CHAPTER – IV

HIS STYLE AND DIFFERENT TECHNIQUES
The discussion of various themes automatically leads to the study of various techniques and styles. These techniques are helpful in studying the inmost feelings of the author, which are reflected through the characters, which he creates in his fictional world. Ghosh uses various techniques in his art of fiction to reflect his feelings, experiences and understandings. The narrative technique, the cinematic technique, the journalistic approach, humour, irony, realistic portrayal of the incidents or accidents, the study of truth through historical study, memory within memory technique, the study of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial circumstances by making comparison between two or more countries, the study of previous and present geographical conditions of nations, anthropological study and the constant research made by Amitav Ghosh before writing his novels are the various techniques and styles evident in his works.

Ghosh not only uses above techniques but also is a master in the implication of impressionistic technique in which the emphasis is on the ‘showing’ rather than on the ‘telling’. Ghosh has used the impressionistic technique in his The Calcutta Chromosome. The fact that Amitav Ghosh has been able to move freely in his writing between anthropology, history and fiction is symptomatic of the extent to which traditional boundaries between those disciplines have themselves broken down.

Amitav Ghosh’s first novel, The Circle of Reason incorporates elements of the picaresque novel, the novel of ideas, the thriller or detective novel to some extent because of Assistant Superintendent of Police, Jyoti Das, trailing the alleged extremist, Alu, through several continents and the Hindu epic. The elements of Hindu epic can be found throughout the novel because Ghosh has
based it on the basis of three Gunas which are Satwa, Rajas and Tamas. The central character Alu also obtains the qualities of saints in him when he was buried alive in a building, surviving there many days without food and water. In this silence Alu meditates on all the possible ways for the betterment of the mankind. The linear narrative techniques of the text are thereby set against a multi-voiced, self-consciously cyclical structure.

The novel pivots upon a debate concerning the relationship between science, technology and nationalism in India, which reaches back to the beginning of the nineteenth century. Ghosh engages in a dialogue concerning 'tradition' versus 'modernity' which has preoccupied Indian nationalists from Rammohan Roy to Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru, and colonial thinkers such as William Jones and Macaulay. Within this broad framework Ghosh, like many other Indian writers, does not fully accept the conventional science / tradition division, or set it on East/ West axis. Rather, he problematizes the Science - is - West and Tradition - is - East dichotomy, breaking down myths by his interrogation of the status and worth of different branches of science in India. In particular, Ghosh is concerned with the staging in India of what might be conveniently termed science and pseudo-science.

The Circle of Reason, as its title suggest, is a novel that closely examines philosophies of reason, and the science and technology that is associated with these philosophies. Ghosh defines reason as a set of inductive processes that supposedly allow access to 'Knowledge in the strongest sense, knowledge that can under no circumstances be false'. 'Reason' is of course a contested term, which
has been interpreted in vastly different ways by philosophers as diverse as Plato and Chomsky.

The search and application of 'reason' in various methods from purifying and then to get rid of the attackers is very well presented in the early part of the novel through the character of Balaram. Balaram's fascination with science generates much of the novel's debate about the materialistic scientific reason of the west. Balaram proudly argues that science and Reason doesn't belong to any nation. Balram is frequently presented in an ironic way in the novel. The ambivalence in the novel's treatment of this reductive character suggests that the novel doesn't belong to countries. Balaram is a product of western education and despite his fervent Indian nationalism; he has internalized the notion that western science transcends national boundaries in its search for truth. This another way in which Ghosh complicates the science / tradition dichotomy, going beyond a simplistic East – West axis.

Mobilizing the theories of Michel Foucault, various scholars seek to situate reason in a particular time and place. Foucault comments on reason as following:

What reason perceives as its necessity, or rather, what different forms of rationality offer as their necessary being, can perfectly well be shown to have a history, which is not to say, however, that these forms of rationality were irrational. It means that they reside on a base of human practice and human history; and that since these things have been made, they can be unmade.

(Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interview and Other Writings, 37)
In India, ‘native’ were stereotyped as illogical, dreamy creatures of instinct; while Britain’s scientific and technological practices were presented as proof of their superior faculty of reasoning. Ghosh’s well researched allusions in The Circle of Reason, suggest that the labels of ‘science’ and ‘pseudo-science’ disguise the fact that these disciplines are not an incompatible as they are made out to be. Western science is often interpreted as a discipline founded upon logic, empiricism and rationalism, even if these goals are not always met. One of the leading figures who helped inspire Enlightenment faith in reason, empiricism and pure ‘science’, Isaac Newton, famously believed in such esoteric practices as alchemy and astrology as well. In the view of Gyan Prakash:

This point is perhaps most graphically illustrated in colonial India, where the British administrators’ desire to promote science as a visual spectacle to the illiterate masses of India caused mesmerism to gain temporary acceptance within mainstream science, even as late at the mid-nineteenth century.

(Another Reason: Science and Imagination of Modern India 33)

The novel invites us to consider many pseudo-scientific practices, such as Lambroso’s criminology, phrenology and the plant physiology of Jagadish Chandra Bose. The novel also provides us the details and application of phrenology, a pseudo-science pioneered by Franz Joseph Gall, J.G. Spurzheim and George Combe in early nineteenth century Europe, which claimed to judge the individual’s personality by feeling bumps on the head. In the discussions about science that occur in the novel, Louis Pasteur is taken to be the archetypal objective, disinterested scientist. Vallery-Radot’s biography, the Life of Pasteur.
is an important motif in *The Circle of Reason*, and both Balaram and his nephew Alu interpret it as presenting Pasteur as the epitome of reason. Balaram idealizes scientific ‘genius’, seeing his favourite scientists as men who work alone in the hope of making discoveries that will benefit mankind. This is the reason for which he holds Pasteur in the highest esteem.

*The Circle of Reason* points to us the need to rethink the relation between the desire for a home and belonging, and the desire for capital often drives migration. In a sense, like other contemporary metatlcational texts, *The Circle of Reason* is about narration itself. The book is about patterning, the various personal efforts at imposition of order on a chaotic world in order to come to terms with it, in order just to live. This quest that is narrated in *The Circle of Reason* is present in all subsequent works by Ghosh.

In the words of Patricia Waugh “*The Circle of Reason* implies like other metatlcational texts that ‘reality’ is also constructed and mediated and is to the extent ‘fictional’ and can be understood through an appropriate ‘reading process’. (*Metafiction: The Theory and practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* 16). The major characters, in their various attempts of ‘reading reality’ create and float in a sea of metaphor. Carbolic acid runs through the book connecting the three parts. So do the kinds, sewing machines, germs and the *Life of Pasteur*. Each character plays his fiction as metaphor and reality merge in the reading. These are attempts at imposing and subsuming oneself in a pattern, a chosen context.

Amitav Ghosh’s most celebrated novel *The Shadow Lines* contains a rich variety of expressions, styles and techniques which prove why a celebrated journalist and author like Khushwant Singh declares Ghosh a fabulous author of
The Shadow Lines is a story of personal experiences of the author of the violence and ill behaviors of the people during the riots of 1984. Ghosh also tells the readers about the partition of Bengal through the reference of evidences of news, experiences and the newspaper cuttings. The quest for the freedom of the country, belonging to a particular place which provides one a shelter from the days of his birth and struggle for individual freedom is presented in a realistic manner in the novel.

The narrative in The Shadow Lines is simple but it has a complexity of varied time and place. The narrator in the novel is an unknown and unnamed child who with the help of his memory narrates the events. The narrator, no doubts, is skilled in the art of recollection. The ease with which he moves from one story to another story or from illusory to real time reflects the fusion through the play of memory. The transparency of this unnamed narrator lets different persons, events and places across while reading the novel is that the reader is sometimes unable to know the name of the narrator and also he is in a great confusion about the looks of the narrator. But when we read the book thoroughly we come to a conclusion that the narrator is a firmly placed character.

The Shadow Lines can be called a memory novel because the major part of the novel is told by the narrator on the base of his memories. In this ‘memory’ memory plays a crucial role. Weaving together past and present, childhood and adulthood: India, Britain and Bangladesh, Hindu and Muslim story and happening, memory generates action of the novel and determines the form of the novel. The narrator lives a truer life in his memories and we meet other characters in the narration’s memories. Ghosh sometime makes it complex when he employs a
memory - within - memory kind of framework and sometimes projects many memories clinging together.

