Chapter IV
4. Fiction

Ghosh’s novels are filled with fictive migrants. They strive to establish themselves even in the callous circumstances that differ in cultures, traditions, languages, and other factors. Ghosh attempts to examine the characters who are fettered to the foreign land mentally and physically. The theme of exile -belonging and non-belonging- has become the major theme in all his fictions. Concepts such as home and rootlessness are used widely by Ghosh in the post colonial situation. In his novels, the dispersed people live in different parts of the world due to social, political or economic reasons and yet retain their emotional, cultural and spiritual acquaintances with the country of their origin. His fiction includes the institutions of family, rituals and relationship of the dispersed people who do not amalgamate with the distorted politico-economic progressions in new settlements resulting in diaspora or the alienated temper of belongingness. Ghosh’s characters are uprooted and heaved to disappointments fashioned by various events and evoked by political, economic, and social calamities or all the three. They live during various periods of time and feel the sense of non-belonging because of their uprooted conditions and disappointments created by historical events like war of Independence, World War, Partition of Bengal and riots.

Ghosh’s fiction challenges the artificial shadow lines that have been erected to separate nations from their neighbours, fact from fiction, and academic disciplines from each other. His interrogation of boundaries accords with the preoccupation with
hybridity, in-between spaces and diasporas in postcolonial debate. Although Ghosh dislikes being categorized as a postcolonial, in his writings he focuses on the ways the partitioned South Asian subject has been affected by and yet can to some extent resist colonialism’s legacy. Ghosh feels that knowledge is produced by structures of dominance, particularly the military, economic and epistemic strategies of colonialism. Santosh Gupta in “Looking into History : Amitav Ghosh’s The Glass Palace” says:

Each of his novels [...] is concerned with the impact of the colonial encounter on the political, social, and cultural lives of the new independent countries, like India, Bangladesh, Burma and Egypt. He is the writer of the shifting ongoing migrations and transnational cultural flows in different countries over different continents, a writer who questions the validities of boundaries and borders imposed by some powerful race / countries / or communities over others. His writings explore and dissolve the boundaries of genres, disturbing the existing divisions of discourse into anthropology, history, fiction and autobiography. (242)

The characters in Ghosh’s oeuvres cross from within and beyond its borders. They do not occupy discrete cultures but dwell in travel in cultural spaces that flow across borders. They draw the shadow lines around modern nation states. They remain bound up in the notion of a universal humanity. They postulate a global theory of the colonial subject. Nicholas Thomas in Colonialism’s Culture : Anthropology, Travel, and Government says : “Orientalist [...] pre-occupations [...] can be displaced, not by a new
universalism, but by an interest in a Plethora of differences that would cross cut ethnic-cultural totalities” (24).

Reason concerns the picaresque adventures of Alu, a weaver from a small village near Calcutta. He leaves home to travel across the Indian ocean to the oil town of al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf. In fact, it is an allegory about the destruction of a traditional village life by the modernizing influx of western culture and the subsequent displacement of non-European peoples by imperialism. Alu is apprenticed as a weaver. His uncle, Balaram, the village schoolmaster, is obsessed with western ideas. He is epitomised by his passion for phrenology and the writings of Pasteur. He establishes the Pasteur School of Reason. He destroys the village by sterilizing it with carbolic acid. It is a satire on western imperialism. In it, Alu stands for tradition and Balaram for modern progress. It also explores the relation between culture and imperialism. Anthony Burgess in the review of Reason states that it juxaposes stable, traditional cultures with a diasporic and post-colonial culture (6). Balaram’s enthusiasm for Reason can be taken as a satire on those diasporic Indian intellectuals who embrace the theories of the west. In fact, Balaram has made his mind “a dumping ground for the west” (CR 53). In fact, Reason deconstructs the opposition between tradition and modernity or discrete oriental and occidental cultures. It is the history of weaving and the international cloth trade that is a synecdoche of that intricate network of differences in which all cultures are enmeshed with their neighbours. Balaram’s detailed account of the history of weaving technology to Alu evokes cultural instability and borrowings across borders. He says that the loom has created not separate worlds but one, for it
never permitted the division of the world. The loom recognises no continents and no countries. It has tied the world together (CR 55).

Alu’s initiation into the world of weaving may be viewed as much an act of admiration for the pristine simplicity and creativity of Shombhu Debnath and his daughter, Maya, as a refusal of Balaram’s idealism. K. Damodar Rao in “Magic and Irony as Principles of Structure: A Reading of The Circle of Reason” says: “The loom functions as a viable metaphor for Alu’s longing for Maya and his mastery over the subtle patterns of weaving including the intricate jamdhani pattern coincide with his winning over the love of Maya which is described in physical and psychological terms” (35). Ghosh himself describes:

So many words, so many things. On a loom a beam’s name changes after every inch. Why? Every nail has a name, every twist of rope, every little eyeled, everything of bamboo on the heddle. A loom is a dictionary, glossary, the Sauras, why? words serve no purpose; nothing mechanical. No, it’s because the weaver, in making cloth makes words, too, and trespassing on the territory of the poets gives names to things the eye can’t see. That is why the loom has given language more words, more metaphor, more idiom than all the world’s armies of pen-wielders. (CR 74)

Reason “is not merely circular but a finely patterned novel and when seen as a whole displays the intricate ‘buti work’ of a master weaver in the making. The journey from
Satwa through Rajas to tamas, the three parts of the novel, is not a straight forward
narrative but one full of resonances harkening back and forth like an unfolding raga
circling and repeating notes and sequence of notes each contextually different” (101).

In Reason, the journey as a motif runs through the novel. It unites its three
parts. Characters cross borders with the biological necessity. This motif is particularly
associated with Alu who is on the run having been branded as an extremist by the police
and with Jyoti Das close on his heels always. He moves from Lalpukur to Kerala and
then sets off to al-Ghazira in the Middle East along with a number of characters, who
travel in search of material wealth and more opportunities. Travel itself is taken as a
homeland. Jyoti Das is in pursuit of Alu. Ironically, it is he who causes the journey of
Alu once again from al-Ghazira through Alexandria, Egypt, Lisbon, Tunis, and to the
little town of El Qued. He is accompanied by Zindi, Boss and Kulfi. Indira Bhatt in
“Outside the Circle : A Study of The Circle of Reason” is very harsh over the theme of
journey in this ouevre. Bhatt says : “What is expected is a journey from purpose to
passion to perception. There is too much passion but too little of perception. What
one finds in The Circle of Reason is a sort of uncertainty of perception or meaning”
(24).

