CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

America leads to Africa; the nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margins of the nation displace the centre; the peoples of the periphery return to rewrite the history and fiction of the metropolis . . . . The great Whitmanesque sensorium of America is exchanged for a Warhol blowup, a Kruger installation, or Mapplethorpe's naked bodies. (Bhabha, *Nation and Narration* 6-7)

The history of human life has always been a chronology of power structures with simultaneous oppression and marginalisation of the weak, having been timed by hegemony. In the history of the world, colonialism is one such phenomenon that has altered the constitution of the tricontinent. It has shaken the roots of the societies concerned under the pressure of Eurocentric ideals, that the identity of the human beings as well as the societies has been shaken out of them. It is of prime consideration in countries like India at present as it is the adverse force that has paradoxically led to the creation of the nations, as they exist today.

Postcolonialism views the specificity of the discourses of the nations that were once colonies as a phenomenon that springs from the impact of Western imperialism on everything belonging to them starting from the nation's history to their innermost individual and collective psyche. Postcolonial discourses dismantle the carefully constructed power structure
that enforced the supremacy of the occidental over the oriental. Debating the
European hegemony and other Eurocentric ideals, postcolonial discourses
emphasize the need for cultural plurality and independence along with
political freedom. The emphasis is on the diversity of cultures with space for
individuality.

Postcolonialism is more than a historical time marker. Ashcroft,
Griffiths and Tiffin consider postcolonialism as that which signifies “all the
culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the
present day” (2). Postcolonial discourses analyse and represent the mutually
imposing relationship between culture and power. The specificity of the
discourses of the colonies springs from the impact of Western imperialism on
everything belonging to them starting from the nation’s history to their
innermost individual and collective psyche. Postcolonial discourses dismantle
the carefully constructed power structure that enforced the supremacy of the
occidental over the oriental. Ashish Nandy writes about the destructive aspects
of colonialism:

... the drive for mastery over men is not merely a by-product of a
faulty political economy but also of a world view which believes
in the absolute superiority of the human over the nonhuman and
the subhuman, the masculine over the feminine, the adult over
the child, the historical over the ahistorical, and the modern or
progressive over the traditional or the savage. It has become more
and more apparent that genocide, eco-disaster and ethnocide are
but the underside of corrupt sciences and psychopathic technologies wedded to new secular hierarchies, which have reduced major civilizations to the status of a set of empty rituals. The ancient forces of human greed and violence, one recognizes, have merely found a new legitimacy in anthropocentric doctrines of secular salvation, in the ideologies of progress, normality and hyper-masculinity, and in theories of cumulative growth of science and technology. (x)

Debating the European hegemony and other Eurocentric ideals, postcolonial discourses emphasise their cultural potentiality and independence along with political independence, to the extent possible in a globalised milieu.

M. H. Abrams defines Postcolonial Studies as “the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature, and modes of discourse, specific to former colonies of England, Spain, France, and other European imperial powers” and identifies three recurrent issues:

i) The rejection of the master-narrative of Western imperialism—in which the colonial other is not only subordinated and marginalized, but in effect deleted as a cultural agency—and its replacement by a counter-narrative in which the colonial cultures fight their way back into a world history written by Europeans.

ii) The rejection of the master-narrative of Western imperialism—in which the colonial other is not only subordinated and marginalized, but in effect deleted as a cultural agency—and its
replacement by a counter-narrative in which the colonial cultures fight their way back into a world history written by Europeans.

iii) The rejection of the master-narrative of Western imperialism—in which the colonial other is not only subordinated and marginalized, but in effect deleted as a cultural agency—and its replacement by a counter-narrative in which the colonial cultures fight their way back into a world history written by Europeans. (237-38)

Postcolonial approach in criticism is a specialised approach designed and adapted to evaluate effectively, the works of art that pulse with postcolonial consciousness. Its evolution as a separate critical theory owes much to the works of the trio—Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. It addresses the multifarious problems related to being colonised, such as dislocation or displacement of people, cultural denigration, identity crisis, social alienation, linguistic hierarchy of colonial construct, annihilation of pride in national heritage and marginalisation of all native discourses including national history before colonisation. In this context, a few critics like Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik have questioned the validity of postcolonial theory promoted by the trio—Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha.