The narrator in the novel uses his imagination to travel to different parts of the world by learning the distance between them with the help of his uncle Tridib who gives him worlds to travel in and eyes to see with long before he ever leaves Calcutta. The narrator deliberately superimposes the child Tridib identity on his own. We come to know that Tridib first went to England when he was eight, the same thing narrator feels. He says that was also exact eight too when Tridib first talked to him about his journey. In the extreme the narrator feels that in his childhood Tridib looked like him. Tridib told the narrator to use his imagination which was the greatest power in his view.

Tridib, the mentor, on when the child projected his won self, pointed out places in Bartholomew’s Atlas while telling him stories, so that when he moved out of Calcutta his world has expanded to include many parts of the globe through hearing and reading about these places. This is the reason why the narrator’s sense of geography is very strong. When his cousin Ila mentions casually about Cairo, Madrid, Cuzco or Colombo are for the narrator to be used with reality through imagination in the way Tridib had taught him. When the narrator places the tip of the compass on Khulna we know his knowledge of distance between two cities is also excellent:

Khulna is not quite one hundred miles from Calcutta as the crow flies; the two cities each other at a watchful equidistance across the border. The distance between Khulna and Srinagar or so I discovered when I measure the space between the points of my
compass was 1200 miles, nearly 2000 kilometers. It didn't seem like much. But when I took my compass through the pages of that atlas, on which I could still see the smudges left by Tridib's fingers, I discovered that Khulan is about as far from Srinagar as Tokyo is far from Beijing, or Moscow from Venice, or Washington from Havana, or Cairo from Naples.

(The Shadow Lines 231)

Knowing and unknowing are also intricately liked to each other in The Shadow Lines. We learn not only about the place the narrator describes but also their exact address like, the prices lived in Lamington Road in west Hampstead; the old house in Dhakha was 1/31 Jindabahar Lane etc. The brand names of certain objects are also mentioned; Rennie's digestive tablets, Lyon's assorted toffees: the watch is Omega, car are Studebakers, Mercedes or Citroens; Nick's shirt is from Turnbull and Asser, his jacket from Armani. Similarly his familiarity with the routes and streets, rooms, houses, neighborhoods, city, country, borders and maps provide a clue to past and future reality. The underground room in the Raibajar house with the shrouded furniture and the large dining table recurs in the novel as an actual and a secret to Ila's secret when as a child she is abandoned by Nick and as an adult when she is betrayed by him. Through the play of memory and vision this basement is turned into the price house in London where an important moment is placed in the novel and the past and the present are fused into one:

Those empty corners filled up with remembered forms, with the ghosts who had been handed down to me by time: the ghost of the
nine-year-old Tridib, sitting on a camp bed, just as I was, his small face intent, listening to the bombs; the ghost of the eight-year-old Ha, sitting with me under that vast table in Raibajar. They were all around me, up were together at last, not ghosts at all: the ghostliness was merely the absence of time and distance for that is all that a ghost is, a presence displaced in time.

(The Shadow Lines, 181)

Time in this novel can be illusory and concrete at the same time. The narrator keeps shifting the time and the focus of the story as and when he requires to do so. The vivid description of even the smallest details in the novel transcends us to the narrator's psyche and helps in experiencing and viewing the events in reality. The tension of conflicting values between the family members is narrated in telling detail. The documentary accuracy forces the reader to wonder whether the primary agenda if the novel is verisimilitude. The way in which the narrator enters other characters lives enables him to place himself in a particular cultural milieu.

Amitav Ghosh has worked as a rookie reporter before starting The Shadow Lines. He reflects his art of journalism in the novel. Ghosh through his journalistic approach describes each and every event and mishappenings of the past. He not only tells us about the event but at the same time he tries to find inter – relation between them with the help of evidences. The role of news paper of Calcutta during the riots and the description of mob – violence is portrayed in a realistic manner by Ghosh. Not only he presents the picture of mishappenings and it’s after effects but he also gives them a touch of his personal experiences.
The circumstances of Calcutta in 1964 are portrayed by Amitav Ghosh in a very realistic manner. The rumours were spreading like fire and the people of Calcutta thought that it will not touch their city, but the most dangerous thing was to happen. Ghosh has impartially observed the circumstances and explains it as following:

In Calcutta rumours were in the air – especially that familiar old rumour, the harbinger of every serious riot that the train from Pakistan were arriving packed with corpses. A few Calcutta dailies printed pictures of weeping, stranded Hindu refuges, along with a few lurid accounts of the events in the East. On 8 and 9 January, with refugees still pouring in, rumours began to flow like floodwaters through the city and angry crows began together at the stations. And so, the events followed their own grotesque logic, and on 10 January, the day the cricket test began in Madras, Calcutta erupted. Mobs went rampaging through the city, killing Muslims and burning and looting their shops and their houses.