In Reason, the village Lalpukur is not the symbol of an Indian tradition. It was
settled by refugees from East Pakistan after the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. The
village, once a symbol of traditional India, is itself the product of a diaspora. In
Lalpukur “borders dissolved under the weight of millions of people in panic-stricken
flight from an array of animals” (CR 59-60). It has become the blend of Hinduism and
Bruce Lee movie (CR 75). It is not a site of tradition but hybridization. When Balaram reduces the village of Lalpukur to rubble in his efforts to apply European theories to Indian life, Alu joins the tide of diasporic Indians drawn to the rich oil economics of the Middle East. In al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf, when he is buried under the debris of the building, The Star, this act of burial is considered as “an allegory about the effect of postmodernity on the traditional societies of the Middle East” (15) by Robert Dixon in “Travelling in the West : The Writing of Amitav Ghosh”. The collapsed building, The Star, is contrasted with the market place, Souq, which does not represent a discrete culture rooted in one nation. It has become a part of a network of trade routes. Alu has begun weaving again at the loom of his Egyptian neighbour, Hajj Fahmy, who abandoned his traditional craft for the more profitable construction business. As a part of his revival of weaving, Alu begins to learn Arabic. His landlady, an Egyptian brothel owner, named Zindi, plans to install Alu as her manager when she buys the Durban Tailoring House from another diasporic Indian, Jeevanbhai Patel. Patel is a Gujarati Hindu from Durban in South Africa, who has come to al-Ghazira after a marriage of which his parents disapproved. His movements evoke the flow of the Indian ocean trade: “the Indian merchants along the coast pulled northwards like a bucket from a well. First they went to Mozambique, the Dar es Salaam, then Zanzibar, Djibouti, Perim and Aden” (CR 221). Zindi’s house is full of migrant labourers whom she hopes to divert from the construction industry to the now declaring cloth trade: “al-Ghazira was a merchants paradise, right in the centre of the world, conceived and nourished by the flow of centuries of trade. Perhaps Iraquis, Zanzibari Arabs, Omanis and Indians fattened upon it and grew rich” (CR 221). Like the village of Lalpukur, the
source of al-Ghazira does not represent a stable authentic culture but a network of trade, centuries old, that unfurls like a vast, borderless region.

Ghosh’s hero Alu in *Reason* behaves as an odd inert hero. He allows the other subservient characters to initiate and carry on with the action while he himself lies in a dormant stage as an onlooker. When Alu is buried in the Star, Alu’s friends Rakesh and Ismail go inside the ruins to search for him. They find themselves lost in the postmodern space of a collapsed glass and concrete dome. “It was like a handiwork of a madman-immense steel girders leaping crazily, whole sections of the glass dome scattered about like eggshells” (CR 232). The voice heard by the rescuers is a transistor radio which was accidentally switched on during the collapse of the building. It echoes through the ruins. Robert Dixon in “‘Traveling in the West’: The Writing of Amitav Ghosh” says: “The ‘voice’ concisely evokes the aesthetics of post-modernism: the loss of affect, the de-centering of the bourgeois subject, the loss of interiority and the relentless commodification of culture” (17). It may be treated as an allegory about the cultural logic of global capitalism destroying the ancient trading cultures of the Middle East. Jyoti Das also feels that al-Ghazira is not “a real place at all for but a question: are foreign countries merely not-home, or are they all that home is not” (CR 269). So, Jyothi Das keeps moving from place to place. But Forid Maian has the intention of finding a home for himself. He was from Chittagong in Bangladesh. He came to al-Ghazira fifteen years back. He had a little savings and he planned to get married and have a family. He asks Zindi emotively, “who would find me a wife? I’m afraid, Zindi: going back to a place alone, starting again, a man can’t do that at my age”
The lack of domestic affinity causes the want of mooring to the place in which one lives. This results in diasporic consciousness. Jyoti Das is a full-fledged migrant who finds himself forever on run. He admits:

Foreign places are alike in that they are not home. Nothing binds you there... He knew that his swimming head had no connection with that hint of sand in the distance. It would have made no difference whether that lot of land was al-Ghazira or Antartica. The journey was within and it was already over, for the most important thing was leaving. (CR 266)

Alu, on the other hand, finds a new community with Zindi and seeks a new rootedness in a foreign land with a sense of new connection.

In Reason, a migrant woman is simultaneously situated and objectified. A woman is called a community ("I take only the good girls" and "she's going to sell them all") a labourer ("hardworking and reliable"), and a daughter ("my family") and as a prisoner and as a slave. Even in Karthamma’s case, it is different. She refuses to deliver the baby on the boat. It is because, as Professor Samuel translates her speech:

“She says she won’t deliver without signing the right forms. That’s what she says. She’ll keep it in for as long as she has to.... She’s delirious, I think..... It was madness to bring her on to a boat in this state. She’s just babbling on and on. She says that she knows that the child won’t be given a house or a car or anything at all if she doesn’t sign the forms. It’ll be sent back to India, she says, and she would rather kill
it than allow that to happen; kill it right now with a bottle while it’s still in her womb”. (CR 177)

Kulfi interrogates her wish: “Where do these villagers get these ideas”? To this, Rakesh says: “May be she wants a birth certificate. You really need a birth certificate now a days : can’t get a bus pass, nothing....” (CR 177). But Professor Samuel is clear: “what she wanted is quite clear. Someone’s brought her on the boat by making all kinds of promises – your child will be this, it’ll be that, it’ll have houses and cars and multi-storeyed buildings if only you get across to al-Ghazira. Sign a few forms and the child will be a Ghaziri. In her state the poor woman believed what she was told” (CR 177-178).

Karthamma is moving to al-Ghazira with Zindi with a hope to get an amazing future for herself and her unborn child. Karthamma’s lack of education and ignorance in various matters has led her to such a poor condition that she doesn't even know when and where to deliver a baby. Her place of birth failed to offer her any protection and pushed her into the bitter life of a sexual labourer. So, she is willing to sign the forms and move to al-Ghazira with Zindi. She wishes to get material comfort for her child and she thinks that 'form is an instrumental means to go about attaining that. It is an authentic source that is going to declare her child as a citizen. This is the condition of the lot of landless field labourers in the village of Third world, neo-colonial nation. Through Karthamma, Ghosh has depicted the transnational circuit of sexual labourers trying to come together into mass culture of everyday life. In a nation that refuses identity to sexual labourers, they get into public sphere by invoking politics. However,
in Reason, “Women often find themselves in contextually marginal positions which distance them for investments in national interests and enable them to critique or interrogate both conceptions of nation and the power of nation-state.” (135).

