CHAPTER-3

AMITAV’S CONCERN WITH CULTURAL HISTORY IN
IN AN ANTIQUE LAND, THE SHADOW LINES, THE GLASS PALACE

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3.1 Introduction

Amitav Ghosh: Amitav Ghosh was born on 11 July, 1956 in Kolkata. He was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian Government in 2007. In 2009, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

His works are:


There are memories, relationships, and images. He questions the meaning of political freedom and the force of nationalism in the modern world. It is set against a backdrop of war and strife. The Hungry Tide describes story between the sea and the plains of Bengal, on the easternmost coast of India, lies an immense extensive group of islands. Some are vast and some no longer than sandbars; some have lasted through recorded history while others have just washed into being. These are the Sundarbans. There are no borders to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea, even land from water. The arrival of Piyali Roy, of Indian parentage but stubbornly American, and Kanai Dutt, a sophisticated Delhi businessman, threatens to upset this balance. Kanai has returned to the islands on the request of his aunt, a local figure, for the first time since the death of his uncle, a political radical who died mysteriously in the aftermath of a local uprising. The Circle of Reason has a story of Alu, an orphan enlisted by his foster father.
as a soldier in his crusade against the forces of myth and unreason. Suspected of terrorism, they are about to be arrested when a tragic accident forces Alu to flee his village, pursued police officer, Alu finds his way through Calcutta to Goa and on to a trawler that runs illegal immigrants to Africa. The Glass Palace is set in Burma during the British invasion of 1885, this masterly novel by Amitav Ghosh tells the story of Rajkumar, a poor boy lifted on the tides of political and social chaos, who goes on to create an empire in the Burmese teak forest. When soldiers force the royal family out of the Glass Palace and into exile, Rajkumar befriends Dolly, a young woman in the court of the Burmese Queen, whose love will shape his life. He cannot forget her, and years later, as a rich man, he goes in search of her. The struggles that have made Burma, India, and Malaya in stressed. Sea of Poppies (2008) is a novel by Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2008. It is the first volume of what will be the Ibis trilogy.

In Sea of Poppies-The main characters include Deeti, an ordinary village woman, a mulatto American sailor named Zachary Reid, an Indian rajah, zamindar called Neel Rattan Halder, and Benjamin Burnham, an evangelist opium trader.

The story is set prior to the Opium Wars, on the banks of the holy river Ganges and in Calcutta. The author compares the Ganges to the Nile, the lifeline of the Egyptian civilization, attributing the provenance and growth of these civilizations to these selfless, ever-flowing bodies. He portrays the characters as poppy seeds emanating in large numbers from the field to form a sea, where every single seed is uncertain about its future. In An Antique Land describes a fascinating story which blends a historical detective story with his own experiences as a young Indian graduate student in the small Egyptian village of Lataifa, a few miles out side the city of Alexandria.

His Novels are:

His Non-fiction:

In an Antique Land (1992), Dancing in Cambodia and At Large in Burma (1998); Essays), Countdown (1999), The Imam and the Indian (2002; Essays), Incendiary Circumstances (2006; Essays).

The Circle of Reason won the Prix Médicis étranger, one of France's top literary awards. The Shadow Lines won the Sahitya Akademi Award & the Ananda Puraskar. The Calcutta Chromosome won the Arthur C. Clarke Award for 1997. Sea of Poppies was shortlisted for the 2008 Man Booker Prize. It was the co-winner of the Vodafone Crossword Book Award in 2009, as well as co-winner of the 2010 Dan David Prize. River of Smoke was shortlisted for Man Asian Literary Prize 2011.

Ghosh famously withdrew his novel The Glass Palace from consideration for Commonwealth Writers' Prize, where it had been awarded the Best Novel in Eurasian section, citing his objections to the term "Commonwealth" and the unfairness of the English-language requirement specified in the rules. Subsequently, he landed in controversy over his acceptance of the Israeli literary award, the $1 million dollar Dan David Prize.