(The Shadow Lines 228-29)

In this masterpiece by Ghosh we see that the pieces of information come one by one and it becomes easy to recognize the relation between them. The following paragraph tells us how Ghosh brings evidences one by one to prove his point, date and the circumstances of that time. He not only portrays violence or riots but also describes the test match between the Indian and English teams to prove the significance of particular dates:
We went back to the newspaper section and took down the volume for January and February, 1964. opening it, we began to go through the papers backwards, turning first to the sports pages. Soon Malik found a reference to the visiting English Cricket team. A few pages later we stumbled upon a headline which said: Madras Test Begins Today; It was the edition of Friday, 10 January, 1964.

(The Shadow Lines 222-23)

The memory, its sources and resources which shape the novel are generally the narrator’s own, but many of his memories come from the stores of the memories that Tridib and his grandmother had told him. Postmodernist writers have widely used the storytelling technique. Bill Reading rightly quotes Lyotard who gave the famous postmodern condition in which the accounts of power, value and knowledge amount to nothing but stories, producing narratives from a series of indifferently assumed position” (Introducing Lyotard: Arts and Politics 65). The Indian postmodernist writers have also adopted from the classical Indian texts like Panchatantra where in the main tale consists of many others.

Actually, most of the episodes in the novel do not happen, but are narrated. Number of stories are told to the narrator like grandma’s story about the house in Dhaka, her story about a bearded revolutionary who was arrested in her class, Robi’s and May’s accounts of Tridib’s death, Ila’s make – believe story about Magda, May’s telling the narrator the real story behind Ila’s fantasy, Tridib’s story of his childhood experience to witnessing a coupling of casual strangers in ruin in a letter to May. May telling about Tridibs and her relationship with him to the narrator and the story of woman across the seas which is never finished.
It is natural that the novel is written in a first person narrative, but as Ghosh fuses family chronicle, political and social document with the main autobiography it become imperative to have a more complex narrative device. Hence, the first person narrative is used from a dual viewpoint – that of the child and the adult ‘I’ this technique enables the writer to coalesce past and present together. The narrative voice, now that of the child’s now the adult’s criss – crosses the novel. The use of first person narrator brings in the feelings of poignancy and intimacy among the readers. But it has its drawback in the fact that the narrative voice can become prejudiced and can influence opinions of the readers. But Ghosh grows beyond his flow as the transparency of his narrator allows other people to enter in his story and sometimes even interrogate his telling of the story.

Though Ghosh resembles other postmodernist writers in using the multiple narrative schemes, the story telling method and back and forth journey in time, his case and brilliance in employing these devices make The Shadow Lines outstanding. The complex narrative technique is not there just for the sake of being but it very well matches with the mood and temperament of the character and adds to the beauty of the novel. The narrative technique in Ghosh’s hand becomes a tool of a poet and so everything merges into a whole. A very clichéd family chronicle and political autobiography are transformed into an interesting novel. The novel proves that Ghosh cannot be easily excelled in respect of the narrative technique.

A parallel attempt to reconstruct history by eschewing the received, official interpretations of events is accomplished throughout The Shadow Lines by the narrator. J.Mee sees “the rewriting of modern Indian history and the question
of who constitutes that nation’ as common concerns of recent Indian novels and recent Indian historiography.” (Ariel 145-46). The study of nation through its narrative does not merely draw attention to its language and rhetoric but it also attempts to alter the conceptual object itself.

Ghosh’s The Calcutta Chromosome has a different taste and storyline as well as different techniques and devices too in comparison to his two previous novels. In this novel Ghosh tries to create suspense, thrill, fear, mysteries and the fight to reveal them, struggle to get the strange truths in comparison to those which are present and many more things. Amitav Ghosh was the concept of Time in a very innovative manner in the novel. He adopts the Bergsonian theory of ‘duration’ not knowing past history or future progress because to the undivided present no categorization of past, present or future is possible. The constant shifts between present and past events as ‘time lived’ and ‘time remembered’ in The Shadow Lines are further developed in The Calcutta Chromosome. The novel takes into its range an unspecified time in the future to the late nineteenth century.

