CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION
Indian Writing in English has a relative recent history, it is only one and a half centuries old. In its early stages it was influenced by the Western art form of the novel. Early Indian Writers used English unadulterated by Indian words to convey an experience which was essentially Indian. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* is Indian in terms of its storytelling qualities. Among the later writers, the most notable is Salman Rushdie, born in India, now living in the UK, Rushdie with his famous work *Midnight's Children*. Interestingly, Salman Rushdie who disagrees with Raja Rao on many grounds agrees with him regarding the structure of Indian narration: immense, rambling and seemingly shapeless. In various interviews/articles as well as in their fiction, both these major writers have gone on record as stressing the 'Puranic' excess of narration that is supposed to characterise India and Indians. Amitav Ghosh is one of the most popular Indian author writing in English. At present he lives in USA but is attached emotionally to his mother land which is reflected through his writings.

Amitav Ghosh created waves in literary circles following the publication of *The Glass Palace* when he wrote a stern letter to the authorities of the commonwealth writers prize 2001, withdrawing his novel that has been nominated without his knowledge, from the competition. He described the notion of a 'common wealth' as historically untenable in the present and objected to the fact that only works in English were considered for the prize. Ghosh's letter to the judges of the prize is available on his website which says:

*The Glass Palace* is eligible for the commonwealth prize partly because it was written in English and partly because I happen to belong to a region that was once conquered and ruled by Imperial
Britain. Of the many reasons why a book's merits may be recognized these seem to equally undeniable that the reasons why I write in English are ultimately rooted in my country's of time: they are also open to choice, reflection and judgement. The issue of how the past is to be remembered lies at the heart of The Glass palace and I feel that I would be betraying the spirit of my passes under the rubric of the 'Commonwealth'.

(www.amitavghosh.com)

Ghosh's The Shadow Lines, following Rushdie's Midnight's Children, has often been cited as an exemplar in the tradition f narrating the nation. Ghosh's views to Dipesh Chakrabarty with reference to his Provincializing Europe provide a suitable example not only for the readers but also for his critics. His thoughts are exact and to the point in context of the role of family and description of nation in his writings:

Two of my novels The Shadow Lines, and The Glass Palace are centred on families. I know that for myself this is a way of displacing the 'nation'... In other words, I'd like to suggest that writing about families is one way of not writing about the nation. I think there is a long tradition of this, going back at least to Proust, something that Jameson, Anderson (and even Bhabha) never seem to take into account.

(www.amitavghosh.com)

In both The Circle of Reason and The Shadow Lines, through the experience of poor and middle-class female migrants. Ghosh makes visible the
bodily and psychic violence done to those who are minor to the hegemonic languages of the nation and of globalization – by their class, gender, race, or ethnicity. Unlike Salman Rushdies, Ghosh refuses to celebrate the hybridity born of migration and the heterogeneity that fails to be contained by national communities. Instead, he offers a compelling critique of nationalism and the failures of migration through the experience of women as citizen and subjects; he thus makes visible the violence that both engender, and that is often constitutive of them.

If Salman Rushdies’ Midnight’s Children makes national fragmentation intelligible through its allegorization in the violence inflicted upon the masculine citizen’s body, in The Shadow Lines, nationalism is challenged not only through the subjectivity of Tha’mma whose unrealised ideals of national citizenship and belonging are belied, but also through the testimony of riot violence. Therefore, in Ghosh’s narrative, the borderline cannot destroy the fundamental identity of people on both sides of the boundary, or render them changed into ‘the other’.

Amitav Ghosh is involved in the same enterprise as his characters, and hence he is bound to be less distant than other master story tellers, more anxious to ensure that the point gets across, eager to make clear that there is a point to the stories of his characters. After all, his stories are but stories that come out of his life and experiences even as they chronicle those of others. They are stories that emanate from and deal with the stuff of humanity: “human yearning, emotions, all spiritual yearnings that create humanity as we know it.” (Outlook 41)
Bishnupriya Ghosh in her scholarly essay of Ghosh’s The Calcutta Chromosome reveals the source of inspiration of the author in a beautiful way, inter-relating it with the works of two master artistes of past:

I will simply mentions two inspirational sources cited by the author himself - the Bengali literature Tagore’s Kshudhito Pashaan (The Hunger of Stones) and the Hindi writer, Phanishwar Nath Renu’s story of the ghost with the red lantern. My point here is this: in Ghosh’s hands this vernacular ghost genre becomes the genetic blueprint for the novel in English.

(Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives 134)

Amitav Ghosh has a crystal clear view about his writing. He Says:

He said that he thought every writer had to decide for themselves why they wrote. Of his own motives he said that the world filled him with wonder, that it was strange and interesting. He wrote the kind of books he liked to read, especially books that encompassed the world and pulled all things into them.