With regard to Spivak's concept of postcoloniality as "the heritage of imperialism in the rest of the globe," Aijaz Ahmad says: "The word 'heritage' in this context is striking, as if 'imperialism' was a matter of the past. Equally
striking is the phrase ‘rest of the globe,’ which suggests that Postcoloniality is a condition found outside the United States, Britain and France. This is curious, because my impression is that it is in these countries, plus Australia, that postcolonial intellectuals actually live and do their theorizing” (278). Ahmad asks two important questions: i) Is imperialism a matter of the past? ii) Where do the postcolonial intellectuals live? Ahmad’s argument is that the concept of hybridity, promoted by postcolonial theorists who are working in American or European universities, cannot be sustained because of the existence of unequal relations of cultural power today. The concept of hybridity, according to Ahmad, cannot erase Manichean binarism because the West will dictate the East: “Into whose culture is one to be hybridized and on whose terms?” (290). Ahmad avers that postcoloniality is a matter of class and that even among the diaspora, only the privileged lead a comfortable life and enjoy the surplus pleasure. The poor people, whose economic status is very low, experience displacement not as “cultural plenitude but as torment” (289).

Similarly, Arif Dirlik views postcolonial criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism as “an attempt to regroup intellectuals of uncertain location under the banner of postcolonial discourse” and says that “the identity of the postcolonial is no longer structural but discursive” (297). Dirlik mentions three uses of the term “postcolonial”— i) as a literal description of conditions in formerly colonial societies, ii) as a description of a global condition after colonialism and iii) as a description of a discourse informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations. Both Ahmad and Dirlik consider the
contribution of postcolonial theorists like Edward Said, Spivak and Bhabha from Marxist perspective. While the arguments of Ahmad and Dirlik refer to the limitations of postcolonial theorists, it cannot be denied that humanism and resistance to hegemony form the basis of postcolonial theory and criticism. Amitav Ghosh acknowledges the contribution made by Edward Said, Spivak and Bhabha in taking the literature of the margin to the centre (Hawley 13) and emphasises the need for plurality in the fast changing global scenario.

Renuka Rajaratnam makes a pertinent comment in her analysis of the Nehruvian narrative of pluralism and its influence on the Indian literary fiction of the 1980s and 1990s: “The cosmopolitan thrust of Nehru's nationalism provided the ideological matrix from which Rushdie, Seth, Ghosh, Tharoor and Mistry constructed their social imaginary viewed through a historical perspective” (1). Renuka Rajaratnam argues that the common feature that is central to Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow lines*, Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance* is their emphasis on the plurality of the nation. She refers to Rushdie's defining image of India as the crowd which is many things at once—multiple, heterogeneous and hybrid. According to her, Nehru's *The Discovery of India*, which is the "foundational fiction" of the Nehruvian novels, shows how religious and cultural tolerance forms the basis of Indian civilisation. Nehru's vision, like Rabindranath Tagore's concept of the ideal world, transcends the narrow walls of nationalism. Homi K.
Bhabha's statement "Nation is Janus-faced" needs to be examined from this perspective.

According to Homi K. Bhabha, the locality of culture is "more around 'temporality' than about 'historicity': a form of living that is more complex than 'community'; more 'symbolic' than 'society'; more 'connotative' than 'country'; less patriotic than patrie; more 'rhetorical' than the 'reason of State'; more 'mythological' than 'ideology' . . . more 'collective' than 'the subject'; more 'psychic' than 'civility' . . ." (The Location of Culture 200). This concept forms the basis of Ghosh's fiction, which shows the movement from "thesis" through "antithesis" to "synthesis."

The triad "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" is associated with the philosophy of Hegel. The triad is usually described in three ways: i) The thesis is an intellectual proposition, ii) The antithesis is simply the negation of the thesis, a reaction to the proposition, and iii) The synthesis solves the conflict between the thesis and antithesis by reconciling their common truths and forming a new proposition.

