<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I – Introduction Postcolonialism and Amitav Ghosh</td>
<td>1 - 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II – Partition, Identity and Communal Violence in <em>The Shadow Lines</em></td>
<td>38 - 73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III - Migrancy and Cross-Cultural Conflicts in <em>The Circle of Reason</em> and <em>In an Antique Land</em></td>
<td>74 - 105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter IV – Travel and Displacement in <em>The Calcutta Chromosome</em> and <em>Dancing in Cambodia, at Large in Burma</em></td>
<td>106 - 146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter V - Exploitation and Colonization in <em>The Glass Palace</em></td>
<td>147 - 186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter VI - A Glance Back and Forth</td>
<td>187 - 205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chapter I
INTRODUCTION
POSTCOLONIALISM AND AMITAV GHOSH
Postcolonialism is a study of the structures of power relations between the colonizers and the colonized. Aime Cesaire calls postcolonialism as “relations of domination and submission. Though it may seek to dismantle the oppositional, colonial, Eurocentric binaries of the centre and the margin, the self and the other, the elite and the subaltern, the west and the East, totalization and fragmentation, essentialization and dispersal, what it has really done is to retain the binaries and to turn them upside down in respect of discursive power” (Shukla 2). The ultimate goal of postcolonialism is not only the colonial experience but the production of knowledge “that is non-dominative and non-coercive ... in a setting that is deeply inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions and the strategies of power(3).

Postcolonialism cannot mean the same thing to every state that has had the colonial experience. It must have a location and is culture specific. Though the drive to domination inheres all social relations, it affects diverse colonial subjects in diverse ways through diverse modes. It blends Marxism, post structural theories, Lacanian psychoanalysis and interdisciplinary approaches in various degrees, considering the various needs of various people.

Both ‘post’ and ‘colonialism’ of postcolonialism are problematic for a country like India. Bill Ashcroft et al. in their book The Empire Writes Back points out, “More than three quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism” (30). But countries like India have had their lives already
shaped when colonialism arrived. India has a rich culture and history. Even when the East India Company presented its charter in the court of the Moghul king Akbar, India was a great civilization whereas England was inhaling the first whiff of the Renaissance. Post colonialism does not keep us ever reminding of our object position as colonial subjects but also rubbing it into our consciousness.

English is the medium through which postcolonialism as well as colonialism expresses itself; it is also the medium of project globalization. Postcolonialism in postcolonial countries comes up in fiction, and not in poetry or drama. Novel is an instrument of colonialism; it must also be that of postcolonialism: the malady itself must provide its cure. Postcolonialism in Indian fiction in English can be considered in various ways. The postcolonial novel has specific post/structural strategies as well as thematics. We have novels primarily rendering the engagement with colonial experience, novels dealing with women as colonial subjects, novels dealing with marginality, especially the subalterns, and novels dealing with either the abrogation or appropriation of the language of the metropolitan centre. Indian English novel has been obsessed more with cultural interaction between the East and the West than with the discursive powers and strategies which led to the depletion of Indian knowledge and culture.
There has been an upsurge of women writers in English in India allegedly brought about by postcoloniality. Many women novelists have been published more in English than in languages like Hindi, Bangla, Tamil, and Telugu. Most of the women writers in English pursue both feminine and feminist concerns. Some writers, with no hesitation, write the woman's body and are not shy of any discourse on sexuality. All such novels which write the woman and her body may be categorized as feminist, and as feminism has links with postcolonialism, the novels can be termed postcolonial.

Postcolonialism becomes mere verbiage if it does not lead to decolonization; decolonization is reifying itself only in bits and pieces. If colonization is undesirable, decolonization is desirable and the best way to do it is to decolonize the mind. As most postcolonialists agree, it is difficult to recover the precolonial past; it is better to structure our present syncretically by building bridges between our cultural heritage and non-compelling knowledges and discourses of others, especially of the West. What is happening in India is that our mind is still in bondage.

It is language that constructs the world. Our knowledge of the world comes through the language. Even today we have English in our midst, not as the site of colonialism but as a transnational language. Harish Trivedi argues that instead of India conquering English, “English
has certainly conquered India all over again” (Trivedi 9). We have not appropriated English as postcolonialists claim, but we have abrogated our rich languages and not saved them from being appropriated by English and believe that Indian English is exclusively our own. Though the use of English has greatly increased in India, it is still the language of the centre with the inherent colonial power discourse. If we wish to decolonize ourselves we will have to enrich our other Indian languages and their literatures and take recourse to translation in order to transcend the national spaces and borders.

Postcolonialism is a mixed blessing. It has brought about the baring of colonial power structure and empowering of the marginality gendered or engendered. It has considerably increased the significance of literary studies and widened the horizons of globalization.