Ghosh's most notable non-fiction writings are In an Antique Land (1992), Dancing in Cambodia and At Large in Burma (1998), Countdown (1999), and The Imam and the Indian (2002, a large collection of essays on different themes such as fundamentalism, history of the novel, Egyptian culture, and literature).

Like Graham Swift, Amitav Ghosh is also concerned with cultural history of India, Egypt, and Myanmar. The world has been becoming smaller because of people’s great interest in other countries’ people and their way of following cultures, economic development, social conditions and historical and moral values. This interest compels people to read other cultures and for it only way to reach there is comparative literature. Amitav Ghosh is the best for showing four cultures of different countries like India, Egypt, Myanmar and England. Amitav Ghosh has pointed out that when there were no plane, railway and other travelling convenience, people used to travel and visit other
countries like Bomma for the purpose of trading and other business. People were curious to know about people and their cultures that lived in other countries and they did something to know about them. After making borders, even people could not prevent themselves. They have to take Visa and then they go there. All people were not enemies as it was thought. A few of them who are selfish tried to make borders, these borders can be made between people and countries but it can not be made between feelings and in their hearts. Ghosh has pointed out that Riots of 1964 was between India and Pakistan at the time of partition. There was also in Burma and people were forced to leave Burma but they could not forget their friends who were still there and whom they loved and respected. Tridib’s grandfather and Mrs Price’s father, Lionel Tresawnsen has been good friends since he lived in India. Mrs Price lived in London and she respected Tridib’s family and invited to there in London. Amitav has pointed out that borders can not be made between hearts of people. Long ago there was no need of permission to cross the borders now there are borders yet people go and do their business and trade.

Even people sacrificed their lives for others as Tridib did in *The Shadow Lines*. Love does not require Visa to enter into the hearts of people. It does know what Visa is and what country is. People are same, their blood is same their feelings are same, their trading and business are same, all of them same hearts, they feel sadness, happiness, annoyingness so why people should have borders. Amitav Ghosh has pointed out that it is really a shadow line that is made between two countries they are not real because people cross these boarders to meet people and for their trading and business. People are interested in knowing others cultures as happened in *In An Antique Land* that women asked about cultures of India that why people of India call the cow mother. Even the narrator was not ready to go to mosque for praying. Some cultures are heart bound and those cultures draw a line that is very difficult to cross those lines. The narrator does not hate Islamic religious ceremony yet he is not able to persuade himself. Ghosh says that people of Egypt can not believe that Indian people do not circumcise. They were unknown about Indian culture so they could not understand and the result is that they think Indian people are impure. The most surprising thing for them was that people of Egypt wanted to know about the cremation done in India. This Indian culture made them
puzzled because in their culture it done differently. Sometimes it seemed insulting way as they asked but actually narrator did not answer because he knew that it was only curiosity that they asked him. Ghosh also journeyed to Egypt like Bomma only purpose is different. People went other countries for religion, political, economical and social purposes it happens still though there is Visa. There were different languages yet they could understand one another but nowadays people have common language like English yet unable to understand.

3.2 Definition of Cultural History

Cultural history has human origins’ customs and institutions of a nation, people or group. The first one is the study of human origins, societies and the arts, customs, and institutions of a nation, people or group. The custom is the scientific description of peoples and a form or type of civilization of a certain race or nation and the third one is understanding. Human life is nothing apart from its ways of behaving. Procter James remarks in Stuart Hall:

“For him culture is not something to simply appreciate, or study; it is also a critical site of social action and intervention, where power relations are both established and potentially unsettled.”

Cultural history is also a record of past events. They may be social, economical, educational, civilization of any nation as well as personal history. It is a description of a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.