Karthamma’s desire for the forms is her desire to realize a potential everyday life. For her ‘home’ is not a domestic space. It also means a community because her life is marked by a lack of education, ignorance in matters of sex and by utter destitution. It is the lot of landless field labourers in the villages of a Third World.

The migrant women’s condition is the most illustrative of migrancy’s paradox of opportunity and oppression, and betterment and loss. The conscientious and moralizing Professor Samuel sees the Indian women who are going to be prostitutes in al-Ghazira as enslaved and exploited. He questions: “She’s a madam.... if she wasn’t, why would she be herding there poor women across the sea? why would she be keeping them shut away like prisoners in the cabin? I tell you she’s going to sell them into slavery in al-Ghazira. Something like that, or worse” (CR 173). But, Zindi, on the other hand, takes it differently. According to her, it is not business but something like a family. She admits:

And as for women, when I get to India I don’t have to do anything. These women find me and come running. Take me, Zindi-no, me, Zindi-didi-don’t take her, she’s got lice. They go on like that. But I don’t take them all. I take only the good girls–clean, polite, hardworking. That’s why I have to go to India myself to look... the whole of al-
Ghazira knows that Zindi’s girls are reliable and hardworking ... And so I get a little extra, too, not much. It’s not a business; it’s my family, my aila, my own house, and I look after them, all the boys and girls, and no one’s unhappy and they all love me. (CR 181)

Zindi names the prostitutes as ‘hardworkers’ and their profession prostitution as ‘work’. They are seen as productive labourers by Zindi. It is as Appadurai in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimension of Globalization* shows, this can be taken as an attempt to negotiate imagined lives and to fabricate different identities—“imaginative appropriations that are involved in the construction of agency into deterriorialized world” (33). Kavita Daiya in “‘No Home But in Memory’ : Migrant Bodies and Belongings, Globalization and Nationalism in *The Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*” says:

Moreover, what is particularly interesting about this struggle over naming the women and their work, as well as in naming the relation between Zindi and the female migrant workers, is that it actually makes visible the doubling of not only the spaces of home and work as it often occurs in the case of prostitution, but also of the familial and corporate. Thus, even as migration for these women entails a loss of home and the everyday, the production of homeliness entails the collapse of the spatial separation of home and domestic and civil, private and public. Furthermore, it is important to note here Zindi’s anxious desire to recognize the relation of exchange between them as simultaneously also
a relation of reciprocal love and communal bonds. For a woman exiled from her own diasporic Indian community and her married home for barrenness, the business becomes a surrogate fecundity, which produces a surrogate family for her Capital reproduces for Zindi that homeliness, or belonging which own patriarchal cultural community/family exiles her from. (39-40)

Ghosh's *Reason* portrays a nation that refuses identity to sexual labourers. Zindi tries to bind the deserted women and create a surrogate family that can offer them a sense of belonging. Zindi is an exile from her own Indian community. She and the people of the agency of sexual labourers are displaced and so they face a steadfast agitation and disappointment. She tries to establish bondage among the dislocated individuals and create mooring to their current situation. She is anxious to create a relation of reciprocal love and communal bond. She produces a surrogate family for herself and creates homeliness or belonging which her own patriarchal cultural community and family denied to offer her. She manages to negotiate with her past by migrating and surviving in a surrogate family. It fails to offer a sense of home. It drives them to relentless journey across the globe. Pradip Dutta in “A Voice among Bullet Holes: *The Circle of Reason*” says:

> It combines within itself an uncompromising restlessness with a poise and control that suggests peace than longing. This is remarkable, for reality *The Circle* offers nothing which we would normally call home. Initially located in a refugee village, the story refers back to Bangladesh.
and Calcutta, finally moving to the Middle East via Kerala where it reaches its denouement in a desert of shifting sand-dunes. And all the while it travels through different environments which are never entirely rural or urban. (39)

**Reason** presents a series of inevitable changes that lead to chaos. The people who lost their original “home” are not satisfied with their current status in Lalpukur as they have to undergo pain and despair to get even their basic needs fulfilled. Man cannot live without a home. Only in a home, he can think of security, job, family and benefits. In “foreign places all are alike in that there are not home nothing binds you there” (CR 266).

The person getting the sense of belonging with the new settlements or physical space is very essential. In **Reason**, Parbothi-devi considers physical space as home. She thinks that a tranquil place can be perceived by the mind as 'home'. She brands her husband, Budheb Roy's house as a prison. She wants to run away from the maddening place. She pleads, “Let me take the child home. You will kill it. It'll die if it stays here” (CR 128). Later, when she comes to the house of Balaram to elope with Shombhu Debnath, the girl shows no sign of illness. It hops up and down the path. Shombhu Debnath has philosophical perception of home. After his hut is burnt by Balaram's men, he says to Maya, “... this is what happens when a man ties himself down and builds a house. It burns down. Nobody has to do it, it's only, Sri Krishna reminding you what the world's like” (CR 122). The novel suggests that home can be established by the association of oneself to the place he lives in and the home affirms calmness immersed in humanism.
The place where one settles becomes familiar to the person and gives them a sense of “home” only if the physical space is spacious and suitable for their life. In Palace, Ghosh compares and contrasts the life led by the members of the Royal family in the palace and the situation in the Outran house. The reception room of the queen in Burma's palace was spacious and was decorated with mirrors. But in Ratnagiri, the reception room is very small and sometimes used as an auxiliary storeroom. The Royal family did not enjoy the comforts enjoyed even by common men. King Thebaw lived with the hope that he can return to his palace in his life, but it did not happen at all. In Ratnagiri, Royal family felt like an outsider as the place symbolized loss. The physical space proclaimed them as exile.

Reason unfolds the diasporic themes of alienation, migration, Identity crisis, cultural variations, multiculturalism and existential crisis of life. It is a diasporic novel. It demonstrates the sufferings of the migrants and the difficulties in migration. It speaks out loudly about the hazards of migration. The novel voices out the darkest side of migrant labourers in the foreign lands. It deromanticized the fantasy of foreign labor or job. It realistically portrays the unthinkable physical as well as psychological challenges of migrants in foreign lands. Alu represents the whole diasporic world. His search for identity unfolds the diasporic difficulties. Alu's quest for identify is represented in Reason, in three stages. The protagonist's journey for his identity starts in the opening chapter itself. Alu, arrives in Lalpukur, a small border village in Bengal. The opening page of the novel begins with the description of Alu, an eight year old boy who has lost his parents in a car accident. He has come to Lalpukur to stay with an aunt
Toro Debi and uncle Balaram though he never knows them before. He has to live with them. Exactly the odyssey of Alu starts from here.