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most widely known Indians writing in English today. He is a Bengali author as well as a literary critic in the field of English language. Born in Calcutta, on 11 July, 1956, Ghosh was the son of Shailender Chandra Ghosh, an officer in the British Indian army who became a diplomat in independent India, and Anjali Ghosh, a homemaker. He spent his childhood with his sister Chaitali, in Calcutta as well as Dhaka, Colombo and Iran, followed by a stint in a boarding school at Dehra Dun in Northern India. He graduated with a B.A honours in History from St. Stephen’s College, University of Delhi in
1976 and an M.A in Sociology from the University of Delhi in 1978. While in college, between 1974 and 1978, he worked as a reporter and editor for the **Indian Express**.

In 1979, Ghosh earned Diplomas in social anthropology from Oxford University in England as well as in Arabic from the institute Bourguiba de Langues Vivantes in Tunisia. He then completed a Ph.D. in social Anthropology from Oxford in 1982, doing a considerable amount of field work in Egypt. He drew directly on his experiences in Egypt for **In an Antique Land History in the Guise of a Traveller’s Tale (1992)** as well as some of the essays in “The Imam and the Indian” while his academic interests in history, sociology, Anthropology and the history of culture permeate all his books. From 1982 to 1983 Ghosh was a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Development Studies at Trivandrum, Kerala.

Between 1983 and 1987 Ghosh taught in the Department of Sociology at the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi, first as a research associate and then as a lecturer. During this period he was associated with the Subaltern Studies Collective, a University group conducting research in the history contributions made by the subaltern or underprivileged sections of society to India’s national culture. Radically departing from the traditional notion of history as a record of the activities of the elite, the group promoted an understanding of
history that equally valued the handiwork of millions of nameless people whose influence on the course of events had gone unrecorded because of their perceived social inconsequence. The forgotten histories of such people are an important element in Ghosh’s work, as evident in his first novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986) which was published while he was still teaching at Delhi.

Even as the literary career of Ghosh flourished in the 1990s he remained active as an academic. He was a Fellow at the Centre for Studies in Social Science in Calcutta from 1990 to 1992. Between 1990 and 1994 he was Visiting Professor at the University of Virginia and at Columbia University. He also lectured at the American University in Cairo as Distinguished Visiting Professor in 1994. He became a frequently invited speaker on Social Anthropology and literature at international conferences and writer’s festivals, often giving reading from his works.

Amitav Ghosh lives in New York with his wife, Deborah Baker and two children, Lila and Nayan. Deborah Baker is the author of the *Laura Riding Biography In Extremis: The Life of Laura Riding* that was published in 1993. In 1999, Ghosh joined the faculty at Queen’s College, City University of New York as Distinguished Professor in Comparative Literature. He has also been a Visiting Professor to the
English department of Harvard University since 2005. He is working on a trilogy to be published by Penguin Books, India.

As a writer, Amitav Ghosh has been immensely influenced by the political and social milieu of the country. Also the stories and events he heard from his parents during his childhood made an indelible impression on his mind. His mother grew up in Calcutta and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, nonviolence and disobedience and the terrors that accompanied partition in 1947. His father worked in the British colonial army in India and his stories were of the war and of his fellow Indians who fought loyally beside the British. The image of the changing India, politically and socially, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh’s mind.

Apart from fiction, Amitav Ghosh is also comfortable in writing non-fiction. He always takes contemporary subjects for his novels such as India’s nuclear policy, Egyptian culture and literature. He bears numerous mantles of responsibility in the world: anthropologist, sociologist, novelist, essayist, travel-writer-teacher. He has been awarded the Padma Shri by the Government of India.

His first novel The Circle of Reason won France’s top literary award, Prix Medici Etranger and was the New York Times notable
book of the year 1987. His next novel *The Shadow Lines* won the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award for the year 1990. It also won the *Ananda Puraskar* Award in Calcutta in 1990. His novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1996) has been described as a kind of mystery thriller. It won the Arthur C. Clark Award. He was the final authority for American Society of Magazine Editors Award, for reporting *Count Down*, 1999. *The Hungry Tide* won the Hutch crossword Book Award in 2006.

Ghosh’s novel *The Glass Palace* won the grand Prize for fiction at the Frankfurt Internationale – Book Awards. He was the winner of the 1999 Pushcart prize, a leading literary award for an essay “The March of the Novel through History: The Testimony of my Grandfather’s Bookcase”, that was published in the *Kenyon Review*. In 2007 he was awarded the Grinzane Cavour prize in Turin, Italy. *Sea of Poppies* was short listed for the 2008 Man Booker Prize. *Sea of Poppies* was the co-winner of the Vodafone crossword Book award in 2009. It was also the co-winner of the 2010, Dan David Prize.