An analysis of Ghosh's novels shows that synthesis is a recurring theme at the physical level as well as the psychological level. In his first novel The Circle of Reason, the protagonist's uncle Balaram attempts to create a micro-society solely governed by reason. In The Shadow Lines, Ghosh problematizes the concept of purity, reflecting Bhabha's concept of nation. In The Calcutta Chromosome, knowledge, shrouded in mystery, travels across national boundaries. In The Glass Palace, Ghosh transcends national borders and
presents his theme from postcolonial perspective. While *The Shadow Lines* is set up against the backdrop of historical events like Second World War, Swadeshi Movement, Partition of India and Communal Riots of 1963—1964 in Dhaka and Calcutta, *The Glass Palace* is set in Burma, India, and Malay, spanning through a century, from the fall of the Konbaung Dynasty in Mandalay through the Second World War to modern times.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh uses the Sundarbans as the backdrop to describe the predicament of the subaltern from humanist point of view. In *Sea of Poppies*, the journey undertaken by the crowd of people on the Ibis becomes a metaphor. The story focuses mainly on the socio-economic conditions that led to the mass migration of impoverished Indian peasants as indentured laborers to the Mauritius islands in the nineteenth century. In *River of Smoke*, the action oscillates between China and India. Ghosh presents the theme of nation as an artificial construct in all these novels with different historical backgrounds. These novels are circular in nature and do not have a linear pattern of telling a tale from the beginning till the end in terms of time, memory or space.

Ghosh uses a wide canvas to describe the events which occur in different places and times. In this respect, Ghosh’s technique is similar to that of Bharati Mukherjee. For example, Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace* and Mukherjee’s *The Holder of the World* are basically the kind of discursive discourses on historical narration from analytical perspective. Both the novels present a picturesque description of history. In *The Holder of the World*, the main
character Hannah Easton's traumatic experiences from her childhood up to her adult life mould her attitude towards life. By the end of the novel, Hannah Easton discovers her true identity as a result of her experiences around the world. In *The Glass Palace*, the pinnacles and troughs in Dolly's life raise her to the level of serenity and wisdom. Both Hannah and Dolly move from the fixed identity associated with home and transcend the boundaries of gendered space. Both contain worlds within themselves and become literally the holders of the world. Hannah achieves this quality by her resolution and independence while Dolly does the same by tolerance and love. Hannah is a person who is marginalized primarily by gender. In spite of all the difficult circumstances, Hanna retains her faith and resolution. As Beigh Masters, one of the characters in *The Holder of the World* says, "Nothing could happen to her, not from alien enemies" (244). This is applicable to Dolly also because she shows love and tolerance to everybody around her.

Both *The Glass Palace* and *The Holder of the World* excel in the presentation of history using prolepsis and analepsis. In *The Holder of the World*, Hannah Easton and Beig Masters serve as a link between the past and the present; in *The Glass Palace*, Rajkumar and Dinu perform this task. The opening lines of *The Holder of the World*—"I live in three time zones that is the past, the present and the future" (5)—indicate the role of the time factor in the development of the plot. The historicity found in these novels is related to the issues in the postcolonial world. As Queen Supayalat condemns the materialistic attitude of the British in *The Glass Palace*, Hannah in *The Holder of*
the World states that the British "had not come to India in order to breed and colonize or even to convert. They were here to plunder, to enrich themselves" (99). Both Ghosh and Mukherjee deal with the historicity of text and textuality of history, establishing a link between the past and the present.

As in Walter Scott's fiction, the encyclopaedic information about the historical period provides the setting to Ghosh's fiction. Like Waverley, Ivanhoe and Kenilworth, which portray the geography, dialect and social issues of the pre-industrial Scotland, Ghosh's Sea of Poppies and River of Smoke provide the details of religious worship, problems of indentured labourers, criminal justice practices, marriage, funeral rites, influence of opium, costume, furniture and the language of sailors in the early nineteenth century. Ghosh talks to Indrajit Hazra in an interview about the difference between history and literature: "History can say things in great detail, even though it may say them in rather dull factual detail. The novel, on the other hand, can make links that history cannot. And I love the novel's total inclusiveness" (Web).

Ghosh's handling of history may be explained in the light of Hayden White's theory of historiography. Hayden White, a postmodern philosopher of historiography, questions the objective nature of historiography. He avers that historiography cannot exist independently of the historian. According to White, the historian begins his work by constituting a chronicle of events which is to be organized into a coherent story. A historian takes events that have happened and makes a story out of them. Thus the historical work is "a verbal structure in the form of a narrative prose discourse that purports to be
a model, or icon, of past structures and processes in the interest of explaining what they were by representing them" (White 3). A historian does not just find history but also makes it by arranging events in a certain order, deciding which events in the chronicle to include and exclude, and stressing some events and subordinating others, e.g. Ghosh’s selection of events in *River of Smoke*. Ghosh explains to Angiola Codacci how he recreated history in the novel:

The principal setting of *River of Smoke* is a place that no longer exists—it is Canton's old foreign enclave, known as the 'Thirteen Factories' (which I call 'Fanqui-town' in *River of Smoke*). This part of Guangzhou (Canton) was razed to the ground in 1856. Almost no trace of it remains, so I had to rebuild entirely from the historical documents, old paintings, memoirs, etc. I tried to make my recreation as realistic as possible because I think it was perhaps one of the most interesting places that have ever existed. It was a much stranger, more interesting place than anything I could have made up--my imagination would not have been able to create anything as 'exotic' as the actual 'Thirteen Factories'. (Web)

In Hayden Whites’ view, a historian chooses any one of the four types of argument—formalist, organicist, mechanistic, and contextualist. Contextualism refers to the task of tracing threads back to the origin and explaining their relationships. Ghosh’s method of presenting history in his fiction is in the contextualist mode. He follows this method in all his novels,
from *The Circle of Reason* to *River of Smoke*. His presentation of the Morichjhapi incident in *The Hungry Tide* is an example. Till today the number of refugees who were killed during the eviction which took place from 14\textsuperscript{th} to 16\textsuperscript{th} May 1979 remains inconclusive. No investigation has been conducted to identify the culprits who perpetrated the violence. Ghosh recreates the plight of the East Bengali refugees hidden in the pages of history from humanist perspective in his novel *The Hungry Tide*. The historical background needs a special mention here.

India’s independence in 1947 resulted in the division of the Sundarbans, with 40 percent of the mangrove forests falling in East Pakistan territory. East Pakistan was created for the Bangla-speaking Muslim majority, which led to the influx of Hindus from East Pakistan into India’s West Bengal region. The refugees fleeing the civil war included both Hindus and Muslims fighting for Bangladeshi sovereignty and numbered between 9 million and 12 million. During the 1970s, a large number of refugees, an estimated 16,000 families, moved to the uninhabited island of Morichjhapi. The West Bengal Government portrayed it as disturbing the existing potential forest wealth. But the real motive was to avoid the economic burden on the state.

On 26\textsuperscript{th} January 1979, the Left government launched an economic blockade on the island of Morichjhapi, preventing the refugees from obtaining supplies including food, water, and medicine. Hungry and helpless, those who ventured out had to brave the police bullets. Groups were tear-gassed, boats were sunk, and several people were arrested. With no sign of reprieve from the
government, reports of starvation deaths began to appear in the press. On 27th January 1979, the government imposed Curfew under Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code. Bengali dailies like the *Anand Bazaar Patrika* and *Jugantar* published articles and photographs of the situation in Morichjhapi. But the Left Government dismissed the media as bourgeois and sensationalistic. Ross Mallick, in his research work *Development Policy of a Communist Government: West Bengal since 1977*, based on interviews with officials of the Indian Administrative Service in West Bengal, mentions the Morichjhapi massacre, describing the sufferings of Dalit refugees. Ranjit Kumar Sikdar says in his article “Morichjhapi Massacre” “…most of the young men were arrested and sent to the jails and the police began to rape the helpless young women at random” (23). Atharobaki Biswas writes in his article “Why Dandakaranya a Failure, Why Mass Exodus, Where Solution?” that “4,128 families had perished in transit (back to their camps), died of starvation, exhaustion, and many were killed in Kashipur, Kumirmari, and Morichjhapi by police firings” (19). The West Bengal State Committee Meeting in 1982 justified the eviction by pointing out that the refugees could not be given shelter under any circumstances.

Fixing the Morichjhapi incident as the centre point of *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh raises an important and complex issue of human welfare versus environment. But in the case of the Morichjhapi incident, it is not even the problem of environment. Preservation of environment was not the only motive behind the forceful eviction of the refugees. It was only a pretext. At the
superficial level, it is the ecological problem, but at the deeper level, it is the materialistic and selfish motive of the government.

Of all the novels of Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies* stand foremost in revealing his intense humanism, which emerges from his sympathy for the marginalised people. He portrays the pathetic condition of the girmitiyas in *Sea of Poppies*. The journey of the girmitiyas was completely different from that of the pilgrims, merchants and traders. While it was a short period of separation for pilgrims, merchants and traders from their families, for the girmitiyas, it was a one-way process, marking a permanent exile from their homeland. Since most of the girmitiyas were peasants with deep love for soil, they had much difficulty in adjusting themselves to alien circumstances. Besides this difficulty, the Hindu religious norms, which proclaimed the crossing of the sea as sin, created obstacles for the peasants. In spite of all these factors, they were forcefully taken from India to other British colonies in the world. Brij Lal writes in *The Encyclopedia of the Indian Diaspora* that the total number of girmitiyas exported to overseas colonies numbered one and a half million people when the practice was finally abolished in 1920 (46). Ghosh describes the predicament of the Indian peasants in *Sea of Poppies*, focusing on the invisible hand of Destiny:

How had it happened that when choosing the men and women who were to be torn from this subjugated plain, the hand of destiny had strayed so far inland, away from the busy coastlines, to alight on the people who were, of all, the most stubbornly
rooted in the silt of the Ganga, in a soil that had to be sown with suffering to yield its crop of story and song? It was as if fate had thrust its fist through the living flesh of the land in order to tear away a piece of its stricken heart. (367)

Brij Lal states that from August 1834 to May 1837, “of the 7000 indentured emigrants who went to Mauritius from Calcutta, fewer than 200 were women” (49). Ghosh paints a remarkable picture of the indentured women labourers on the Ibis at the point of departure: “Among the women, the talk was of the past, and the little things they would never see, nor hear, nor smell again: the colour of poppies, spilling across the fields like ábír on a rain-drenched Holi; the haunting smell of cooking-fires drifting across the river, bearing news of a wedding in a distant village; the sunset sounds of temple bells and the evening azan; late nights in the courtyard, listening to the tales of the elderly” (SP 365).

Ghosh introduces a powerful metaphor in his description of Deeti’s entry into the Ibis. He compares Deeti to a newly married woman arriving at her husband’s house, where the relatives will examine her. On seeing Deeti, some of the women lying on the floor planks of the Ibis “moved up to make room for her; she lowered herself to her haunches, taking care to keep her face covered, there followed a sizing-up that was as awkward and inconclusive as the examination of a new bride by her husband’s neighbours (SP 215). The representation of the suppressed voice of the indentured labourers is prominent
in *Sea of Poppies*. The significance of *Sea of Poppies* lies in Ghosh's description of the under-studied segment of the early Indian diaspora.

With regard to the construction of female characters, it is found that Ghosh has created several powerful and strong women in his novels. Mangala in *The Calcutta Chromosome* is an example. She develops the technique of transferring malaria from a pigeon to a patient of syphilis. The famous scientist Ronald Ross just becomes a tool in her hands. Ghosh questions the superiority complex of the West by making Ronald Ross a toy in the hands of Mangala. Murugan comments on the role of Ross in the discovery of malaria parasite: “He thinks he's doing experiments on the malaria parasite. And all the time it's he who is the experiment on the malaria parasite. But Ronnie never gets it; not to the end of his life” (67).

Murugan points out that the research activities of Ross are actually controlled by Mangala, a sweater woman, who represents counter-science with its metaphysical possibilities, based on folk healing to help people move away from narrow confines of mundane existence. Ghosh employs magic realism to create an atmosphere of the distant age. Shubha Tiwari aptly says: “Mangala is the other name of the great mother Kali who comes in various forms in Indian mythology. She is the archetypal nurturer as well as the terrible mother figure. She is the life giver as well as the annihilator” (58). Tiwari also points out that Mangala symbolizes the ultimate desire of a human being to become God and the wish of a human being to merge in the womb of the supreme mother. Mangala attains a deified status.
In *The Shadow Lines*, women characters such as Thamma, Ila and May Price maintain their individuality and freedom. In *The Glass Palace*, Dolly, Uma and Queen Supayalat are strong characters. Uma in particular is a revolutionary character. Dolly reaches the level of a philosopher at the end of the novel and becomes a nun in a Buddhist monastery. In *The Hungry Tide*, Kusum, Piyali Roy and Nilima have determination and will. In *Sea of Poppies*, Deeti becomes a semi-goddess. From the state of being an ordinary village woman Deeti rises to the most extraordinary height of a leader. Her quest for identity is the basis of diasporic consciousness. Paulette, who is the main character in the parallel plot of *Sea of Poppies* represents the spirit of freedom. She has the courage to escape from a forced marriage with an old British Judge. She disguises herself as an Indian indentured woman and comes to the Ibis. The remarkable aspect of her character is her perseverance to prove that she can withstand all the difficulties of a labourer, though she has lived a comfortable life. She also establishes cordial relationship with other women on the Ibis.