The boy had no sooner arrived; People said afterwards, Balaram had run into the house to look for the claws. People were sorry for the boy, of course. It was barely a week since he had lost his mother and his father (Balaram's brother) in a car accident. It was hard after a shock like that to go away to live with an unknown aunt and uncle. It is common knowledge that the boy had not met Balaram his own uncle, ever before.

(CR 3-4)

Even though Balaram and Toro Debi are not having good relation with Alu's parents, they decide to take and raise him since they have not had a child of their own. It is quite visible that the identity crisis or quest for identity in this novel for the protagonist starts in the first chapter itself. The name of Alu is not a original name which is given by his parents to the protagonist. The real name of the protagonist is “Nachiketa, Nachiketa Bose”. This is the name of the protagonist. But the people of Lalpukur name after him as “Alu” because of his appearance. The two names of the hero unfold the double identity or identity crisis in his life throughout the novel. Ghosh describes the head of a boy:

That was a little difficult to believe. But, still, it was an extraordinary head huge, several times too large for an eight year-old and curiously uneven, bulging all over with knots and bumbs ... So Alu he was named and Alu he was to remain, even though he had another name, finely
The identity of Alu is decided by others and it changes according to the situations. The quest for identity starts for Alu in Lalpukur itself. In Lalpukur, Alu is merely a puppet in the hands of Balaram. He is wedged between his uncle and his uncle's obsession with the phrenology and his aunt and her love for sewing machine. After a short time, Alu has been sent to Shombu Debnath to learn the art of weaving. Alu's frequent visit to Debnath's resident makes Balaram take this decision. Shombu Debnath is an enigmatic weaver. Balaram's phrenological studies of Alu's physical appearance confirm his survive.

His intuition was proved in every detail; Alu's body, his mind, his legs, his arms, not to speak of the organ, corresponded exactly to his calculation of the proportions ideal for a weaver. (CR 35)

Before the avatar of weaver, Alu was merely experimental clay in the hands of Balaram. Balaram is “a confused extremist. An extremist; no respect for order. A terribly confused extremist” (CR 37). But it is Toru-Debi who raised her voice against the scientific, experimental attitude of Balaram. Once, she burnt down all the books of Balaram into ashes to show her discontent with his too much of rational experiments and attitudes. The superficiality of Balaram's knowledge of a dubious science decides the identity of Alu. Though Alu settles in Lalpukur, his troubles never settle. The quest for the identity is visible in the whole novel. His life itself is
a struggle to acquire an identity for himself. Due to Balaram's obsession with the cleanliness and the carbolic acid, Jyothi Das misidentified Alu, as a “bad guy”. Now in order to save his life from the police officer Jyothi Das, Alu starts to fly from Lalpukur and meets Gopal in Calcutta. He and his friends help him travel down to Kerala and to the small former French colony of Mahe. From there, Alu flies to al-Ghazria in a boat 'Mariamma', along with a load of migrants with former prostitute named Zindi-al-Tiffaha.

In *Lines*, the narrator reminisces about his father who was born in Mandalay in 1925 and who was taken to Dhaka every year for a couple of months to stay with her mother’s parents. Their visit became less frequent when the parents of the narrator’s grandmother died. It was also due to partition. Ghosh writes: “And then, in 1947, came partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan. There was no question of going back after that” (SL 125). Then the readers find that Mayadebi had got married and settled in Calcutta and even the narrator’s grandmother had to leave Dhaka for Calcutta after her husband’s death. In 1962, the narrator had to settle in Calcutta, in a new house in Southern Avenue opposite to the lake in Calcutta. It gave an opportunity to the grandmother to fall in nostalgia about the border she had crossed. The narrator describes:

> I turned out that many of the elderly people who went to the park had come across the border from the east too, during or just before partition. Most of them had settled, just as my grandmother had done, in our part of Calcutta, which was then still undeveloped. So it was not really much
of a coincidence that my grandmother often ran into people she had known or heard of, in Dhaka, when she went on her walks in the lake.

(SL 127)

This border crossing has created a problem with refugees. The grandmother was astonished to see the filth in the city of Calcutta, that once was a place of rich Calcutta with garden houses. But now it is flooded and infected by refugees. She strikes:

When I last came here ten years ago, there were rice-fields running alongside the road, it was the land of peace where rich Calcutta people built garden houses. And look at it now – as filthy as a bubui’s nest. It’s all because of the refugees, flooding in like that. (SL 131)

She also comes to know that their house at 1/31 Jindabahar Lane has become the house of refugees, who came from the border of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. She even recalls how the house had been partitioned by her father and uncle; “they found that it had ploughed right through a couple of door-ways so that on one could get through them any more; it had also gone through a lavatory bisecting an old commode. The brothers even partitioned their father’s old nameplate. It was divided down the middle by a thin white line, and the names were inscribed on the two halves – of necessity in letters so tiny that nobody could read them” (SL 123). Then after March 1963, the grandmother had to go back to Dhaka. On her arrival at Dhaka, the grandmother failed to recognise the city of her childhood. The narrator elaborates: “her Dhaka had long since vanished into the past” (SL 193). The earlier picture of Dhaka with a black steam engines
puffing smoke and a long line of carriages, platforms, porters and vendors vanished and
it that place “the bare glass-and-linoleum airport, so like the one she had just left. Nor
was she prepared for the drive to the Saheb’s house, along a straight road, flanked by
full eucalyptus tree and the occasional suburban bungalow” (SL 193-194). Even while
on their way in Dhaka, they were blocked by hooligans:

There were dozens of them stretched all the way across the road. They
had lit a fire in the middle of the road, with a few broken chairs and lifts
of woods. Some of them were squatting around the fire, others were
leaning against the lamp-posts and the shop-fronts. Robi could tell from
the way they were watching the road that they had been waiting for their
car. (SL 218)

Even on reaching the uncle’s house, the grandmother could see that “The patch of grass
they had once called a garden was now potted with pools of black oil and strewn with
tyre-tubes and exhaust pipes” (SL 208) by Saifuddin, the motor-mechanic from Bihar
who stays in a portion of her uncle’s house. The grandmother had to persuade her uncle
to move from Dhaka to Calcutta, but he remained adamant that he was not willing to
move from Dhaka to Calcutta. He has his own partition and segregation. He says:

I know everything, I understand everything. Once you start mooving
you never stop. That’s what I told my sons when they took the trains. I
said, I don’t believe in this India – Shindia. It’s all very well. You’re
going away now but suppose when you get there they decide to draw
another line somewhere what will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I’ll die her. (SL 215)

Similarly Saifuddin also relates:

I couldn’t get my father to leave Motihari to come to Pakistan with us.