Ghosh is innovative. He is an experimentalist; he experiments extensively with the form of his books. But basically ideas run into his books. Ideas are the driving force of his works. Each work of Ghosh is born out of a conviction. He may be writing a travelogue, a novel or a book of essays but certain heartfelt ideas prod him on. The thought-content of his books is mighty. The incidents, the characters and the places convey thoughts and feelings. He has been true to his ideas. He
does not shun away from commenting on politics, wars, economy and other worldly affairs.

Amitav Ghosh has always kept his audience engrossed, presenting a new paradigm of novel, writing right from the publication of his first novel *The Circle of Reason*. *The Circle of Reason* is a book written in defence of reason, logic and rationality. In practical situations logic hardly works. India is a place where irrationality is pursued almost like a religion. Superstitions, blind beliefs, prejudices and the dominance of the supernatural in the collective psyche hardly allow any fresh thinking. *The Circle of Reason* is a revolt against this trend. Rationality is the driving force of this irrationally structured novel. Ghosh is bothered about the unhygienic conditions prevailing in the country. What is the use of Ganga Jal as a purifying agent when Ganga itself has gone so dirty?

*The Circle of Reason* basically tells three stories. The first part deals with the story of Balram. He is a rationalist and is influenced by the life of Louis Pasteur. He is idealistic to the extent of being inhuman. He has no involvement with people. He treats others simply as objects of observation and for change. He takes his whims to extreme and becomes self-destructive. In fact, he meets his own mettle in Bhude’s Roy; he is equally cynical. He is a Congressman. Alu, the protagonist is a nephew of Balaram. He is the only one to survive in the family.
The second part of the novel tells another tale. An earthly, practical and zestful trader tries to bring together the community of Indians in the Middle East. But again these efforts prove to be unrealistic. The third part is the story of Mrs. Verma who outrightly rejects rational thinking. She again tries her hand at creating Indian model of community life in the desert. However Alu, Zindi and Jyoti Das, a police officer, leave, Mrs. Verma and her experiments in the desert. At the end of the novel, these three are in search of newer horizons, unformed hopes and ideas.

The relationship between Alu and Jyoti is not normal. Jyoti as a police officer, initially views Alu as an extremist. She has her eyes on him right from the first part. Their story is the main source of continuity in the novel. Their relationship too adds thrill. The story begins when an eight year old orphan Nachiketa Bose who comes to live with his uncle Balram Bose in Lalpukar. His rickshaw is chased by Boloi Da. Boloi da runs a cycle repair shop and eagerly utilizes every opportunity of enjoyment. The only remarkable thing about this orphan is his extraordinary head. While everyone is busy comparing the head with other suitable objects and bring it in a perspective it is Boloi Da who gives Alu his life long name as well as part of his identity.

On an allegorical plane Alu is someone rooted in soil and therefore, in identity, Balram is a freak. He claims to be a rationalist; he
admires scientists like Jagdish Bose, Meghnad Saha and above everyone else, Louis Pasteur. They are his ideals. He is obsessed with the science of phrenology which is the study of the size and shape of people’s heads in the belief that you can find out about their characters and abilities from this. Alu is a curious case study for Balram. Balram applies this instrument for measuring head on Alu, much to Alu’s woes. Alu settles in Lalpukar, but his troubles do not. He is admitted to Bhudeb’s Roy’s school. Gopal bullies Alu. Finally Alu is forced to leave school. Shombhu Debnath is a lowly man in Lalpukar. It is not respectable to learn weaving from him. Yet, Alu does it. This gives the novelist an opportunity to give a historical perspective to the skill of weaving.

The novel is a journey from Sattva to Rajas to Tamas, the three parts of the novel. The journey is lopsided. Traditionally the protagonist Alu should have gone from Tama (darkness) to Satwa (purity). Amitav Ghosh freely mixes past, present and future in his books. He describes an incident and if the incident links itself to any past happening, he immediately transfers himself to that past incident. So, the whole fabric of the novel keeps floating, shunting backward and forward. It goes back and forth to Bangladesh and Calcutta. Then it reaches the Middle East via Kerala. Significantly, the last location is a desert with shifting sand dunes. The story moves in an uncertain atmosphere. The journey
does not bring any kind of satisfaction or success. It celebrates the sense of unquiet wanderings. It goes on and on, searching for a vision suitable for present times. It is chasing a phantom that ultimately vanishes into thin air. **The Circle of Reason** is called an endless saga of restlessness, uncertainty and change.

The novel is crowded with characters. The episodes are only loosely connected. Alu is the only constant factor who lives a life by trial and error method; falls at times, stands up again and finally moves on to realise his potential, if he has any. Like a typical open-minded novel, it ends without providing ready-made solutions.