A subtle analysis of Ghosh's method of constructing female characters reveals that he never creates women as ideal persons without *hamartia*. The reader is often puzzled at the sudden turn of events which makes it difficult to fix a particular character within a definite framework. Uma in *The Glass Palace* emerges as an ideal person but her sexual relationship with Rajkumar described at the end of the novel destroys the reader's attempt to perceive her character as too good. The reader wonders why Ghosh has introduced the
scene in which Uma and Rajkumar, both at the age of ninety, are found naked in Uma’s bed. The last page of the novel presents a tragic-comedy. When Jaya goes towards the tumbler to take the dentures used by Uma and Rajkumar, she finds that the two sets of dentures are interlocked, “each reaching deep into the mouth of the other, each biting down on the other’s teeth” (546). This kind of sudden twist is a recurring pattern in Ghosh’s novels. Dolly’s sexual relationship with Sawant in Ratnagiri and Alison’s sexual relationship with Arjun in Morningside when she is in love with Dinu are other examples which defy any attempt to predict the behaviour of a particular character.

The character of Queen Supayalat is another example. Before coming to Ratnagiri, Supayalat was the fiercest and most wilful of all the princesses in the Glass Palace, resembling her mother in guile and determination. In order to protect her husband Thebaw from her mother’s cunning tricks, she banished her mother to a corner of the palace along with her sister and co-wives. She even ordered the killing of every member of the Royal Family who appeared to be a threat to her husband. Seventy-nine princes were slaughtered on her orders; some of them were new-born infants. “To prevent the spillage of royal blood, she had had them wrapped in carpets and bludgeoned to death. The corpses were thrown into the nearest river” (GP 38). Such a ruthless woman chooses to live in exile in an alien land and suffer with her husband till the end. Ghosh focuses on the complexity of human behaviour in the Collector’s interior monologue: “What could love mean to this woman, this murderer, responsible for the slaughter of scores of her own relatives? And yet it was
a fact that she had chosen captivity over freedom for the sake of her husband, condemned her own daughters to twenty years of exile” (GP 152). This kind of delineation of characters shows Ghosh’s intention, whether deliberate or not, to foreground the fact that human nature is always unpredictable.

To conclude, Ghosh is a unique portmanteau of historian, anthropologist and novelist. He proves to be a socially and artistically committed writer. He has attributed new dimensions to Indian English fiction, by constructing shifting mosaic images of cultures and histories in their plurality and continuously experimenting with form. His themes emerge from his comprehension of the crux of historic depiction, that is, power. Consequently, in the place of the powerful being voiced, he decentralises power and makes the common man from the margins heard alongside the centre. Overriding the binaries of power and deconstructing hierarchies, he renders history’s muted identities palpable. History ceases to be a prejudiced record of marvellous happenings involving royalty and the like. It deviates from the fantastic that takes place in the capitals inconsequent to the common man. History becomes a faithful record of the happenings of the world and its entire population. It ceases to be a singular dominant master narrative and evolves as a compendium of multiple narratives.

The emergence of postcolonial criticism is in fact a part of the process of decolonization itself. Decolonisation in turn arose from the realization that the imperial powers had not only colonized geographical territory but the minds of the people concerned and their systems. Decolonisation of the minds was set
in motion when the colonised people after political liberation felt they were still not free from the web of colonial powers. When an imperial power made a country like India its colony, it was originally moulding the country into something entirely new and totally unlike its past.

The India of the present owes allegiance to colonialism for many of its dimensions, both good as well as bad. Colonialism has been instrumental in the evolving of the nation India from the cluster of kingdoms of ceaselessly varying dimensions. The multitude of facets of India, its politics, culture, economy, education, government, identity and history, all show the profound impact of the colonial rule. Hence, in the present, colonialism becomes a phenomenon to contend with in order to understand the nation's self, identity. Amitav Ghosh and other contemporary Indian writers show a concentrated focus upon the colonial impact upon the native society and the reclaiming of the indigenous past.

In Ghosh's fiction, identity is contextualised historically because human identity is shaped by the context of existence. Context in turn is multifaceted, comprising biological, psychological, social, cultural, geographical and historical factors. These factors interact with one another and thereby determine human predicament. Identity, a fluid paradox, self-contradicting, simultaneously suggests uniformity as well as uniqueness, dependence as well as independence. It is the cornerstone of human life, which attributes a sense of meaning to man's existence individually as well as collectively. Identity becomes palpable with its complexity and dynamism. Of all the factors that
determine human identity in an anthropocentric world, the role of history is surmounting as it chronicles the evolution of identity in the contextual interplay of the other factors, becoming fundamental to silhouetting human existence.