ABSTRACT

The doctoral thesis “Re-inventing History: A Study of Amitav Ghosh’s Novels” aims to examine Ghosh’s use of history with special attention to his fictional works. Ghosh’s projection of history is viewed from two ways: Ghosh’s unconventional reading of the past and his preference to understand history from the perspective of the historically unmapped, unexplored and unrepresented. His novels are read as models of history of the voiceless and the marginalised rather than those of historical figures; as novels that enhance family than nation in their juxtaposition of public and private histories; and as works that view migration and displacement only from the historical angle, thereby portraying migrants as victims trapped in the cauldron of history. History as an indispensable reality is an integral quality that defines his novels. The research work would make use of primary and secondary sources on Amitav Ghosh’s works of fiction.

The thesis has been organised into six sections as given below:

Chapter I “Introduction” attempts definitions of history, examines the general use of history by historian and litterateur and relates the use of history by Indian English writers. It introduces Amitav Ghosh’s life, career, works and their dominant characteristics: Ghosh’s use of history is a common thread that unites most of his works.
Chapter II “Amitav Ghosh and Re-examination of History” studies Ghosh’s novels in the context of an examination of history and the decoding of an alternative history. Ghosh debunks, deconstructs and repositions monumental historiography displaying a narration of ordinary individual rather than that of the nation to arrive at a revisionist view of the past.

Chapter III “History and Imagination in Amitav Ghosh’s Novels” examines how Amitav Ghosh uses history against imagination or reality against fiction. This chapter for that reason attempts to examine re-invention of history in relation to Ghosh’s narrative style, attempting to understand his narrative methods of integrating the real viz history and the unreal viz imagination in his works. It would study how Ghosh reverts to history against imagination, or reality against fiction.

Chapter IV “Juxtaposing History: Nation and Family” attempts to understand and analyse the juxtaposition of history with nation and family in the works of Amitav Ghosh. The chapter examines the way in which Ghosh draws attention to a reading of the past as one that merges stories of the nation with stories of common people and their families.

Chapter V “Impact of History: Migration and Displacement” projects the presence of migration and displacement of characters in Ghosh’s novels. The chapter closely looks into how Ghosh links
migration to the re-examination of history, where pre-independence struggle and Partition forced the populace to migrate to another land to seek shelter and subsistence for their family and themselves. Ghosh’s portrayals of displaced individuals, along with the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors of their migration, their reactions to displacement and their experiences of travel to distant lands are also discussed in the chapter.

Chapter VI “Conclusion” sums up the discussions in the previous chapters and presents the findings of the research on Amitav Ghosh’s novels. The research acknowledges the importance and worthiness of Amitav Ghosh in the literary field. The doctoral thesis concludes with the identification of possible areas for future research on the works of Amitav Ghosh.