**The Shadow Lines** (1988) is a novel of three generations. The three geneses from the narrator’s family spread over Calcutta, Dhaka and London weave the ground of the novel. The title, **The Shadow Lines** philosophically unfolds the inner struggle of mankind in choosing light and darkness, which is symbolically presented in the novel. **The Shadow Lines** is set in Calcutta of the 1960s and moves with an easy felicity between Calcutta, Dhaka and London. A young unnamed narrator, his hero Tridib and the narrator’s grandmother provide the basic framework on which the novel moves forward. The time span of the novel extends from 1939 to 1974, with 1964 being a very important year for the characters.
In the first Section of the book titled “Going Away” Ghosh recaptures London on the eve of and during War. This knowledge of War was gained by the adolescent story-teller, not from books but from the experiences of his uncle who exercised an indelible impression on him. In the section “Coming Home” Ghosh shifts his focus to the Indian subcontinent, mainly to Calcutta and Dhaka where he tries to find the meaning of political freedom. Memory links the past to the present and many of the characters live more in the past than in the present. The novel seems to mock even the concept of exclusive national identity and pride, because riots break out simultaneously both at Dhaka and Calcutta. Snapping of cultural bonds become a recurring image in the novel. Lines and boundaries are drawn across continents and countries but what purpose is served by them is an unsolved puzzle. Even ideals nurtured by the freedom struggle suddenly seem meaningless because the disrupted sub-continent today refuses to accept the importance of religious tolerance and brotherhood. In fact, the novel clearly suggests the mindlessness of the violence unleashed in both the countries as a fall out of the theft of the prophet’s hair. This is corroborated by the killing of Tridib when he is on an innocent visit to Dhaka along with Tha’mma and May.
Partition of the Indian subcontinent was the most traumatic experience in our recent history. The event has been the focal point in many Indian novels Amitav Ghosh acknowledges no separate national or cultural realities; for him all such demarcations are Shadow lines, arbitrary and invented divisions. While crossing the border, the grandmother cannot see the line dividing the countries.

In *The Shadow Lines* the overall focus is on the meaning and shades of political nuances in contemporary life. The universal urge for political freedom, the response to violence and strident nationalism are some important aspects of contemporary life in the sub-continent stressed in the novel. The vision of life presented is a dynamic desire to find a harmonious and complete relationship with the rich diversity of the modern world. The quest for political freedom, the violence in modern life and the role of rumours in riots are all aptly delineated by Ghosh. The novel is basically a feat of memory, which skillfully weaves together personal lives. The focus is on story telling. Coil within coil of memories unfurl in the narrator’s story. Amitav Ghosh with his subtle humour and awareness of contemporary politics ensures that private turmoil and crises are mirrored and intermeshed in public turmoil and crises. He uses this technique to unveil the political theme in the novel.
The first instance of different strands of political nuances appears in the memories of the grandmother of the narrator about her old hometown, Dhaka. The grandmother is a displaced person and had to leave her ancestral home Dhaka and her homeland in 1964. Dhaka is a different city. Yet in her mind the place of her childhood remains as real as ever. Her memories are passed on as vivid stories to the narrator. The idyllic vision of the ancestral home at Dhaka is shattered by political events like communal riots in both India and Pakistan in 1964. The political theme of the novel gets highlighted, as the narrator shows the contrasting responses to violence and the concept of nationalism, as revealed by his grandmother Tridib.

Most of the grandmother’s vision is nostalgic. There is no rancor about partition and Muslim refugees occupying her ancestral home. Yet this is a novel which acknowledges the restlessness and political turmoil of the times. The communal riots in 1964, in both India and Pakistan, led to the untimely killing of Tridib by an impassioned mob in old Dhaka. The overall focus is on the meaning and nuances of political freedom in contemporary life. Communal strife and the irresistible urge of nationalism are also highlighted by the author. Characteristic of many Indian novels in English in the 1980’s, politics - national and international - is the most important theme of the novel. Bharati Parikh examines how Ghosh integrates the historical achievement of the Indian traders from a decolonized point of view. She points out that India
attracted merchants from various far off places even when means of
communication were very few. She highlights the cultural exchange
between these countries and India.

Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* reveals that he is not a mere
fictionist but a researcher and a keen traveller. It bears testimony to
Ghosh’s interaction with at least four languages and cultures, spread
over three continents and across several countries. Unlike some of the
other contemporary writers, his canvas keeps on conquering new
images, giving expression to new ideas and themes. This is the story of
two Indians in Egypt: Bomma, a slave brought there by his Jewish
master who came to India in the twelfth century, and Amitav Ghosh,
who finds himself tracing Bomma’s story in 1980. Interspersing his
quest with accounts of his stay in ‘Mast’ and the people he met, Ghosh
weaves together a narrative packed with exuberant details, exposing
the ties that have bound together India and Egypt, and Hindus and
Muslims and Jews, from the Crusades, to Operation Desert Storm. The
story of the second Indian, Ghosh is presented to us at several different
chronological moments: the time of his fieldwork in 1980, his return to
Egypt in 1988, and finally the Gulf war in 1991.

