CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

The thesis “Positioning Orientalism in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh” analyzes the intricate relationship between Orientalist discourses and Indian English novel in general and Amitav Ghosh in particular. It positions the novels of Amitav Ghosh in the discourse of Orientalism by revealing the elements of Orientalism in the written part of his texts, in the silences, and in the ways the texts are produced, published, popularized, canonized and interpreted. The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on the cultural function of literary artifacts. It looks at Amitav Ghosh as a product of the intricate relationship between various discourses and material realities.

It uses the critical framework of socio-linguistic engineering and reveals how colonialism is continuing without any break and establishes a link in the development of colonial discourses during colonial era and establishment of postcolonial studies in the First World. The emergence of postcolonial theory and literature in the post-colonial world has a neo-colonial agenda. Therefore, in this neo-colonial capitalist world-order unlike the colonial period when East was a career for the Western Orientalists, it has now become a career for the displaced Easterners. The Third World migrant intellectuals and creative writers have become the carriers of the task, which was once started, by the Orientalists like Erpenius, Guillaume Postel, Anquetil-Duperron, Sir William Jones etc. The Diaspora postcolonial writers are caught in the neo-Orientalism and neo-colonialism, which avoids making sense of the current crisis and covers up the origins of postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries. That is why despite the fact that migrant intellectuals from former colonies have been instrumental in
making postcolonialism an academic discipline in Western Universities, especially American, many critics of colonialism agree that it hardly deals with the contemporary needs of the countries with a history of colonialism, such as India; as its imperatives are set elsewhere. As the diaspora literature emerges as the sole representative of the former colonies, it deprives the oppressed of even the vocabulary of protest and rightful demand of protest against exploitation by taking up the burden of representing them that denies them the right of self-representation. This artistic takeover is based on the principles of high aestheticism in both creative as well as critical works and the professional writer/critic located in the First World seems to announce before the marginalized Third World there is no need to hear their voice when he could talk about them better than they can speak about themselves, therefore, there is no need to hear their voice. The Diaspora writer emerges as the lone representative of the Orient and re-narrates the story of the subaltern. The most important and powerful aspect of this thesis is that it has employed a large number of displaced Diaspora intellectuals. These displaced intellectuals come from the colonized world, which was made to internalize the ideological procedures of the colonial mission through the assimilation of English texts that spread the colonialist imperatives within the unsuspecting native body. It rendered them human individuals, who as per Poststructuralist theory put forward by Gilles Deleuze in his *Anti-Oedipus* (1977), are not sovereign subjects with autonomous agency over their consciousness that is constructed discursively through shifting discourses of power, which endlessly speak through them by situating them in particular positions and relations. This thesis shows the class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has the control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental
production are, in general, subject to it. By controlling the material production directly or indirectly in nearly the whole of the world, the First World also controls the mental production i.e. production, publication and popularization of literature and other discourses and this textual takeover of the Non-Western world has enabled the colonial forces to transform the Orient to suit their needs. Contrary to the popular belief that there is only one colonialism i.e. the British colonialism, this thesis indicates the presence of numerous colonialisms most of the time collaborating with the British colonialism and sometimes challenging it. This thesis reveals that Amitav Ghosh in his novels problematizes the British colonialism in India but does not highlight the internal colonialism perpetrated by Brahmanism as pointed out by various social reformers belonging to the subaltern groups for instance Jyotirao Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh and many others.

This thesis shows how the British colonial authorities excavated the Brahmanical texts and canonized them to consolidate their rule over India therefore a large part of so-called Indian identity of which Indians are proud of is created by the colonial authorities. Under such circumstances, the way Amitav Ghosh attempts for decolonization only consolidates colonization. The powerful position of the British authorities in India accorded hegemonic status to the Orientalist discourses. With the passage of time these discourses displaced majority of other and other’s discourses from the collective psychological space. With this marginalization of other’s discourses, the reality constructed through Orientalist discourses emerged as the only reality of the Third World. Amitav Ghosh in his novels instead of constructing a discourse on the contemporary needs of India subscribes to the Orientalist representation of India. He supports superstition, spiritualism etc. in the characters of Mangala, Baboo Nob Kissin, Balaram and many
others. In his hands, the natural phenomenon attains supernatural colors and highlights the irrational and unscientific nature of Indian mind as explicated by the Orientalists. This thesis problematizes such depiction and shows how Mangala, Baboo Nob Kissin, Balaram and many others are not posing any challenge to the Orientalist idea of India rather they are conforming to the discourse of Orientalism.