(www.readersvoice.com)

Ghosh too has faced and faces a question and a challenge. The challenge, the question is why he chose English Language over Bangla or Hindi. The question is still alive. Over the past decade he has established himself as one of the best-known Indian writing in English today. He admits that he sometimes feels uncomfortable about writing in an adopted language and explains that he does battles with himself. He explains the conflict as follows:
I believe that literature is one of man's paths to self awareness. If I am working with an instrument that actually prevents my self, "what am I doing"? There is a conflict here, I have to acknowledge it and I have to see away to step past it.

(www.bbcworldservice.com)

Ghosh’s life has been somewhat nomadic. This rootless existence is reflected in his novels as the characters spend most of their lives on the move. Ghosh admits that, “I think that I was writing about that, “I think” that I was writing about globalisation long before it became fashionable” (www.bbcworldservice.com). The thing about Ghosh’s novels is that they are always associated with a sense of place. But the difference between that sort of globalisation and the globalisation that we see today is that today’s is a globalisation of capital.

Amitav Ghosh is an author who believes writing is a job which requires a lot of things. In an interview to readersvoice.com he confesses, “writing itself is a solitary activity, requiring a lot of discipline and a constant effort of concentration over a long period.” (www.readersvoice.com)

The Circle of Reason deals with the modem man’s problem of alienation, migration and the existential crisis in life. Divided into three different sections the novel symbolically deals with three phases of human life. Satwa symbolizes the search of wisdom, Rajas symbolizes the life of passion and Tamas stands for darkness, death and destruction. We can say that the novel is written for selected readers, the novel is neither a novel of plot, nor a novel of character, but a novel of thought which is clearly evident by the theme of the novel.
There is no conventional development of plot or character, like R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide*, a story of Raju or Mulkraj Anand’s *Untouchable*, a story of Bakha, this novel is a story of *entire* humanity. All characters belong to the world. Only the character of Alu is present in all the three sections of the novel. Through the study of the theme of the novel we can come to certain conclusions. The novel describes all characters with visual details and successfully creates a picturesque effect on the reader’s mind. Though the characters in the novel are not subtle and they are an epitome of human suffering and pain. In the novel every one has a story to tell – the story of their untold sufferings.

*The Circle of Reason* concerns the picaresque adventures of Alu, a weaver from a small village near Calcutta, who leaves home to travel across the Indian Ocean to the oil town of al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf. Reviewers of the novel may read it as an allegory about the destruction of traditional village by the modernizing influx of Western Culture, and the subsequent displacement of non-European peoples by imperialism. Alu who is apprenticed as a weaver, stands for traditions; Blatam in his demented way stands for progress. *The Circle of Reason* certainly explores the relation between culture and imperialism. Balaram’s enthusiasm for Reason can certainly be read as satire on those diasporic Indian intellectuals who enthusiastically embrace the theories of the west, and it is surely significant that his greatest heroes are French. Balaram has made his mind ‘a dumping ground for the west’.

Moreover, what is particularly interesting about this struggle over naming the women and their work, as well as in naming the relation between Zindi and the female migrant workers, is that it actually makes visible the doubling of not only
the spaces of home and work as it often occurs in the case of prostitution, but also of the familial and corporate. Thus, even as migration for these women entails a loss of home and the everyday, the production of homeliness entails the collapse of the spatial separation of home and work, domestic and civil, private and public. Furthermore, it is important to note here Zindi’s anxious desire to recognize the relation of exchange between them as simultaneously also a relation of reciprocal love and communal bonds. For a woman exiled from her own diasporic Indian community and her married home for barreness, the business becomes a surrogate fecundity, which produces a surrogate family for her. Capital reproduces for Zindi that homeliness, or belonging which her own patriarchal culture community / family exiles her from. The form of patriarchal violence that grants there subjective presence only as reproductive female body, such that femininity is inaccessible for subjective identification, thus gets negotiated by migrating, and surviving in a surrogate home where she manages migrant female sex workers.

The different perspectives of both Zindi and Samuel together express the complexity of the different discourses in which the migrant woman is simultaneously situated and objectified. In this task, the narrative’s dramatization of Karthamma’s pregnancy is central: her labour has started and she should deliver the baby there on the boat, but she refuses. Later, Professor Samuel translates what Karthamma is trying to say. We learn that:

She says she won’t deliver without signing the right forms. That’s what she says. She’ll keep it in for as long as she has to... she’s delivious. I think, ... It was madness to bring her on to a boat in this state. She’s just babbling on and on. She says that she knows
that the child won't be given a house or a car or anything at all if she doesn't sign the forms. It'll be sent back to India's, she says, and she would rather kill it than allow that to happen; kill it right now with a bottle while its still in her womb.