*In An Antique Land* speaks for Ghosh’s research abilities and
interest in Anthropology in which subject he holds a research degree.
To a post-colonial writer, cultural heritage and identity become important facets of one’s personality. History is easily interwoven into the narrative framework and Ghosh attempts a comparative study of Asian and African, Indian and Egyptian, Jewish and Islamic cultures. Using the autobiographical traveller’s tale to study the past Ghosh creates a canvas vaster than that of his other novels. Character-delineation has been handled expertly by Ghosh in most of his novels and the three dimensional characters- Abu Ali, Musa Mustafa Jabir, bring life and colour to his fiction.

The 1964 riots are described in *In An Antique Land* from the other side of the border. Ghosh has drawn parallels between War and riots, Europe and Indian subcontinent to show how all violence, whether committed in the name of nationalism or freedom, is to be given no other colour. It records people and their manners. *In An Antique Land* is a combination of autobiography, history, anthropology, travelogue and fiction.

*The Calcutta Chromosome* has been described as a kind of mystery-thriller. Amitav Ghosh makes a unique experiment by combining various themes and techniques. His treatment of history in this novel is unique. He succeeds in evoking the places and times with touching details. Ghosh is in full control of the intellectual topography and geographical locale. The novel brings together three searches: the
first is that of an Egyptian clerk, Antar, working alone in a New York apartment in the early years of the twenty-first century to trace the adventures of L. Murugan who disappeared in Calcutta in 1995; the second pertains to Murugan’s obsession with the missing links in the history of malaria research; the third search is that of Urmila Roy, a journalist in Calcutta in 1995 who is researching the works of Phulboni, a writer who produced a strange cycle of Lakhan stories that he wrote in the 1930s but suppressed thereafter.

Amitav Ghosh uses flashbacks to present the virtual Murugan roaming Calcutta and trying desperately to understand and expose a subtext of counter science in Ross laboratory. The novel is kaleidoscopic in structure uniting the past with the present, with an aim to visualize the future. The novel reads like a medical case history, but later moves like a medical thriller related to Ross’s discovery of malaria and its initial repercussions. The novel has two sections:

1. August 20, Mosquito day
2. The Day After

The first section is devoted to the recollection of certain scientific facts in a very thriller mode of fiction. The second is related to the attempts to trace out the adventures of Murugan and the queer truth of what in fact took place on these fateful days of August 1995.
The Glass Palace (2000) is a historical novel, set in Burma, India and Malay. It spans a century from the fall of the Ava kingdom in Mandalay through the second World War to modern times. Focussing mainly on the early twentieth century, it explores a broad spectrum of issues, ranging from the changing economic landscape of Burma and India, to pertinent questions about what constitutes a nation and how these change, as society is swept along by the tide of modernity.

The novel starts with a boy called Rajkumar running through the city of Mandalay to find a woman called Macho. He comes from India and reaches Burma with a bright spirit and a hunger for success. Rajkumar’s work as an assistant on Ma Cho’s food stall takes place in the shadow of The Glass Palace, in which king Thebaw and his wife reside with their daughters. As the British invasion comes to topple the incumbent regime, everyday, citizens of Mandalay are able to enter the enshrined building. Rajkumar spots Dolly one of the princess’ assistants and falls in love. The entire royal family and their group are quickly extradited by the British and forced into house arrest.

Whilst Rajkumar’s quickly evolving career begins to take shape with the help of Saya John, a successful teak-merchant Macho’s sometime lover we are given a glimpse into the awkward beginnings of a new life for King Thebaw and his family, as they try to settle at the port town of Rathagiri, north of Goa. Events conspire to weave Outram house move firmly into the life of Rathnagiri than expected. King Thebaw is revered by the local community, and in time the family comes
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 the forests for sale into the British Empire’s vastly expanding markets. Being an opportunist, Rajkumar starts making his own way in the world after receiving advice from his new friend and colleague Dohsay. Borrowing cash from Saya John, he makes the journey to India to recruit the poverty-stricken village dwellers into the comparatively lucrative world of 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.