The novel begins in the future but very soon we are taken to a date in the past – 21st August 1995. Interestingly, The Calcutta Chromosome was published in 1996 but Ghosh takes us one year back in 1995. If we could look at ‘time remembered’ or the past in terms of the recent past and the distant past, we realize that Ghosh interwines the two very masterfully. From 1995 we move, through Murugan’s recapitulating the details of Ross’s research into an earlier century almost a hundreds years ago to 1895 – 98. An oft-used way by novelists to order time is to very the proportion of time allocated to particular incidents. Hence, an important single event may be described in great detail while an entire century
may be dismissed lightly in a single paragraph. By his handling of pace, Ghosh is able to indicate the relative importance of events. In the view of Raban, Raban "Historical dates provide the modern fiction with documentary décor." (The Technique of Modern Fiction 59). Farley’s visit to Cunningham’s laboratory and his unexpected experiences in great detail because the sweeper - woman Mangala and the yet - unnamed assistant (Laakhan) are to play a major role in Ghosh’s theory of science and counter - science. Specific dates appeal to Ghosh - maybe he uses it to indicate his scrupulosity. This could be seen as Ghosh’s personal quality rather than an artistic necessity.

Compared to plot, theme, language or character, ‘place’, as an aspect of fiction is generally overlooked and has not received the attention that it deserves. Place concretizes experiences and helps the author see the day - to day experience from a distinct point of view and gives the work a sense of direction. This is not to suggest that every novel should be ‘regional’ - instead by being rooted in a place it gives the novel an explicit, direct source. In Ghosh, this place is not a single one but is a constant shifting as much in place as his novels do in time.

The Calcutta Chromosome begins in New York but moves with equal ease to Avtar’s Childhood in Egypt or to Murugan’s global Childhood’ spen wandering between the world’s capitals with his technocrat father or with old American serials. The novelist shifts the scene of action to different parts of the world and simultaneously includes listing of places repeatedly. With the computer Ava being the best repository of memory, space and time blend beautifully here in cyberspace as Ava search for Murugan’s E-mail posted to Antar. In the words of
Eudora Welty "it is place, the named, identified, concrete, exact and exacting gathering spot of all that has been felt that constitutes the real essence of a story" (The South Atlantic Quarterly 57). Ghosh provides minute details of the various places to make a realistic feeling as well as to inter-relate events.

Places keep coming back in the novel with different people having visited the same place at different periods. The best example of this is the remote provincial town of Renupur where Elijah Farley disembarked and disappeared without a trace. Mangala brought Cunningham’s young assistant Laakhan from there. Phulboni the writer has his eerie experience there and which makes him believe that the villagers have their heads full of superstition and fantasies. Calcutta, of course, is present throughout the novel. Ghosh also shows a keen sense of observation for the shapes, sounds and smell of places. Each place is invested with a local flavour - be it the streets of Calcutta or the fresh fish with genuine smell in the fish market early in the morning, the crowded streets and stations, the dirty slum areas, the traffic build up at London Road - Ghosh exhibits an excellent eye for detail.

In The Calcutta Chromosome, Ghosh successfully uses continuous time and place shifts to provide an extra dimension to the novel. It goes beyond the accepted stream of consciousness technique and takes within its scope more than the span of one life. The blurring of past, present and future provides an innovative, experimental the traditional western forms. This experimentation has enriched him with a ‘double vision’ that enables the writer to present a cross cultural critical analysis. Like Rushdie, Ghosh has employed ‘Magic realism’ to
invoke the impossibility of the happening without losing the immediacy of its experience.