(The Circle of Reason 177)

The sign image of 'forms' here is saturated with multiple, imbricated, and perhaps contradictory meanings; as such, this carries the burden of representing the different discursive networks of desire and social imaginaries that The Circle of Reason traces out in its narrative. All the explanations enumerated by her fellow travellers contain a medium of truth as conditions of possibility that inform and structure her desire. Moreover, these varied readings of Karthamma's desire for forms all converge upon the everyday - both Rakesh and Samuel's explanations reveal that the desire for 'the forms' is a desire for an everyday life produced and promised by modernity.

On the one hand, the image of the form carries the condensation of all of Karthamma's desires, wishes, hopes, disappointments, and pain. But the sign of the form is also catachrestic; what the forms 'really' represent for Karthamma is mysterious and unknowable, beyond the literal sense. If we take her desire for a house and a car and everything else for her child literally, we may interpret it as a general desire for material comfort, and the forms as the instrumental means to go about attaining that. The form, then, is the emblematic source of material wealth in Karthamma's vision for her yet unborn child's life as a citizen. But taken figuratively, as indeed they must simultaneously be, the forms are marked by a
desire for ‘home’: home as a place of comfort, as a sense of rootedness and belonging, as a future time of a secure life.

When we read carefully The Shadow Lines we come to know that almost all the major characters are unsatisfied with the surroundings. The old grandmother which is also known as Thakurma or Thamma is the most puzzled one many times because of the partition line or the ‘The Border’. She feels that her sacrifice (She helped the revolutionaries in their war against the British) has been in vain and whatever she has done is useless after the partition. Through the character of Tha’mma Ghosh shows how communal violence spread in Calcutta and cities of former East Pakistan in 1964. The poisoning of water, the trains of dead bodies, all incredible rumours, further vitiated the communal frenzy and increased the violence. It has to be remembered that freedom is not just the absence of external pressure; it is also the presence of something else. The struggle for freedom also has its darker side. She was very shocked when she saw the terrible face of partition which resulted in mass extermination and Tridib’s death bewilders her further. She finds her idealism fast turning into helplessness as the anarchic tendencies within and without her gather force. There is obviously need for an order, a new order, but what kind of an order remains an unanswered question. She lies in bed, weak and helpless; she realizes that war, partition and violence are meaningless. The likes of Tridib have to die so that a comprehensive view of real freedom may find favour and flourish with the help of personal relationships. Ultimately, the responsibility of achieving and sustaining real freedom rests with every individual as it lies with every nation too within the larger framework.
Even though there are at present over 185 nation states in the world, nationalism is a fairly recent development. It emerged towards the end of the 18th Century, though the growth that made it possible had long been in process. The American and French revolutions were the first striking manifestations of nationalism, and both happened within a short span of time. During the 19th century, nationalism spread throughout Europe and Latin America. Germany and Italy became a unified nation. In the 20th century, anti-colonialism was the moving force behind nationalistic movements in Asia and Africa. With the collapse of soviet socialism, nationalism has once more appeared on the agenda of world affairs. But now a days, from one point of view nationalism is considered to be a force of destruction; a threat to world peace. Amitav Ghosh in The Shadow Lines studies the meaning and impact of nationalism which is portrayed through different characters.

Ghosh has presented the various concepts of nationalism through the Character of Tha'mma. The novel raises certain serious issues related to the phenomenon of nationalism. The Shadow Lines undercuts nationalism by questioning history, the official version of History, on which the idea of a nation is constructed. However, as far as offering solutions to the problem of nationalism is concerned, the novel refused to oblige the reader. Her nationalism was, first of all a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. She thought people must be gathered together in a single historic territory, a homeland. It was the lure of freedom from the colonial rule that ingrained the feeling of nationalism in her. She told her grandson about her fascination by the stories she had heard about the terrorists. She always used the word "our freedom". The use of the word "our" is
significant, for throughout the novel Tha’mma is conscious of the fact that she is a part of a larger community sharing a common interest. Her concept of nationalism would be meaningless if it is not coupled with the idea of fraternity. Her efforts to strengthen the unity of the country range from making girls in her school to cook one dish that was a specialty of some part of the country other than her own.

This is the hallmark of the novel; it recognizes and acknowledges the violence in our lives. There is state terror; there is majority communalism and minority communalism violence. The novel makes no distinctions, takes no sides. Amitav Ghosh shows that even characters like the grandmother and Ila, who do not indulge in violence are on the fringe of it. The grandmother, even though afraid, was willing to run errands for the Bengal terrorists and kill the English magistrate at Khulna during her student days. There is a certain cruelty in the way Ila breaks from her family to adapt the more cosmopolitan life style of London. The quest for political freedom in The Shadow Lines makes the novel very contemporary.