He’d grown old there to. (SL 211)

Lines in its two sections, “Going Away” and “Coming Home” asserts the notion that even then the borders are crossed, home is the best place where one can have rest and peace. However, many carry the memory of home with them.

In Lines, the narrator recollects his meeting with Ila at the age of eight when she had come to Calcutta for Durga Puja with her parents and invented London for him. The narrator met Ila’s father known as ‘Saheb’ for the first time and was amazed to see him so Europianised. Ghosh writes: “his hat would n’t come out off his head” (SL 34). His house on the outskirts of Calcutta is surrounded by imported trees from Brazil and Congo. The house has an underground cellar, where he gets bewildered to find the table of which Tridib has once told him that his grandfather bought it on his first visit to London, sometime in the 1890s.

Ila is an enigmatic character. She tries to be free. She feels that Indian milieu is alien to her. She tries her best to be accepted by the people of her adapted land, but her experience warns her that she will never be completely accepted by them. As a child,
she had attended various schools in various countries. In her photograph of her class, she seems to be standing apart. However, she tries to convince the narrator she was popular and accepted by her group. She is a victim of racism in the International school in England and suffers physically and emotionally as she is rejected by her classmates. She feels isolated, lonely, and miserable. She wants to live in present and experience the world through the senses. When she visits India, she insists that Robi and the narrator should go with her to a bar for a drink. They reluctantly accompany her. But when Robi does not let her dance with a stranger, she is bitter and expresses her extreme disgust at the conservative nature of Indian society. Neither in India nor abroad does Ila show her awareness of the bhadralok lifestyle of modern Bengal, which is essentially a mix of ‘modernity’ and ‘tradition’ - the outward mannerisms of western speech and dress coexisting in complete harmony with orthodox basic concerns of family life and morality.

As an adult, Ila gives the impression of being a drifter, not quite sure about what she wants. Before her marriage, she lives with a group of youngsters who specialize in organizing pickets. They were very practical. For hours they argue about which kind of pen is better for drawing posters or they discuss how to go about making arrangements for lunch or tea. There were no political debates and it did not take the narrator long to observe that Ila was regarded as a kind of guest, almost a decoration. But Ila thought that she was politically committed. Ila is unwilling to accept India as her home, as she has never really lived there and cannot identify herself with its culture. She also knows that her adapted country is not keen to ace her. She is an alien, an outsider.
Ila’s disillusionment brings into focus the strengths and limitations of the two cultures. Ila finds Indian culture too restrictive, too conservative. But in India, generally speaking, institutions like marriage are considered stable. Ila rejects everything Indian, but eventually she finds herself ‘clinging’ to her uncle Robi and the narrator - the members of her family from India who have shared a common loss, the death of Tridib.

In *Lines* the narrator is drawn to Ila by her exotic appeal, the striking foreignness, her western ways and easy informality. The infatuation turns into passion. Ila possesses everything – beautiful, sophisticated, accomplished and adventurous. Joydeep Banerjee in *The Novels of Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Study* says: “But Ila’s preference for Nick Price exposes her wobbly transplantation in western culture. Ila’s dislocation stems from her penchant for illusions devoid of any real understanding of the cultural interface. Nick-Ila pairing is a counterpoint to Tridib May Kinship and the narrator notices her snooty ways and cultural contradictions when he looks at her seductive foreignness with untinted eye in his mature age” (62). Hence, the love of the narrator is terminated. The narrator admits: “And when she did not come back to the cellar that night, I knew she had taken my life hostage yet again; I knew that a part of my life as a human being had ceased; that I no longer existed, but as a chronicle” (SL 112).

The narrator’s mother, in contrast, does not consider herself an exile. India is her home and she does not pine either for Dhaka or for other distant shores. She is content being a housewife, fussing and caring for her husband, her mother-in-law and
her son. Relatives shunned by her mother-in-law-and family-were the central points, which gave her world its shape and substance. As her husband goes up steadily in his job, they move up the social ladder-from an apartment in Gole Market area to a more spacious dwelling in the more affluent Southern Avenue. She ensures that there is serenity and the correct atmosphere in the household when her husband returns home from work, tired. As her son, the narrator, says, it was in the fussing and caring for her husband that his mother was able to demonstrate her “effortless mastery of the household arts” (SL 131). Her homeland is where her family is, Gole Market or Southern Avenue. There are no divisive shadow lines in her mind.

If there is any anxiety in her, it is for her son. With a note of hysteria she warned the narrator as she drilled him for his examinations that “if I didn't study hard I would end up over there (the slums); that, the only weapon people like us had, was our brains and if we didn't use them like claws to cling to what we'd got, that was where we'd end up” (SL 138). Good performance at examinations is of the utmost importance, so important that when Tha'mma dies, the narrator is informed of the event only after his examinations are over. As he says in “the tidy late-bourgeois world I had inherited, examinations were more important than death” (SL 96).

Through the characterization of the narrator's grandmother, Ghosh makes a touching comment on the lives of many people of the older generations of the subcontinent: of people who have lost their spaces-literal, emotional, and spiritual-because of the Partition. The grandmother's fascination for terrorist heroism during her youth highlights her yearning for freedom. She recalls her desire to work for terrorists
whom she believed, were fighting for freedom of their land: “I would have been frightened.... But ... I would have killed him. It was for our freedom: I would have done anything to be free” (SL 39). This yearning for freedom continues well into her declining days because, paradoxically, though in a free country, as far as she is concerned, she is not free. She has been up-rooted by the violent ruptures and dislocations caused by historical accidents, along with the indefinitely great number of individuals. Ghosh powerfully captures the tragedy that has overtaken most people of the subcontinent. It is a tragedy which is reflected in their deep longing for spaces of their own.

The grandmother is brought up in an environment of police raids in the universities of Dhaka during the British rule, and the terrorist movement in Bengal during the first few decades of the twentieth century. Her need to be free, to have a space of her own, are reasons enough to motivate her. The grandmother's strong sense of belonging to a space is brought out with her attitude that everyone who lives in a country should have earned his right to be there.