Allegory, a characteristic form of post-colonial writing creates, deconstructs, restructures and reaffirms myths. The Calcutta Chromosome presents the mythical character of the Ramayana, Laxman and Urmila. Murugan the much revered God of South India (the eldest son of Goddess Durga) are interwoven into the text simultaneously, to reenact and Mangala are introduced into the text to recharge the concept of mythical Goddess Kali / Durga. The constant blending of fact and fiction has generated a situation where past has lost its antiquity. By crossing over the physical time, the writer has invented new allegorical meaning. The collision between the west and the east is projected symbolically through an ideological conflict between tradition and modernity, faith and reason, scientific knowledge and intuitive knowledge. Amitav Ghosh in The Calcutta Chromosome as a post-Colonial writer has rearranged the simplistic equation of life, death and immortality to prove that 'word manipulated' artistically can establish theories that are true and yet stranger than fiction.

The Calcutta Chromosome has many mysterious characters as we find in any detective novel but only this similarity not proves that it is a common suspense or detective novel. The mystery or the secrets are ultimately revealed in detective novels but this thing is absent in Ghosh's work. For instance, the Nepali boy is a mysterious character. He chases Murugan to the point of annoyance. He leaves Sonali's house only to be found at Romen Halder's house performing tantric rituals. He fetches fish for Urmila and provides clues on Cunningham and Ross through the Xeroxed copy used as fish wrapper enabling Murugan to pick the
missing link. If we observe carefully we find that this boy’s work is only to help
the other major characters in novel in their search but we are never told that who
was guiding that boy or what happened to him in the end. All these things make
unhappy a common detective novel reader but Ghosh uses these things as mystery
and a fantasy and equal importance is given to computers as well as to tantric
rituals.

The narrative technique of *The Calcutta Chromosome* cannot be compared
to *The Shadow Lines* because we find that the narrative has no beginning, no
middle and definitely no end. *The Calcutta Chromosome* has a pendulum like
swing touching two simultaneous narrations. There are two main narrators, Avtar
and Murugan. In Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11, 17, 19, 21, 33, 36 and 42 Avtar is
reporting on Murugan where as in chapter 5, 6, 8, 12, 15, 18, 22, 27, 29, 30, 31,
33, 34 and 40 we find Murugan reporting. The two narrators also meet. The events
of the nineteenth century are embedded in the narration of the twentieth century.
Sometimes the wonderful computer Ava also act as a narrator whenever Avtar
orders to provide him some information. At the same time we have other
narrations coming from Urmila, Sonali and to some extent from Phulboni.

Ghosh uses the technique of the puppet master. His characters are made appear
and disappear, rise and fall as a part of the narrative technique. The suspense of
the quests is never diluted. What seems to be simple quest turns out to be a
multiple one. The ‘Ghost’ station master Buddhu Dubey provides us comic relief
by his frequent visit back and forth out to the fields and again. We are taken by
surprise that their hasn’t been a station master at Renupur more than thirty years.
The question arises here is whom did Phulboni actually meet? We are told that the
station master provides Phulboni Parathas and achar. There is a description by Ghosh that Phulboni enjoyed the parathas, achar and golden brown fried potatoes. Phulboni appreciates these tasty things. But if there were no station – master for more than thirty years then who gave him all these things for eating. This is the point when the ghost story becomes unconvincing.

The novel is indeed a quest through the world of superfluities to the world of ideas. It is an attempt to bring together the past and the present with a vision of future. If seen from a different angle, Indira Bhatt’s observation looks more rational and acceptable. She writes:

When one asks the question of why and in what direction the events lead to, one feels baffled. A mystery novel would have clues that lead to the solution. Here the novelist has wonderfully and vividly created the mysterious happening and has attempted to relate them, only to arrive at nothingness.

(The Novels of Amitav Ghosh 239)

Amitav Ghosh narrates the mediocrity of the western mind and tries to establish the superiority of the Indian intellect. Tantra and Rebirth conquer the western psyche through an instrument they heavily rely on —a super computer AVA. The very mystery in the novel is that it allows the reader to dig deeper to have new and many more new layers of meanings. Undoubtedly, it is a good beginning of a new trend yet to be adopted by young fiction writers of today.

The Glass Palace is the biggest novel in comparison to the previous novels written by Ghosh. The Glass Palace is a historical novel because it deals with the history from the British time to the present period and the story line runs in
concern with more than one country. The novel starts from the British Raj in Mandalay, covers the main events of India freedom movement and ends in the present scenario with a description of Aung Saan Suu Kyi.

