
The Issues of Rooted-Identity, Migration, Hybridization, Dislocation and Displacement in Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason: A Post-Colonial Study

Article Received: 06/06/2022, Article Accepted: 11/07/2022, Published online: 14/07/2022, DOI: 10.36993/RJOE.2022.7.3.08

Aparna Bajpai¹

Research Scholar

Department of English & M.E.L.

University of Allahabad ,

Prayagraj, U.P. (211002)

Email : ab26101994@gmail.com

Prof .Gunjan Sushil²

Professor of English,

(Research Supervisor)

Department of English & M.E.L.

University of Allahabad,

Prayagraj, U.P. (211002)

Email : gunjan.sushil1@gmail.com

Abstract

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956. He grew up in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. He studied at the universities of Delhi and Oxford. He is a passionate and ebullient writer of India. This research paper aims to analyze the binaries that are quite apparent in the first novel of Amitav Ghosh titled *The Circle of Reason* i.e. (tradition and modernity), (oriental and occidental cultures) and (emigration and immigration) which are the real forte of the narrative of the aforementioned novel. In this research paper miscellaneous and diversified issues of the novel will be critically evaluated in the light of postcolonial theory. The novel emphasizes the moral conundrum of those who become the victims of inequity and injustice when they are compelled to cross borders. The thematic issues that have been discussed by him in his first novel are: diaspora, migrant-issues, rooted identity and transnational spaces. It seems that this novel is a critical document of Amitav Ghosh where we can find different types of postcolonial affairs and concerns.

Keywords: Rooted-Identity, Migration, Hybridization, Dislocation and displacement.

Amitav Ghosh is a vigorous and avid writer of India whose writings, especially novels, use various narratological strategies to anatomize national and personal identity traits, remarkably to the people of India and Southeast Asia. He won the 54th Jnanpith award in 2018. In 2007, he was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India's highest honors, by the President of India. He was also the joint winner of the Dan David Award in 2010, along with Margaret Atwood. His oeuvre fastidiously and scrupulously explicated the molding and remolding of identities in colonial and postcolonial societies. One of the reasons why Ghosh is regarded as an influential author is that his narratives do not reside in a neutral zone; instead, they offer astute and byzantine prospects on the current difficulties of the world he writes about. This research paper aims to analyze the binaries: (tradition and modernity), (oriental

and occidental cultures), and (emigration and immigration), which are the unifying ideas and very marrow of the narrative of the novel titled *The Circle of Reason*. In this research paper, various story issues will be critically discussed and analyzed in the light of postcolonial theory. In the book *The Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, the term "postcolonial literature" is defined in the following words: "Postcolonial literature is often engaged with the problems of identity (individual or national) that have resulted from the cultural disruptions initiated by colonialism (disempowerment, dislocation, diaspora, migration)" (551). The novel, *Bildungsroman* in essence and temper, deals with geopolitical boundaries and language hybridization. The book accentuates the moral enigma and the social status of those who become the victims of discrimination when they are obligated to cross borders. The novel focuses on the supremacy of narration and the power of language to proclaim alternative realities. The convergence of various cultural trends, socio-political forces, identity, distinctiveness, heterogeneity of trans-national spaces, and cross-cultural ideas is portrayed in this novel.

His first novel, titled *The Circle of Reason* (1986), is incontrovertibly and unequivocally postcolonial in its marginalization of Europe and postmodern in its non-linear narrative structure and brimming intertextuality. All his important and influential literary works have enjoyed illimitable academic attention across the globe. His scholarly insights and textual research have engrossed and interpreted the

complex colonial and postcolonial situation. The novels of Amitav Ghosh are replete with postcolonial motifs and leitmotifs. The thematic issues he discussed in his first novel are diaspora, migrant issues, rooted identity, and transnational spaces. It seems that this novel is a critical document of Amitav Ghosh where we can trace various types of postcolonial and postmodern issues, i.e., the problem of radical and extensive identity, diasporic sensibility, hybridity, geographical difference, spatial difference, commercialization, the commodification of migrants, cultural interconnectedness, an amalgamation of identities and subaltern relationship. Millions of refugees have been depicted and delineated to suffer a total dislocation of their lives in this novel. The analytical study of the strong characters of this novel through the lens of postcolonial theory reveals the dirty politics of colonialism and strips off the mask of cultural imperialism and capitalism. The following lines from the story tell the brutal and savage face of capitalism:

I was wrong because there aren't any queues there; it's near those lights that the lines are because there aren't any queues without money...wherever money and its attendant arms have chosen to descend on peoples unprepared for its onslaughts, and for all of those hundred and fifty years Mariamma's avatars have left that coast for those lights carrying with them an immense cargo of wanderers seeking their destruction in giving flesh to the whims of capital. (203)