Upon moving into a larger house, which seems immense after the cramped little flat, the narrator notices that the grandmother no longer cares for control over the household. The vastness of the new house brings back memories of her huge childhood-home in Dhaka. The past, suddenly, becomes very important to the protagonist's grandmother. Imagination and memory make possible for her the recollection of the concrete reality of her ancestral home and the region about the place. Decades have elapsed and she has stayed away in Calcutta, yet, in her mind, the place
of her childhood remains as real as ever. It is a memory, a thought that sustains, soothes, and provides a sense of belonging. She feels the need to go back to her childhood space, ostensibly to bring her old uncle back with her, but in truth, there is a deep desire to go back to that space which once was real, and now remains only in memory to see for herself if the geographical space she still considers her home, is so emotionally too. Yet, there is a fear within, at going back to a familiar and loved space: a fear of anticipation, of not finding that space which has been enshrined in her mind.

The Glass Palace begins with the description of King Thebaw, the last of Burma's king who is removed from his Glass Palace inside Mandalay Fort as a part of colonization. In Burma, monarchy comes to an abrupt end and it becomes a part of the British Empire in India. King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat are sent to a small town called Ratnagiri, which is located in India as outcasts. They are cautiously secluded from the political events of the time by the British. Although King Thcbaw is able to accept his exile life, the Queen finds it very difficult to cope up with the situation of the exile. She still longs for the lost life in the Glass Palace in Mandalay. She feels that Mandalay and Burma are her property and the British and others swindling its wealth are indigestible. However, the members of the royal family have to exist in the remote place given to them at the mercy of the British people. This dislodgment from the native place builds in them a lot of emotional strain. The Royal family and the servants do not feel at home in the new settlements as their moorings are with the palace Mandalay. It is because diaspora turns out to be the primary trope as the existential torment. It is the outcome of the Imperial government’s resistance to preserve the native Burmese culture in the place of settlement. Lata Chadurvedi in “The Glass Palace: A Critical Assessment” says:
The existential angst of modernist fiction is replaced in the postcolonial novel by a phenomenon one might term exit-ential anxiety. Diaspora here replaces doubt and homelessness becomes the principal trope typifying a historical condition as well as a state of mind. (116)

The king feels hurt when Laden, the British colonial, who has worked as emissary in Burma, has filled the king’s “ceremonial canopy with seven tiers, the number allotted to a nobleman, not the nine due to a king” (GP 43). The Queen, during her stay in Ratnagiri expected her Indian servants to observe all the rules that were followed in Mandalay. The new ayahs and maids, came to know how things were done in Mandalay Palace from Dolly, the maid who accompanied the people of the royal family to Ratnagiri. But the Queen's expectation was not fulfilled. She was much irritated by the attitude of the workers who never tried to satisfy her wish and honour her as a Queen. She felt disgraced, yet learnt to cope up with the changes.

The exile of the king Thebaw and his servants gave them the sense of “outsiders” in Palace. In Ratnagiri, the new place, where the unknown language is spoken, the servant maids did not feel comfortable due to the sense of alienation. The servants of the king wanted to go to their native place and join their family which is left in their native place. The collector talks of moving servants back to Burma. The Queen mocks at the British saying that none could “hold a family imprisoned in isolation on a hill. Why the very soil would revolt against it.” (GP 87). Exiled in India, King Thebaw is never given respect by the British. The servants who accompanied the Royal family did not pay care to honour their king as they did in Mandalay. The servants wished to
go 'home' and their unrest compelled the Queen to send them back to Burma. King Thebaw was treated as a prisoner. Except Dolly and a few other members, everyone returns to their home town to escape from diasporic consciousness. Dolly learns Tamil and Hindustani in order to manage the household. The new bitter experiences result in the longing for the restoration of the homeland.

In *Palace*, Uma’s easy going nephew, Arjun, becomes one of the first Indian officers in the British army. He takes pride in being an officer. He willingly submitted himself to the vast power and became a tool in their hands. His friends in the Battalion also tell him about the duties of the Indian to the nation and Arjun is caught up in a peculiar moral dilemma. The Indians in the British army warn him not to risk his life to protect the very people who are holding them down. Only when he goes to Burma as a representative of the British army in 1940s, he begins to gain the realization that the ideal colonial ideas have made him unthinking and unreflecting person.

Arjun’s move towards Burma becomes a ground for the battle between reality and the inner self that provokes the moral responsibility of his duty to the country. His Indian nationality provokes his love towards the native country. Arjun feels that he cannot resist the power of the Empire that formed him and allows it to gain control over him. This psychology of submission of the Indians allowed the colonizers to conquer the empire. “Everything he has ever assumed about himself was alien, an illusion. And if this were so, how was he to find himself now” (GP 431). The basic problem of the dispersed people was to find a home and an amiable society for biopsychic security. The people who reached Calcutta which was a thousand miles away also could get
nothing to eat. It had already become impoverished city. The country witnessed one of
the worst famines in its history. Ghosh says in the novel that people were stripping the
grass and leaves, sifting through sewers for grains of rice.

One of the characters who accepted the displacement after much struggle is
Rajkumar, the pivotal figure of the novel *Palace*. He could be considered as the in-
text metaphor for Ghosh, whose authorial persona finds an extension in the character
portrayal of Rajkumar. Like Ghosh, Rajkumar is also a boundary crosser who makes
many transitions across national frontiers and creates his own destiny. Rakhee Moral
points out in “In Times of Breaking Nations: *The Glass Palace* as Postcolonial
Narrative” that

Amitav Ghosh weaves into the life of the central protagonist, RajKumar,
the bewildering and often poignant accounts of a family scattered
through post imperialist dislocation in various parts of the ancient
continent, as he charts the complex sociological and political
repercussions of such disbanding through the experiences of loss and the
search for a homeland. (143)

Rajkumar, almost an orphan, has to invent a family for himself. He has to build
confidence and lasting bonds of trust with strangers. The unfolding of the novel
presents enfolding of the family of Rajkumar.