In the recurrence of disappeared bodies in The Calcutta Chromosome we inhabit this uncanny place, where only by partially abandoning the proportions of scientific rationalism we can recognize certain others. D.D. Cunningham, Countess Pong Vacz, and Murugan, among other characters are- medically speaking -dead or have literally disappeared into obscurity. But they continue to trouble our pseudo medical rationality by constantly reappearing as other characters. The novel insists that the philosophical premise of transmigration be accorded the some empirical credibility that we willingly give medical discourse
on bodies. Such epistemological leaps are necessary to speak to ghosts in our living present.

The quests that belong to different times and places and which are motivated so differently are thus juxtaposed from the beginning itself: Antar's for Murugan, for the truth behind Ross's research, which too was just as much a quest as Antar's and Murugan's quests are research. All the characters in the novel, unlike as they are, are entangled through their individual quests and connected in other devious and subterranean ways with one another and with the one greater quest of all life, for immortality. In this way the device of the story becomes story - within - a story and the quest - within - a quest.

The Calcutta Chromosome is more important for its thrill. It warns the reader of a dreary and learned treatise on the chromosomal traits of the inhabitants of Calcutta who are susceptible to all sorts of fever including political fever and delirium - a highly specialized subject meant for medical students, Amitav Ghosh has written. In fact, a complex, fascinating and highly imaginative story of quest and discovery that weaves past, present and future into an intricate texture and is narrated, despite its burden of erudition, in a crisp, racy and crystalline prose that grips the reader's attention till the end.

The Glass Palace is totally different in compassion to Ghosh's other novels but one common thing is present here as in his other novels - struggle, finding and a sense of loss, which is very well expressed by his characters. The Glass Palace is an attempt to locate in the history of time and nations such a people, a beleaguered group of races inhabiting British occupied territories in South East Asia. Amitav Ghosh weaves into the life of his central protagonist, Rajkumar, the bewildering
and often poignant accounts of a family scattered through post-imperialist dislocation in various parts of the Asian continent as he charts the complex sociological and political repercussions of such disbanding through the experiences of loss, exile and the search for a homeland.

Ghosh does not make any pretence about the nature of the narrative in that The Glass Palace is nothing if not the discourse of postcolonial subjects, the easy sliding of imagination at once into and away from historical reality and the author's attempt to remap the history of three crucial South Asian Countries, Myanmar (Burma), India and Malaysia, all sites of the Empire through the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, resulted, by his own admission, in a novel in which the writing of places and times necessarily forced him to "create a wholly fictional world". (The Glass Palace Author's Note). The idea of the nation as metaphor of loss and as being more symbolic of a unitariness than the physical entity which is society, finds elaborate figuration in the turbulence of cultural cross-over and conflicting histories that makes up the central concern of Ghosh.

The idea of the 'nation' has been largely a western construct, a term appointed in the recent history of human civilizations and international affairs to address diverse aspects of human communities, sometimes social but more often political. It is, as most historians feel, more than anything, a creation of an ideology, liable to reinvention and engineering and therefore not an unchanging social entity? Emotional responses of a community such as territory, a shared history, language, race and religion gather in momentum to forge in the community a consciousness of 'nation' - a conceptual center - a formation that allows them cohesion and homogeneity.
Amitav Ghosh is essentially a visionary and he has the vision of the whole. He makes a holistic approach to life and writing. Only those who have the knowledge of the whole are able to do justice with the minute details. Main springs of his characterization is based on feminine, his knowledge of woman character. He emanates and determines the course of the major action and also determines the inner motives of the male characters.

Love of truth is the Hallmark of his novels. In the wilderness of details he never loses the importance of the individuals. All Ghosh's novels are remembered for the impression, the protagonist lives behind as an individual. This indirectly reflects on his deeper sense of value as they all uphold the importance of the 'human' which the individual represents. In his novels the individuals pitted against the institutions as well as the natural or the man made calamities or catastrophes of life. The greatness is that he does not unnecessarily idealize his central characters. They are known and remembered for the honest effort they put in against all the adversities. More so the situations are not sentimentalised, an intellectual acumen and indefatigable sense of quest and exploration characterize all his works. All his works give primary importance to the spirit of research, the spirit of research is the fountain source of their making and also their major thrust. Such doggedness of intelligent effort made in the morasses of life reveal the significance of what is human amidst bewildering and incorrigible situation.

The Triumph of the human spirit prevails keeping intact the explorative sense against all adds and adversities of life. The spirit of the renaissance is salvaged though it may remain only as a speck of life. It is never allowed to be bedimmed or disappear once and for all. This is the seminal quality of all his works - fictional as well as non-fictional rather the non-fictional are the quarries
where in he has relentlessly dug to bring out an unearth the raw material for his novels. It is the novels that give a shape and contour like forms by the sheer power of his imagination to the chaotic welter of his inchoate amassing of nondescript facts - the palaver of information the genius of his explorative mind relentlessly and both consciously and unconsciously hoards together.
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