This criss-cross of history with narrative fuelled by the author's own remembered images and fabulations of people trapped in the machinations of time serves to bridge the widening psychological gap between nations and geographies. Ghosh's account of colonial conflict and his rendering of time past allows sufficient distance, as it were, in which to reconsider some of the issues that racked South Asian history more objectively. The question of identity, whether cultural or political, takes into account the collective natural allegiance of the people to their nation.

Although The Glass Palace dose privilege colonial experience, making it central to the lives of those involved in it, the novel presents situation and characters in a broadly complex framework that makes for depth and richness. Ghosh's superb observation and evocative description of nature, the exquisite sense of topography, the feel for the landscape and the seascape are quite remarkable. Ghosh, in fact, shows a poet's sensitivity to nature and is fully alive to the riot of colour and sound in natural phenomena. This highly expressive style is rich in felicitous turns of phrase, combine to give Ghosh's work the quality that Khushwant Singh calls it 'unputdownability'.

The Glass Palace is not just a thoroughly researched novel; it is a carefully plotted one. This shows that goes out of his way to tie up loose ends. Stylistically, he is always measured, correct and objective in the manner of historian. By the time Ghosh reaches the middle of his novel, he has three generations and several
families strewn across half the world and must meet the obligation to establish
connections between them. Neel and Manju fell in love and then marry which
makes the relationship of Uma and Dolly stronger. Dinu who in a strange way
leaves his father's house to become a photographer ultimately meets Jaya in the
end of the novel when he takes photographs of Suu Kyi.

Only a skilled historical novelist can so endear his characters to his
audience that are prepared to 'forget history' from time to time and allow the
internal dynamics of the text to dominate events. Despite the novel's bulky
package of one hundred years of dates and facts, Ghosh's triumph is that time
seldom hangs heavy in the fictional space he has designed for it, and, on several
occasions, the illusion of restoring an imaginative wholeness to the divided self of
colonialism is very successfully maintained via an appeal to luminous concept like
beauty and hope.

In an article in Critical Inquire on the experience of colonialism from the
imperialist's point of view, Ranajit Guha pointedly asks, "can we afford to leave
anxiety out of the story of the empire?" (Critical Inquire 482-94). Guha cites the
case of the beleaguered Sahib in Orwell's Shooting an Elephant and his mixed
reaction at the prospect of killing the pachydem in alien territory amidst yellow
faces. Imperial authority, or whatever it may connote, is here in the remote
Burmese town of Moulmein, inextricably bound up with the savagery of cultural
conflict, self-doubt and a nameless anxiety. Such an attitude also informs Ghosh's
narrative where the tenuous if ineffable relationship between the British and the
South Asians hinges not merely upon the colonizer - colonized binary but is also
drawn on the incomprehensibly vast and unnamed grey spaces, the in-between
zones that displace however intangibly the postcolonial reader's informed if predictable reception of the novel.

In the face of such ambivalent treatment of these issues, the reigning mood of The Glass Palace seems to be one of acceptance of the psycho-historical and geo-political contingencies that led to the emergence of the national idea in India or for that matter the liberation of Burma from British occupation. Some of the lives these events touched and whose stories Ghosh chooses to retell assert in a small but telling way the changing conditions of production of academic and intellectual knowledge and their reception in a less divided world. The need for the postcolonial to converse with that world, as it were, prevails over the other more blind need to resist the old world. Ghosh is a worthy writer, not a scintillating one; and his The Glass Palace is important not because it opens new stylistic or thematic doors, but because it reopens old ones so effectively. Burma at the present time is near inaccessible territory; yet Ghosh's book manages to hold up before a global community of readers a historically authentic 'golden' Burma as it was - and could be again.

Ghosh uses various techniques and styles to present the realistic pictures of events as well as his own experiences in his novels. He uses these styles and techniques as a tool of expression. He does not totally depend on them. The different types of techniques and styles are a part of his writing, not his complete writing. The use of various patterns of expression reflects the rare artistic sensibility in his work. The most noticeable thing in his novels is the investigative and exploration oriented approach of an indefatigable nature. Ghosh has mastered in the art of balancing the personal with the impersonal. The outward upsurge of
the narrative is the classical tendency to objectification. Yet what permeates even is steeped in the constant progression is the much too personalized approach and the personal touch. Not for the single moment is the author absent with the tenderness and the delicacy of this touch. This grants the needed verb a strength to the narration making it more acceptable and amiable for the reader.
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