Rajkumar is well travelled along the coast between Burma and Bengal. His
trade begins with the death of his father at Akyub. With his mother, he travels to
Chittagong. Rajkumar cannot recollect anything about his family. It was told in the novel, “That was all Rajkumar knew about his family” (GP13). Even the Nakhoda, the boat owner says, “The boy was strong and willing (...). He had survived the killer fever” (GP 14) after the death of his mother. Rajkumar lands first in Burma as a “Kalaa” a foreigner in the alien territory which is subjected to colonization by yet another more powerful country. He feels at home in every place. He is much fascinated by the geometrical grid of Mandalay and explores the ordered pattern of the street around the Palace. He develops himself from a petty migrant lad through his apprenticeship as a “luga-lei” under Saya John to a business man who is respected by the timber trading circles of Burma. Rakhee Moral in “In Times of Breaking Nations: The Glass Palace as Postcolonial Narrative” says:

Rajkumar has hailed up to an important position in the Burmese timber trading circuit and he is regarded with respect in the South Asian market. Rajkumar’s contacts with the raftsmen of India evoke in him nostalgia for Chittagong and boyhood days. It is just a momentary longing and he is able to control it and be at ease. (132)

Rajkumar becomes interested in the capitalistic love for money. Rajkumar and his master Saya John start teak business in Burma. The story of Rajkumar reflects the real life story of the Indians who flourished well in Burma. Rajkumar finds his roots by generating and achieving synchronization out of the chaos resulting out of historical conflict and antipathy. He gets a sense of “exit- tential” challenge by creating his own national identity and family genealogy. He prefers to stay in Burma as he has lived all his life there. Uma speaks of Rajkumar, who is not willing to go to India.
Everything he owned was in that place, all that he ever worked for; a lifetime's accumulation of labour stored as a single cache of wood. He thought of the elephants and the bombs falling around them; the flames leaping from a well-stacked wood; the explosions, and the trumpeting. It was he who had concentrated all his holdings in this one place -- that too was part of the plan -- and now the bombs have claimed it all. But it didn't matter; nothing mattered so long as Neel was unharmed. The rest were just things, possessions. (GP 240)

The idea of travelling to India after the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1940s, heaved in Rajkumar the question of national identity. He says, “Everything I have is here” (GP 244). He knows that there is no one to welcome him in India. Like Jethamoshai in *Lines*, he too did not want to move from his place which he likes. His love for the place is due to the prosperity that the country gave him. Rajkumar also wants himself to be called a native of Burma although he often escapes into the mesmerizing Chittagong as a boy. He says,

Burma has given me everything I have ... they've never known any other home. I don't think I could ever love another place in the same way ...

But this is not something that is owned too (...) we'll have to move on again .... take control of our own fate. (GP 310)

Rajkumar considers his real homeland-India-as foreign place. Uma says, “But you must consider that he has lived in Burma so long that he is more Burmese than Indian” (GP 135). His long stay in Burma and his marriage with Dolly, a Burmese woman, have not
given him Burmese identity although he wished for the same. When he settles in Calcutta, he remains an outsider meeting the people uprooted from Burma and reliving in the golden days he spent in Burma.

The place where one lives for a long time becomes their “home”. The people develop identity to the place in the course of time. In Palace, Dolly’s obsession is that Burma, which is her place of birth. It is lost forever. She doesn't want to change her present identity in India and return to Burma after a long time. Rakhee Moral in “In Time of Breaking Nations: The Glass Palace as Postcolonial Narrative” observes:

> Curiously, the phenomenon of such displaced location triggers off what seems like a self inflicted act of dispossession in Dolly, reiterating the thesis that colonized subjects suffer from a sense of unreal and imaginary homeland. (147)

Her displacement from her native root and her discomfort with her own changed identity is obvious in her argument with Uma, the collector’s wife. She says:

> If I went to Burma now, I would be a foreigner- they would call me a ‘kalaa’ like they do Indians - a trespasser, an outsider from across the sea. I'd find that very hard I think -I’d never be able to rid myself of the idea that I would leave again one day, just as I had to leave before. You understand if you knew what it was like when we left (GP 113).

Dolly says, “I’ve lived here nearly twenty years, and this is home to me now” (GP 112). When she is asked to move to Burma, she refuses to do so. She feels that Burma, her place of birth, is an alien country.
In *Tide*, Kanai Dutt is a linguist who runs a translation bureau in Delhi. Ghosh positioned him as an outsider, “Kanai was the one other ‘outsider’ on the platform ...” (HT 4). He visits his aunt Nilima as he was invited to look at some papers left by his uncle Nirmal Bose. At the age of forty, he goes to Lucibari to read the journal left by his uncle Nirmal during the last days of his life at Morichjhapi. He understands that he is a man of the city and therefore an outsider in the tide country. He accepts to Piya that “This is not my element, Piya; he said “What happen today certainly shows me that” (HT 334), At Morichjhapi, he wishes to meet Piya in his own native place. In his letter to Piya, he accepts his pride and the experiences he has gained regarding the world. He says. “At Gajontola, I learnt how little I know of myself and of the world” (HT 353). He has nothing to do with the culture and environment of Lucibari and has no emotional bondage as well. So he remains an outsider.

In *Tide*, Piyali Roy, the Indian-American ecologist is another outsider. Her reach is on the rare Irrawaddy dolphin that lives in the waters of the Sundarbans. “...she knew no Bengali: ami Bangla janina” (4). She has lost her identity and thinks of herself simply as a scientist and researcher, working without any affiliation in isolation and bodily discomfort. She knows neither the customs nor the language and so she is also regarded as an outsider.

Ghosh shows clear distinction between outsider and insider. This outsider-insider paradigm is based on geographical and cultural attitude of the characters in *Tide*. Kanai, Piya and the refugees are depicted in this novel as outsiders. Fokir, Moyna, Kusum, Horen are the characters who are insiders in the Sundarbans. Fokir is
Kusum’s son. After the death of Kusum in that massacre, he is looked after by her distant relative, Horen. Fokir grows up to be an illiterate fisherman, but he knows and lives the ways of the waters and the wildlife of the Sundarbans. He always remains an insider. Like Fokir, Moyna is also brought up in that particular land and marries Fokir. Though Kusum went to Dhanbad in search of her mother and married there, she returned to Lucibari after the death of her husband. So, she is also called an insider.