3.3 Ghosh’s Thematic Concern

Amitav Ghosh has described the story of Abraham Ben Yiju and his slave Bomma and the second story is narrator’s experiences of Lataifa which is a little Egyptian village and Nashawy which is a larger Egyptian town in In An Antique Land. He covers the cultural history of Egypt and India. In Shadow Lines, he covers crucial events occur in the 1960’s, but the narrator recalls that story in 1980’s and they are rooted
in the period just before the First World War. In *The Glass Palace*, he covers the story of family saga of eleven years old orphan boy Rajkumar and king of Burma and Supayalat the queen In *An Antique Land*, Amitav Ghosh describes about Lataif which is the Egyptian village. There is description of Alexandria—Egypt’s most important city founded in 332 BC by Alexander which served as the country’s capital for almost a thousand years. There is description of cultural history of people of Lataifa and Nashawy. There is also description of Indians’ and their cultural history. There is description of slave MS H.6. The narrator finds a short article written by a scholar E. Strauss in the 1942 issue of a Hebrew journal, Zion, published in Jerusalem. The article bore the title ‘New Sources for the History of Middle Eastern Jews’. The narrator describes:

“The letter, which now bears the catalogue number MS H.6, of the National and University Library in Jerusalem, written by a merchant called Khalaf ibn ishaq, and it was intended for a friend of his, who bore the name Abraham Ben Yiju.”

*In an Antique Land*, there are cultural histories of being attacker like Colonialists and East India Company yet have friendly relations with each other. The narrator describes that address is written on the back of the letter. The letter shows that Ben Yiju is living in Mangalore. It is a port on the south-western coast of India. Strauss estimates the letter should have been written in 1148AD. Palestine is a path forming a route between two places for European armies. A German army reaches in April. The ageing king Conrad III of Hohenstaufen comes to be known as Alman to the Arabs. Frederick of Swabia, his nephew the young and who has charm that can inspires admiration or enthusiasm in other people is present at the same time. The narrator says that the Germans deliver unpleasant emotion that causes the harm and pain into local population. King Louis VII of France visits Jerusalem with his army and a group of assistants, his wife accompanying him. The narrator describes Palestine that it crowded on June 24. It is great crowds of the crowned heads of Europe gather near Acre, in Galilee. Eleanor of Aquitaine is the greatest heiress in Europe. She is bound to be Queen of France and England. The King Baldwin and Queen Melisende of Jerusalem receive them. There are
also their men belonging to the lowest rank of the British nobility, and senior members of the Christian clergy in the range of a district for which bishop is responsible, there are the Grand Masters of the Orders of the Temple and the Hospital. King Conrad’s kinsmen, Henry Jasimergott of Austria, Otto of Freisingen, Frederick of Swabia, Duke Welf of Bavaria, and by the lords of Verona and Montferrat accompany King Conrad. Among the nobles accompanying the king and queen of France are Robert of Dreux, Henry of Champagne, and Thierry, Count of Flanders. Between joyful celebrations, the leaders of the crusading armies hold meetings to deliberate on their strategy for the immediate future. They become agree to attack the city of Damascus.

Culture ties among different people and lands. Muslim rulers of Jordon and Syria who have experienced hundred years of the Crusades feel stroke because they didn’t expect such things from them. On 24July 1148 AD the greatest crusader army attack but they are forced to pack up their camp. Khalaf’s letter moves quickly and quietly into twentieth-century print that the Middle East again sees so great and varied a gathering of foreigners. Not anywhere are there more than in the area around Alexandria; the Afrika Corps and the Italian Sixth Army, under the command of Erwin Rommel are encamped only just enough forty miles from the city, waiting for their orders for the final push into Egypt. The soldiers of the British Eighth Army were still arriving from every corner of the world. India, Australia, South Africa, Britain and America were among them. Alexandria well known for its merry-making for people belonging to all parts of the world becomes witness of great disturbance and uncertainty. When two types of cultures meet each other especially when one is aggressive and the other is peaceful but are forced to be aggressive makes disturbance emotionally as well as rationally. The narrator describes the condition of cosmopolitan city before attack and after attack. It seems that deep and peaceful water becomes full of Tsunami. The narrator has raised many issues in this book. There is the issue of calling mother to the cow in In An Antique Land. There is the issue of not circumcising people especially in India. The narrator describes:

“I was glad,’ writes Khalaf ibn Ishaq, ‘When I looked at your letter, even before I had taken notice of its contents. Then I read it, full of
happiness and, while studying it, became joyous and cheerful...You mentioned, my master that you were longing for me. Believe me that I feel twice as strongly and even more than what you have described...“3

Above mentioned sentences show the relation between Khalaf ibn Ishaq and Ben Yiju. The narrator describes about Abu –Ali’s nature says that nobody likes his nature in Lataifa. The narrator says:

“Nobody in Lataifa liked Abu-Ali; neither his relatives, nor his neighbours nor anyone else in the hamlet—not even, possibly, his own wife and children. Some actively hated him; others merely tried to keep out of his way. It was hard to do otherwise; he was profoundly unlovable.” 4

Abu-Ali scolds his wife and shouts at the some unfortunate customer bring his displeasure upon himself while making purchases at his shop. The narrator dreams to see Cairo. The meaning of Cairo is conqueror. Cairo is the capital of Egypt. It is the largest city in Africa and the 16th most populous metropolitan area in the world. This must have increased his curiosity to see Cairo but Abu-Ali’s shouts disturb him. People avoid Abu-Ali because of his temper.

3.4 Second World War and Partition of India

The Shadow Lines has also cultural history that is set against the backdrop of historical events like Swadeshi movement, Second World War, Partition of India and Communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta. The narrator is a middle class boy who grows up in a middle class family. Tridib is the son of Mayadevi and he is so by relation he is the second uncle of narrator. Tha’mma is the narrator’s grandmother. She is the headmistress of girl’s school in Calcutta. By nature she believes that rules concerning behavior must be obeyed. She is a much disciplined, strict, hardworking, mentally strong and a patient lady. The story is mixed up in a confused way. The narrator searches the
meaning of violence through the faculties by which the mind stores and remembers about moving to settle in London in order to find work. There is a sudden or violent occurrence of war in history. The very important events happen in the 1960’s. The narrator remembers them in the 1980’s. They have just been before the First World War. Amitav places world war struck London against the communal rioting in Shrinagar, Calcutta and Dhaka in 1964. There is also the story of Mayadevi who goes to England along with her husband and their son named Tridib. Mayadevi is narrator’s grandmother’s only sister. Tha'mma thinks that Tridib is type of person who seems determined to waste his life in idle self-indulgence. Tridib is one who refuses to use his family connections to establish a career. Tha'mma finds Tridib lazy and wasting his time. There is the story of the family of Datta Chaudharis and Alan Tresawseon. The narrator loves and respects deeply Tridib because he has impressive knowledge and his particular way of seeing the incidents and places. Though the novel is based largely in Kolkata, Dhaka and London, it seems to echo the sentiments of whole South-east Asia, with lucid overtones of Independence and the pangs of Partition. His first brother’s name is Jatin. His second brother is much younger whose name is Robi. Tridib spends much of his life in Calcutta in the old family house in Ballygunge Place with grandmother. The narrator is the protagonist. He is a middle class boy who grows up in a middle class family. The narrator describes that his aunt, Mayadevi goes to England and her son, Tridib. It happens in 1939, thirteen years before his birth. Mayadevi is the only sister of his grandmother. He further says that she is always Maya-thakuma to him. The narrator knows her in secrecy of his mind as Mayadevi. She is a well-known stranger like a film star or a politician whose picture he has seen in a newspaper. And reason behind this, he says that he knows very little because she is not often in Calcutta. He himself says that he knows it that it is untrue. The truth is that he does not want to think of her as a relative.