The central character of this novel is Alu, who had to leave his native town, and

due to unavoidable reasons, he had to take shelter in al-Ghazira and, after that, in an Algerian city. It seems that he was journeying to different lands, so his personality is continuously shifting and transforming. He was exposed to various cultures of other lands, so his identity was shaping and moving consistently. Because of the continuous migration, he had to suffer the pangs of an identity problem and especially the agony of diasporic sensibility because Alu could not define his identity and culture. He was having trouble with belongingness. His personality was just like a pendulum oscillating between being and becoming. He could not connect himself with where he goes and what he does. Sometimes he feels happy about his rooted and radical identity, and sometimes he becomes very nostalgic about his roots and nativity. Lois Tyson, in his magnum opus book titled *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, explained and expounded one of the overlapping topics of postcolonial literature in the following words:

The struggle for individual and collective cultural identity and the related themes of alienation, unhomeliness (feeling that one has no artistic "home" or sense of cultural belonging), double consciousness (feeling torn between the social and psychological demands of two antagonistic cultures), and hybridity (experiencing one's cultural identity as a hybrid of two or more cultures, which feeling is sometimes described as a positive alternative to unhomeliness. (427)

The above citation clearly depicts some of postcolonial literature's crucial

topics and issues. The first novel of Amitav Ghosh focuses on these postcolonial issues pragmatically and realistically. *The Circle of Reason* charts the socio-cultural journey of a young weaver Alu (Nachiketa Bose), who is brought up in a small Bengali village Lalpukur. After being falsely arraigned on charges of terrorist activity, he skedaddles westwards to Calcutta, Goa, the fictional Gulf state of al-Ghazira, and finally to Algeria. Alu is the leading character in the novel, although, for large sections of the narrative, he persists more in a kind of silent center. Specific historical events such as the Indian Nationalist struggle of the 1930s, the Bangladesh war of 1971, and the international undertow of migration to the Middle East from the 1970s onwards are accentuated in the novel. Deracination and migration, discombobulating and disorientation, and especially inter-cultural leitmotifs are persistent designs in Ghosh's oeuvre, which are introduced quite fascinatingly in the book. The first section of *The Circle of Reason*, eloquently titled "Satwa: Reason," is a systematized and organized probing of what comprises of scientific approach by exposing the limitations of Balram's aberrant and anomalous science of phrenology. In the contrivance of things where reason is illusory and shadowy, the innocent orphan Alu is absurdly denominated as a terrorist. The escapee Alu flees from the clutches of the police and scrams to South India, where some weavers from Kerala help the truant suspect leave the Indian shores for al-Ghazira in the Persian Gulf on the jerry-built boat Mariamma. While "Satwa: Reason" scrutinizes the constraints of the

authoritarian and pompous ideals of the Enlightenment and their divergence with the demands of practical life, the third part, "Tamas: Death, aims at a natter and confabulation between science, humanism, and religion in postcolonial Algeria. The country has risen from the ashes, surviving the consternation of concentration camps and organized pogrom(genocide) by the French. In a small Algerian town, Ghosh portrays an Indian community of emigrants and expatriates whose members are sharply distinguished and contrasted. The microbiologist Dr. UmaVerma is very genuine and fervid to give a taste of Indian culture to a foreign assemblage of lovers of art and chooses to stage Tagore's Chitrangada with the refugees from al-Ghazira in the main cast. Like the other chimerical and visionary projects in the novel, this one too ends in fiasco.

Throwing up his job Jyoti Das delights in his newfound freedom and rejoices in the prospects of a new life in Dusseldorf. Alu and Zindi are ancillary and piffling migrants who resign themselves to their destiny. Leaving behind their unhappy past, these subalterns put themselves in jeopardy to exacerbate their future. Hope can only give an incentive to a fresh start but whether it will lead to attainment or bitterness is always a toss-up. The novel's

last line reveals this: "Hope is the beginning" (457). The people of Lalpukur were pressured to leave their homeland by events beyond their control. The narrator senses and comprehends these stooges of history very profoundly, who was disgorged and regurgitated out of their native soil years ago in another pogrom. They have been dumped hundreds of miles away on foreign soil. Due to these unavoidable and uncontrollable circumstances, they had no exasperation left, and their only passion was a memory. The following lines of the novel reveal the aforesaid psychic pain of the migrants: "Vomited out of their native soil years ago in carnage, and dumped hundreds of miles away, they had no anger left. Their only passion was memory; a longing for a land where the green was greener, the rice whiter, the fish bigger than boats; where the rivers' name sang like Megh Malhar on a rainy day" (63).

References:

- Cuddon, J.A. Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory. 5th ed., Penguin Books, 2014.
- Tyson, Lois. Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide. 2nd ed., Routledge, 2017.
- Ghosh, Amitav. The Circle of Reason. Penguin Books, 2009.

How to cite this article?

Aparna Bajpai¹ & Prof .Gunjan Sushil²,

“ The Issues of Rooted-Identity, Migration, Hybridization, Dislocation and Displacement in Amitav Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason: A Post-Colonial Study ”, Research Journal Of English(RJOE) 7 (3), PP: 59-62,2022, DOI: <http://doi.org/10.36993/RJOE.2022.7.3.08>