Commenting on journey as a symbol in Ghosh’s novels Alok Kumar and Madhusudan Prasad in “The Novels of Amitav Ghosh: A Study in the Sociology of the Symbol” say:

All the three novels teem with activity and movement, both in time and across places, yet all this activity almost never attains the pitch of action, conscious action. And in The Circle of Reason, as also in his later novels, journey is a symbol of hope and discovery at the same time as it is a symbol of displacement and endless drift. The Circle of Reason underlines the circularity of the journey symbol thus making it an apt image of all human seeking. The Shadow Lines too is structurally divided into two parts, ‘Going Away’ and ‘Coming Home’ and the journey motif plays an important role throughout the novel. In An Antique Land raises the question of journey on the plane of a whole society, the Egyptian society, and crosses it with the issue of social mobility. Ghosh seems to be questioning the very object, and thus the nature of human quest. His own search for the identity of the Indian
slave ‘Bomma’ mentioned in an ancient manuscript, that takes him journeying across continents contrasts violently with the exodus from Egypt to Iraq and Libya, in search of mad lucre. (188)

Almost all the characters of Ghosh, like Ghosh himself, are journeying all over the world. They are wanderers and nomads. Commenting on migrant bodies and belongings, Kavita Daiya in “’No Home But in Memory’ : Migrant Bodies and Belongings, Globalization and Nationalism in The Circle of Reason and The Shadow Lines” says:

   In both The Circle of Reason and The Shadow Lines, through the experiences of poor and middle-class female migrants, Ghosh makes visible the bodily and psychic violence done to those who are minor to the hegemonic languages of the nation and of globalization - by their class, gender, race, or ethnicity. Unlike Salman Rushdie, Ghosh refuses to celebrate the hybridity born of migration and the heterogeneity that fails to be contained by national communities. Instead, he offers a compelling critique of nationalism and the failures of migration through the experiences of women as citizens and subjects; he thus makes visible the violence that both engender, and that is often constitutive of them. In this, he also proffers an important critique of current celebratory discourses of globalization: he reveals how the much celebrated global flow of human bodies and its associated tropes of empowerment can also be differently, and violently objecting processes - processes that
Journey is an important aspect of the novel Palace. The characters of the novel travel by air, water and land both within the country and outside the country. They travel between India, Burma, Malaya, Europe, America and Japan starting from 1885. The novel starts with the border crossings of a few people from India to Burma and others
from Burma to India. The first travel is started in the novel by Raj Kumar. As he travels to Burma, he gets introduced to Dolly and Saya John. Through Dolly, he meets Uma. His journey to Burma makes him realize the evils of colonization. The upheaval created by the British occupation of Burma is followed by turbulent experiences in imperial India also.

Everyone in the novel **Palace** travels to search for his or her identity and finds it. Raj Kumar travels a lot between Burma and Bengal and finds his identity in teak business. Saya John, like Raj Kumar, travels for survival. To him, travel means money. King Thebaw has not left “the vicinity of Mandalay in all his life” (GP 39). He travels to India as an exile after seven years of confinement in his palace. For Thebaw, travel represents freedom. He travels to India in “Thooriya,” the Sun. He proves his kingship more in Ratnagiri than in Burma. Dolly’s travel along with Royal family away from the huge walls of Mandalay means freedom from slavery. Arjun’s travel from India to Malaya and Burma results in the development in his career. Dinu’s travel from Burma to Malaya gives him confidence and a sense of belonging. Thus, travel signifies self-determination and lack of restriction to many characters.

In the novel, almost all the characters cross the borders. Almost all the major characters, both from the Royal family and the ordinary people make up their mind to accept life and elucidate the best out of chaos without any psychological depression. Rajkumar’s native place is Chittagong, not Burma. Yet, he considers Burma as his native place. Rukmini Bhaya Nair says in “The Road from Mandalay: Reflections on Amitav Ghosh’s **The Glass Palace**”,

... the pivotal figures of Rajkumar in *The Glass Palace* now seems to me an in-text metaphor for Ghosh’s own authorial persona, as he perceives himself. Like Ghosh, Rajkumar is a boundary- crosser, who makes several traditions across national frontiers during his lifetime but he is also a man so absolutely focused that he creates his own destiny, his own history. (166)

Rajkumar enters Burma from India as a poor boy. As he has no identity of his own in his life, he creates his identity in his teak business. Rukmini Bhaya Nair also avers that Rajkumar has actually to discover his lineage by achieving creative harmony out of the materials of historic dissention and resentment; and he has to make sense of the ‘exit-tential’ conundrum that plague all individuals who cross, for one or another reason, the well-defined lines of ‘national identity’ and ‘family geneality’. (166)

So, Rajkumar forays into Malayan Forest Resources. As he becomes part of the various nations and various situations, he can be considered transnational.

In *Chromosome* the people of all the three generations often shuttle between nations and places. Ross, Farley, D.D. Cunningham and the westerners move to India in search of knowledge in the research laboratories situated in India, ruled by the British. Their journey has been started in the nineteenth century. Murugan and Antar journey to the West from the East. Murugan goes to New York from Calcutta and
Antar has gone from Egypt to America for his sustenance. Tara and Maria, who belong to the third generation, also journey to New York. Almost all of these characters crave for returning to the homeland.

Man undertakes journey in search of truth and fulfilment. Most of the characters in Tide discover some secrecy. They investigate truth. Piya’s research on Irawaddy dolphins makes her meet Fokir and her field biology friends who teach her that she should “Get used to the idea of being on your own” (HT 314) in life. Her parents’ unhappy life troubles her mind and she has to fight back that unpleasant experiences. Her home reminds her of “Ghosts” and “Phantoms” that come alive again clawing at her throat and her eyes, harassing her. Her dissatisfaction in her life makes her interested in Fokir.

Likewise, Ghosh’s oeuvres have some relevant themes like migration, immigration, nostalgia, border-crossing, journey and so on. His fiction covers the vast postcolonial space. It speaks of disintegration and psychic maladjustment with an identity crisis. It proves that man is disintegrated and disjoined in his/her moorings. He/she becomes a solitary figure/a loner. He/she is thwarted and assaulted and thrown into pieces. Life become a struggle for many of the characters. All these things are fictionalized by Ghosh in an effective manner.

References


Chapter V

5. Summing - up

Ghosh throughout his diverse and generally composite oeuvre attempts to find connections between seemingly unrelated subjects. In fact, Ghosh’s fiction challenges the artificial shadow lines that have been erected to separate nations from their neighbours, fact from fiction, and academic disciplines from each other. His interrogation of boundaries accords with the preoccupation with hybridity, in-between spaces, and diasporas in postcolonial debate. He is concerned with highlighting filiations and connections which go beyond the (neo) colonial relationship, such as the persistence of pre-colonial trade connections between the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula or the existence of an Indian Community in Burma, which was almost entirely erased by nationalism / colonialism.

Reason follows the fortunes of a young weaver, Alu, who is brought up in a Bengal village and after a false accusation that he is a member of a terrorist group, subsequently flees westwards, first to a fictional gulf state and later to Algeria. The novel suggests that weaving is a diasporic activity which transcends national and international origins and unites worlds that have habitually been viewed as separate and in so doing, it anticipates Ghosh’s later contention in Land that the medieval trade – routes functioned as a mobile inter-continenal network that was largely unaware of western oriental / occidental bifurcations.