_The Glass Palace_ is full of description of Mandalay. It is upper Burma’s main commercial, educational and health center. There is description of Irrawaddy River. It is the principal river of Myanmar (Burma). Rajkumar is an Indian boy who is just eleven years old. The novel is set in Burma, India, and Malay. There is description of the fall of the Konbaung Dynasty in Mandalay through the Second World War. There is the cultural
history of Burma, India and Malay and covers economic, social and political aspects of their lives. The Glass Palace is a family’s long traditional story describing heroic adventures. It opens in 1885; there is eleven year boy named Rajkumar. He is from Chittagong, but his father has moved them to Akyab which is an important Burmese port. On the way Rajkumar’s family suffers a lot and at last dies of fever. He says that there was a fever, a sickness in his town, Akyab and many people died. He says that he had a father, a sister, brothers and a mother. His mother dies on a sampan that is tied with a rope in a line of tropical tree in coastal swamps with tangled roots that grove above ground near the mouth of river where it becomes affected by tides. He remembers the tunnel like shape of the boat’s galley and its roof of hooped cane and roof covering of straw, reeds. There is an oil lamp beside his mother’s head, on one of the crosswise long, flat piece of timber used in flooring of the main body of the boat. Rajkumar knows the fever well by that time. It has come to their house through his father who works every day at a warehouse, near the port. His father is a quiet man. He has made his living as a translator and clerk. He works for a succession of merchants along the eastern shore of the Bay of Bengal. His family home is in Chittagong. His father quarrels with their relatives and moves the family away. He goes to Akyab, the principal port of the Arakan-that tidewater stretch of coast where Burma and Bengal collides in a whirlpool of discontent and anxiety. There his father remains for some dozen years, and becomes father of three children. Rajkumar is the oldest of them. Their family name is Raha, and when their neighbours ask him who they are and where they come from they would say they are Hindus from Chittagong. Rajkumar is the next to fall sick, after his father. They are on their way back to their native Chittagong. Just two of them are alive and the rest are gone. Rajkumar recovers quickly, but his mother’s turn to sicken. With Chittagong just a couple of days away she begins to shiver. His condition being miserable, he has not many clothes for covering his mother. He has few saris, longyis borrowed from the boatmen and a folded sail. When he touches his mother’s body, he finds it glowing like hot charcoal.

It is also a part of Indian culture. In Mandalay, Rajkumar meets Ma Cho. She is half Indian and half-Chinese. She is in her mid-thirties. Ma Cho is in charge of a small
food stall. She gives work to Rajkumar and pays him for it. She gives him work to go on a short journey to deliver and to collect money from customers. He is an errand boy there. Once her lover, Saya John Martin comes to meet her, she introduces him with Saya John Martin. Saya John is a contractor who also happens to be a Christian. Saya John also has some similarity like Rajkumar. He has also been orphaned earlier like Rajkumar.

3.5 Cultural History of Lataifa

In *In An Antique Land* Amitav Ghosh gives detail of the cultural history of Lataifa. He says that Abu-Ali’s house is so placed that it commands a good view of the road and, being the man he is, Abu-‘Ali is careful and conscientious in his duties in making good use of the strategic abilities that leads to success. It is his careful eyes on the traffic that make him busy. The narrator describes Abu-Ali’s particular position of the body:

“At the busier times of the day he would lie on his side, with one arm resting voluptuously on the gigantic swell of his hip, watching the passing trucks through pair of silver-tipped sunglasses; in the afternoons, once he had eaten his lunch, he would roll on his back and doze, his eyes half-shut, like an engorged python stealing a rest after its monthly meal.”

The people of Lataifa were aware of developing countries. Everyone tried to do his best individually for himself and for the family. Shaikh Musa who is one of the elders of the hamlet tells the narrator that Abu-Ali has always been very fat, even as a boy. He says that Abu-Ali has never been able to work in the fields because he has hurt his leg as a child. He further says that Abu-Ali soon grows much heavier than others of his age. As he is not able to work in fields, he gets advantage of it. He is sent to school. Later he goes to college in Damanhour, which is unusual at that time for a fellah boy. He tries to develop contacts with students from influential families, and with bureaucrats and officials in Damanhour. And the result that is not surprising when he is given permit to set up a government-subsidized shop for retailing essential commodities at controlled
prices. It can be seen that influences work in every country whether it is Egypt or India. Permit of establishing a shop is like a passport for him to enter into the country of progress and prosperity. It is the only shop of its kind in the area and the result that everybody has to go to him if they want to buy sugar, tea, oil and many things at government-subsidized prices. It is other thing that the customers more have to beg for things than to give financial supports. If anybody goes wrong, he has to be out of tea or kerosene or whatever it is they want. Hence, customers have to come to him or go to next village; Nashawy is a mile and a half down the road. The narrator has described the culture of Lataifa beautifully. Even he has paid attention to a little thing of the village. Amitav Ghosh describes the way of exploitation of the people of Lataifa and their compulsion to buy things whether they like or they don’t like. Money oriented man like Abu-Ali always exploit people for self advantage. It has been a system of society since progress has taken place.