This thesis shows how the literary journey of Amitav Ghosh is located in the discourse of Orientalism and the discourse of Orientalism is located in his novels however, this position keeps on changing from novel to novel. In his first novel *The Circle of Reason*, he discusses rationality and science in postcolonial Indian society, and the state apparatus of nation. Through various characters like Balaram, Alu etc. he problematizes the colonial statecraft retained by the newly independent postcolonial world however, he never questions the alternative proposed by various political outfits in India. There has always been a demand to Indianize the statecraft however if they replace the state apparatus inherited from the British with their own native systems the situation will be worse for the people. Undoubtedly, the system needs change and it should be made more humane, but Ghosh’s characters are victims of irrationality, not statecraft as such, for instance, Balaram’s death is more of a suicide than institutional murder. Similarly, Alu unleashes the forces that he neither understands nor knows how to control. When it comes to science Ghosh uses pseudoscience of phrenology to question the Western science at a time when West does not consider phrenology a science. In a very subtle manner through justification of phrenology, he tries to prove scientific nature of Indian irrational practices. He does not take up the Indian social scientists and intellectuals like B. R. Ambedkar, Bhagat Singh, Rabindranath Tagore etc. who are far more rational and provides higher place to Jagadish
Bose than Saha, Raman etc. who are real scientists. Therefore, despite his effort to challenge colonial legacies he only conforms to the Orientalist notions of Orient in his depiction of Oriental characters.

The relationship between the author and Orientalism remains almost same in his second novel *The Shadow Lines* here Amitav Ghosh questions the idea of nation in the Orient in general and India in particular however; the question is whose nation and which nation? The nation that Ila transcends is the nation created by upper caste upper class cultural imperialism developed in the close proximity of British Imperialism. Here the author does not explore the option of moving down the caste hierarchy to escape this cultural imperialism because position of women is different in different castes, societies and cultures across India. The Orientalized mindset compels the author to search for solutions outside the Orient. The Orient that Tridib, Robi and narrator tries to transcend is the political nation/alism owned by upper caste upper class Indians. Rest of the Indians are either uninvolved or just carrying the nation imposed on them. Thus the nation in general and Indian nation in particular is a product of capitalist colonialism and neo-colonialism and any effort to transcend it by crossing political borders is futile because it is an act of moving from one kind of nationalism to another kind of nationalism.

Gradually he moves away from the history of nation to the history of science and shows how Indians contributed to the development of science and technology in the European world however, the structure of the novel is inclined towards glorifying superstitions. Therefore, despite the fact that the novel at one level reveals how the colonial machinery exploits the physical and intellectual labor of Orientals to its own advantage and instead of giving them credit calls them unintelligent and lazy, this novel does not emerge
as a tool to liberate the Orient from Eurocentric orientalized notions of it rather it further Orientalizes the Orient by inducing the feeling of pride on those very Orientalist constructions.

He develops interest in the history of colonialism, shows how the colonial powers used Indian Military to conquer Burma, and ultimately destroys this peaceful country. He challenges the national identities by bringing in the concept of perpetual movement in the life of people living here but keeps the Oriental identity as created by the Orientalists intact. Undoubtedly, the colonial intervention has brought largescale changes in the Orient but it is odd to say that Orient could not have undergone those changes on its own as it happened in Europe. Moreover, various cultures, civilizations, economies and political systems are meant to interact with each other and the societies that shut themselves from all outside influences are sure to decline. He depicts the Indian Dalit Diaspora helping British colonialism however, the upper caste Diaspora is depicted as enlightened, humane and nationalist. He does not look into the Brahmanical internal colonization that is responsible for making life of the lower castes, a hell.

He provides an insight into the internal colonization in The Hungry Tide, and shows how the state looks at its own citizens as antagonists. However, he tries to project himself as a pro-subaltern writer here but he ends up glorifying the very apparatuses responsible for the exploitation of the subaltern. On the one hand, he criticizes the State apparatus in which the lower caste Indians can move upward due to reservation and more votes on the other hand, he glorifies the private enterprises like private schools, private farm houses, NGOs etc. where a Dalit has almost no chance to move up the hierarchies. This artistic
representation of political choices before the lower caste people caters to the needs of metropolitan reader and writer more than the needs of subaltern.

The *Ibis Trilogy* is different from his other novels because it challenges both the European colonization as well as the internal colonization to some extent. However, he conforms to the Orientalist projection at many places still he challenges it at some other places. For instance, he highlights how the absence of science and technology in India has more to do with colonial intervention than the temperament of Indians as evident from the example of Bahram’s father-in-law whose shipbuilding industry is destroyed by the colonial intervention. However when it comes to superstitions, caste-based exploitation, illiteracy, oppression of women etc. he does not explore the role of colonial scholarship, colonial capital and colonial military. Moreover, in his depiction of Indian characters he foregrounds their spiritual nature, which is actually irrationality and superstition. He even goes to the extent of proving superstitions as scientific phenomena for instance the ghost of Bahram is seen by at least three characters, the omens perceived by Shireen prove right.

This thesis provides new insight in the relationship between Orientalism and Indian writings and open a new dimension to understand the writings of Amitav Ghosh in particular and all Indian writings in general.