Having built a more than modest commercial empire, Rajkumar had one piece of unfinished business: to track down the only girl he ever loved, Dolly. Through an Indian connection in Rangoon, Rajkumar makes contact with Rathagiri via Uma, and is accordingly granted an audience with the Collector and his wife over a meal, which of course stiffly conforms to colonial practice. To his surprise, Dolly is present, and after some time, he finally persuades her to leave the family she
has been exiled and return with him to Burma as his wife. Saya John prides himself on being able to spot the next big commodity and on their return to Rangoon, he hands Rajkumar and Dolly a small clump of odd elastic material rubber.

**Sea of Poppies** is a vibrant and intensely human work that confirms the author's reputation as a master storyteller. At the heart of this epic saga is a vast ship, the Ibis. Its destiny is a tumultuous voyage across the Indian Ocean to the Mauritius Islands. As for the people on board, they are a motley array of sailors and stowaways, coolies and convicts. In a time of colonial upheaval in the mid-nineteenth century, fate has thrown together a truly diverse cast of Indians and westerners, from a bankrupt Raja to a widowed village woman from a mulatto American Freedman to a free spirited European orphan. As they sail down the Hooghly and into the sea, their old family ties are washed away, and they view themselves as jahaj-bhais, or ship-brothers who will build whole new lives for themselves in the remote islands where they are being taken. It is the beginning of an unlikely dynasty.

The sweep of this historical adventure spans the lush poppy fields by the Ganga, the rolling high seas and the exotic backstreets of China at the time of the Opium wars. But it is the panorama of characters, whose diaspora encapsulates the vexed colonial history of the East itself, which makes **Sea of Poppies** a master piece.
The author compares the Ganges to the Nile, the life-line of the Egyptian civilization, attributing the provenance and growth of this civilization to these selfless, ever-flowing bodies. He portrays the characters as poppy seed, emanating in large numbers from the field to form a sea, where every single seed is uncertain about its future.

The story begins with Deet, a simple pious lady married to Hukam Singh, a crippled worker in the Ghazipur Opium Factory. Deeti runs from pillar to post to discover the identity of her daughter’s father. It turns out in the end to be the subhedar of her village. But as luck would have it, her husband dies, leaving behind his daughter Kabutri who is later separated from her mother. Deeti looks almost certain to meet her doom in the customary Sati Pratha when Kalua, the ox-man from the neighbouring village, comes to her rescue. The couple flees and unites. This is not acceptable to their fellow villagers.

Zachary, an American sailor, receives a lot of attention. He has been on the Ibis since the schooner started her journey, and hopes to die with it. With the support of Serang Ali he becomes the second in command of the ship, when it was refitted to carry indentured labour to the island of Marcech, instead of the tradable opium.
Neel Rattan Haldar, a wealthy landlord whose dynasty has been ruling for centuries, is forced by Mr. Burnham to sell off his estates in order to pay for the debt he had incurred when trading opium with China at the height of the opium trade. But now that the opium trade has come to a standstill, as a result of the resistance shown by the Chinese authorities, he is left with no money to clear his loan. He is unable to envisage his poor state and is tried for forgery. The court punishes him for working as an indentured labour for seven years in March. It is then that he meets An Fatt, a Chinese opium addict.

Miss Paulette, a French lady is determined to run away from Mr. Burnham’s villa because Mr. Burnham is trying to get married to Justice Kendalibushe. She has resolved to travel to Mareech, as her grandmother would find a better future. Along with Jodu, her childhood friend, she boards the Ibis, unaware of her destiny. On the ship she falls in love with zachary. Ibis is a shelter to those in destitution. Neel, An Fatt, Jodu, Serang Ali and Kalua manage to escape, unaware of the destination the sea waves would drag them to.

The Hungry Tide tells a very contemporary story of adventure and unlikely love, identity and history, set in one of the most fascinating regions on the earth. Off the eastern coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal, lies the immense labyrinth of tiny islands known as the
Sundarbans. For settlers here, life is extremely precarious. Attacks by deadly tigers are common. Unrest and eviction are constant threats. Without warning, at any time, tidal floods rise and surge over the land, leaving devastation in their wake. In this place of vengeful beauty, the lives of three people from different worlds collide. Piyali Roy is a young marine biologist, of Indian descent but stubbornly American, in search of a rare, endangered river dolphin, Orcaella brevirostris. Her journey begins with a disaster, when she is thrown from a boat into crocodile infested waters. Rescue comes in the form of a young, illiterate fisherman, Fokir. Although they have no language between them, Piya and Fokir are powerfully drawn to each other having an uncanny instinct for the ways of the sea: Piya engages Fokir to help with her research and finds a translator in Kanai Dutt, a businessman from Delhi whose idealistic aunt and uncle are longtime settlers in the Sundarbans. As the three of them launch into the elaborate backwaters, they are drawn unawares into the hidden undercurrents of this isolated world, where political turmoil exacts a personal toll which is every bit as powerful as the ravaging tide.

