expression of his anxiety regarding the dichotomy between the text and ideology. Ghosh, time and again, denies the view of the critics who try to categorise him as postmodern and postcolonial writer for his critiquing standpoint of colonialism. He puts forth his view that he himself and his works do not conform to any specific ideology. Therefore, a work may be carried out examining on the works of Ghosh — whether the tension between ideology and aesthetics is coming out of author's own disbelief of fixed ideology.

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