The Hungry Tide is a prophetic novel of remarkable insight, beauty and humanity. The Morichjhanpi massacre incident of 1978-79 took place when the newly elected CPI(M) government of West Bengal evicted thousands of Bengali refugees who had settled on the island forms a background for some parts of the novel. The novel explores
topics like humanism and environmentalism, especially when they come into a conflict of interest with each other.

Ghosh’s next work Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma is a non-fictional ethnographical travelogue comprising three short prose pieces, Dancing in Cambodia, Stories in Stones and At large in Burma in which he demonstrates the dichotomy between history as recorded and history as emotionally experienced. “Dancing in Cambodia” is framed by descriptions of two performances of the traditional classical dance of that country: beginning with the exhibition of the troupe of Royal dancers who moved Rodin to tears when King Sisowath visited France in May 1906 and ending with the performance of a dance troupe, assembled from among the survivors of the devastating carriage, wrought by the Khmer Rouge during the Cambodian Cultural Revolution, in a shattered theatre in Phnom Penh. While Rodin’s tears had been for the exquisite beauty of an exotic oriental artifact, the packed Cambodian audience for the latter performance wept because the dance symbolized the survival of their culture against all odds. In “Stories in Stones”, Ghosh traces the monumental twelfth century Cambodian temple complex of Angkor wat, which he calls a monument to the power of the story, and discusses the contrary purposes with which the story of the temple is told by priests, politicians, colonial explorers, western tourists and ordinary Cambodian
citizens. In At Large in Burma, Ghosh considers the significance of
activist Aung San Sun Kyi for the Burmese people oppressed by a
dictatorial government.

Ghosh’s novels in general are about the past from a point of view
located in the present. Complex and intricately patterned, they
interweave the freedom struggle, riots, partition, sexual exploitation,
romance and love making. The stories developing through different
locales, deal with exploitation and power structures before and after
colonialism. Ghosh seems to be very meticulous in portraying the
colonial experiences and memoirs of a time gone by.

The fictional space, which Amitav Ghosh creates, being part of
the prevailing discourse, depicts the material conditions of postcolonial
societies where the experiences of colonialism, the struggle for
liberation and the dehumanizing, decadent socio-political conditions
that follow independence exercise an enduring impact. The struggle for
liberation produced new states and new boundaries, but along with it
homeless wanderers as well. Driven by a quest for identity and
migratory instinct. Ghosh’s protagonists are either orphans or aliens to
the cultural and social milieu in which they are placed.

The disturbing predicament of rootlessness and non-belonging
urges the postcolonial subject to move on in search of new pastures
and to explore the sense of belonging of the traditional old people to their soil. The use of the theme of journey or migration in his novels speaks of Amitav Ghosh’s obsession with the quest-motif operating in the restless psyche that has imbibed and inherited a cultural displacement as the outcome of the colonial regime. The political and cultural dominance of the west alienates individuals from their indigenous cultural tradition and makes them strangers, groping in the dark for their identity.

Ghosh’s historical perspective reflects a postcolonial consciousness of considering narrativization as a means of achieving meaning in life. Narratives are expressions of the collective consciousness, which have traditionally been believed to help establish community and group identities. Ghosh’s characters, mostly rooted deep in the Indian tradition, never encounter the West directly and so do not flaunt their Indianness in a proclamatory tone. The technique he employs is the conventional Indian style of interpreting the present in terms of the mythical past and of containing the historical within the metaphysical, by dismantling the temporal with events perceived in a cyclical rather than linear time frame.

Postcolonial India shows a growing prediction towards westernization, individualism and the nuclear family, homogenization of culture and the emergence of a bourgeois perspective, indicative of a
cultural transformation which seems to sensitize Ghosh to confront them through his works of art that take on a subversive vision. Among the fictional techniques of subversion, Ghosh seems to be proficient in the use of magic realism. It dissolves the boundaries between the physical and spiritual truths and explores the possibilities of existence at various level of consciousness which greatly assist subversive aesthetics. Another interesting fictional device employed by Ghosh is the subverting of accidental causes and coincidence to restore the subaltern’s potential of comprehensibility and historicity.

Amitav Ghosh’s writings portray the confrontations in the postcolonial society, offering potential resistance to the dominant ideology, at the same time collaborating with it. Most of his characters take a liberal humanist stance towards issues they confront, betraying this ambivalence of collaboration and confrontation. Ghosh’s pen-pictures expose the postcolonial socio–political scenario as dominated by the colonial ideology and underscore the need for a potent resistance movement in the discursive and material practices to subvert this ideology as well as its power structure.

A sketchy outline of the Chapters of the thesis may be relevant. **Chapter I, Postcolonialism and Amitav Ghosh** is introductory in
nature. It traces the emergence of man and artist- Amitav Ghosh, in a postcolonial era. **Chapter II**, “Partition, Identity and Communal Violence in *The Shadow Lines*” discusses the issues of partition, identity, freedom and cross-cultural interactions, in the backdrop of communal violence. The attitudes of both British and Indian characters in different situations are dealt with here. The friendship between various branches of an upper class Bengali family and an English family over three generations is the central argument wherein the division of Bengal and suffering caused by partition is highlighted by Amitav Ghosh. In 1947 came partition and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan. The partition changed the meaning of home. The novel brings out the futility of political boundaries and purposelessness of socio-political movements which resulted in the death of many innocent people.

Serious questions about roots, identities, war and borders are answered in this novel. Two generations of migrant women, the grandmother and Ila, and different ideas of freedom are the subsequent subjects of discussion in *The Shadow lines*.

**Chapter III** “Migrancy and Cross-Cultural Conflicts in *The Circle of Reason* and *In an Antique Land*” addresses the postcolonial issues in two novels. *The Circle of Reason* occupies a unique place in the field of post colonial life by depicting the condition of people who are displaced and have become migrant. Ghosh refuses to celebrate the
hybridity and heterogeneity born of global migrations. Instead, they offer a compelling critique of nationalism and the failures of migration through the economic and political experiences of women as citizens and illegal migrants. This novel offers a grim exploration of the oppressions of migrancy and the violence of the modern post colonial state in the lives of those who live in the shadows of globalization.

In *In An Antique Land* Ghosh mingles history, geography, voyages, trade, adventure and magic memory. The author depicts the co-existence of different cultures in India. He recuperates the pre-colonial cultures suppressed by conquest and the hegemonic history written to serve the civilization priority of Europe. The author could write in Bengali or any other Indian language, but he wrote in English, the language of global communication. Here Ghosh does not propose to dissolve barriers between natives, peoples and communities, but rather makes a plea for cross-border ties.

**Chapter IV** “Travel and Displacement in *The Calcutta Chromosome* and *Dancing in Cambodia*” spins around two works. *The Calcutta Chromosome* is the maiden attempt of Ghosh in the genre of science fiction. Keeping travel and displacement as pivotal issues, the novel searches for the history of the “Calcutta Chromosome”. The story covers the colonial and postcolonial years of
Indian history. The theme of search for immortality moves through a never-ending line of female characters. The special contribution that the Calcutta chromosome makes is that it suggests transference of personality traits. This way it suggests immortality. Secrecy is used as a technique of procedure by the researchers. The mythological references of names at times make the characters archetypes. Ghosh deconstructs and dismantles western sense of superiority through Indian irrationality. The presence of blind beliefs is easily felt in India which Ghosh fictionally exploits. Though the language of the colonizer is not totally rejected by Ghosh, he also follows the Indian practice of using native words.

The other work, **Dancing in Cambodia, At large in Burma** also surfaces the motif of displacement. The author has viewed these countries from a historical perspective. His work analyzes the impact of French colonization of Cambodia, the aftermath of decolonization and its subsequent humiliations and fantasies. Dance becomes the central metaphor. Music and dance stand for life. Dance and Music are symbols of politics of resurgence in Cambodia. Angkor Wat is a powerful symbol of the romance and going of a lost civilization. But for the Cambodians, it is a symbol of modernity. Ghosh wrote about Burma to explore the places his parents and relatives had lived or visited before India became a Republic.
Chapter V addresses “Exploitation and Colonization in The Glass Palace”. The Glass Palace treats several issues that intersect on the terrain of a postcolonial nation-state spanning three generations and three nations over a period of two centuries. It narrates the histories of Burma, Malaysia and India. The novel portrays political and cultural complexities through the author’s concepts of nationalism, imperialism and the subjugation of gender, class and caste. The Glass Palace portrays the colonial rule of nearly a whole century in Burma, Malaysia and India, starting from the Anglo-Burmese war of 1885. This novel begins from pre-independence era and ends in post-independence days. In the very opening scene the greed of the colonizer is highlighted. The British occupation of Burma suggests the pattern of their colonization and exploitation. The plight of the Indian soldiers constituting the British army is shown in due course. The love for money drew them to this profession. The author’s intention, it appears, is to trace the evolution of national conscience antithetical to the colonial power. Another theme illustrated here is resistance to imperialism. Caste system, untouchability and widow-burning that were prevalent in India even before the British came are also brought to light. The resistance to the dictatorial military rule in the post-colonial Burma through some student activities and arguments is the subsequent concern of the novelist. The Concluding Chapter, Chapter VI, A Glance
**Back and Forth** sums up the arguments elaborated in the core chapters of the thesis.
WORKS CITED