Curiosity has also been part of cultural history and it can be seen here in Lataifa. Abu-Ali owns more and more small mechanical things which are made for particular purpose especially than anyone else in Lataifa. It becomes the matter of annoyance when he finds that he is not the first person in the village who buys a television set but it is his own half-brothers who is a schoolteacher beats him in this matter. Jabir, Abu-Ali’s cousin’s son often reminds him. Jabir’s curiosity turns towards the narrator asks the name of the captain of the Algerian soccer team. Jabir’s curiosity wants to know the Rais of India. He wants to know if Indira Gandhi is the Rais of India. He raises questions and answers them himself. Then he turns to television and says that there is much to be learnt from television. He is happy that he has television just next door. The colour of jealousy throws some light when Abu-Ali says that there is no point of buying television set when their village does not even have electricity. It is a kind of jealousy that makes him think so. Jabir smells it and he at once says that television set can be run perfectly well on the car batteries. Hearing it, Abu-Ali answers with contempt that running television with car batteries means burning up money. Abu-Ali says that electricity should come first to Lataifa as the government promised. He promises him that he will see the best television set in the room and it will be colour, too. Jabir says that there will be other colour
television soon. He tells Abu-Ali that his uncle is going to get one for their house any one of those days. Amitav Ghosh describes the condition of Lataifa that changes have taken place in the village of Egypt. Curiosity has been major factor behind the changes of the way of people, and their customs. Nobody is untouched from it then how can be people of Lataifa. The culture of Lataifa has a long root. The narrator further says that Abu-Ali wants Jabir to ban from his house, but it is not possible because Jabir’s father is his cousin in the paternal line. Abu-Ali is the head in extended lineage. There is also a reason not to throw him from his house that Jabir is also best friends with one of Abu-Ali’s sons. Both of them are close friends. There is an obligation of blood relationship. It is also a part of cultural history of Lataifa described by Amitav Ghosh.

3.6 North London

There is also a culture of other family who lives in north London. There are Mrs Price, her daughter May and her son Nick in the family. Mrs Price’s husband is no more now. She has been widow now. They live on a street called Lymington Road; the number of their house is 44 and the tube station is West Hampstead. May is solidly built with broad shoulders, and not very tall. She is not very pleasing to the senses. She has a strong face and a square jaw, but she has thick straight hair which came down to her shoulders in a shiny and smooth black screen, like a head-dress in an Egyptian decoration, and she has a wonderful, warm smile which lights up her blue eyes and give her a quality all her own. She studies at the Royal College of Music. She plays the woodwind instrument of treble pitch, played with a double reed. She wants to join an orchestra. The narrator says that how Tridib’s family and Price’s family come in contact with each other. The narrator says:

“Tridib had been to London, with his parents, many years ago, when he was a boy. They had taken his father there for an operation, which couldn’t be done in India. They had had to go even though it was 1939 and they knew there might be a war. His brother Jatin had been left behind in Calcutta with his grandparents because he was older and couldn’t be away from school for so long.” 6
There is Price’s family living in West Hampstead. They are not relatives but Price family has been friends for long time. They are friends because Mrs Price’s father, Lionel Tresawsen has lived in India when British are here, and he and Tridib’s grandfather, who is a very important man, a judge in the Calcutta High Court. They have been friends now. Lionel Tresawsen goes back to England his daughter marries there with a man who teaches her in the college. His name is S.N.I.Price so people called him Snipe. When she comes to know all these things about Tridib’s father’s illness at once she writes them and sends telegrams to say that they must stay with her in London because she has bought a big house, and she wants to take in a person who pays rent to live in a property with her. At that time May is there but she is just a little baby. There is Mrs Price’s brother called Alan. He has been in Germany before the war. The narrator meets May Price for the first time two years after that incident, when she comes to Calcutta on a visit. It takes seventeen years to meet her after seventeen years when he visits to London himself. The narrator says that he goes to England on a year’s research grant, to collect material from India Office Library, where all the old colonial records are kept, for a Ph.D. thesis on the textile trade between India and England in the nineteenth century. He meets May more than one month.

### 3.7 Indian Discipline in Family

The narrator says that his grandmother does not like Tridib because she thinks that he wastes his time. She calls him loafer. Narrator’s grandmother seems to be strict in the matter of discipline as seen in Indian culture. She is headmistress in girl’s school so she cannot bear wasting of time. She believes that time is like a toothbrush. She says that if time is not used it becomes worthless. Same thing happens with toothbrush. She is so strict in the matter of work. There is neither chessboard nor any pack of cards to play in the house. The narrator confesses that he is allowed to play when he is sick. And it is nothing but a battered Ludo set. His mother is also not allowed to listening radio more than once a week. Everyone works their work sincerely in his family. His grandmother does her work as schoolmistress. The narrator does his homework; his mother does her housekeeping work. His father does his work as a junior executive in a company which
dealt vulcanized rubber. She is a disciplined headmistress so her discipline can be seen in
the house. The narrator confesses that because of much strictness, he loves to listen to
Tridib. The narrator finds Tridib wasting his time yet it seems that there is no stinking of
time. He is surprised to see that whenever Tridib comes to meet him at his house, his
grandmother does not get angry but seems to be happy. The narrator finds that his
grandmother becomes happy because Tridib and his family are only rich relatives. She
finds that he is rich yet he comes to meet her. This incident makes her happy. She knows
that he comes there to nurse his stomach but she does not admit it. The truth is that his
digestion has ben a mess that is ruined by the rivers of hard-boiled tea he has drunk at
roadside stalls all over south Calcutta. He feels continuous deep sound like distant
thunder in his intestine and the result he has to go to the nearest clean lavatory. It is
known as his gastric.

The narrator’s grandmother always finds etiquette in Tridib because whenever he
comes at home, he uses doorbell to enter in to the room. He asks how everyone is at
home. His grandmother rushes to the kitchen to make an omelette. She makes omelette
leathery little short line curls and loops irregularly scattered green chillies which lies
balefully on its plate, silently challenging Gastric to battle. His grandmother loves to
serve self-made omelette. She herself believes in self-made discipline and expects the
same things from others. She is like a coconut looks hard outer side but soft in side.
Sometimes she asks Tridib about his gastric after eating omelette whether it is ok or not.
Tridib just nodes his head casually and changes the subject. Tridib does not like to be
asked about digestion. The narrator finds that his grandmother using a special proper
noun for gastric so he thinks it may be kinds of aching tooth that grew out of his belly
button. Narrator’s grandmother does not let him stay at her home because she believes
that Tridib is capable to influence anyone like a harmful planet so she does not let him sit
at home after eating. She also believes that the males are naturally weak, delicate, self-
willed and unpredictable by nature. She fears that the narrator and his father may tempt
toward Tridib if they have long company with him. The narrator does not mind it
because Tridib is never at his best in his house.
The narrator likes better to meet him in the street corners in his neighbourhood. It never happens again and again because they meet once in a month. He takes his presence for granted so he never thinks he is lucky to have Tridib in Calcutta. The narrator’s grandmother is like typical Indian grandmother who fears that bad person’s company may spoil he career of her grandson. She is worried about her grandson’s future so she tries to do her best to make future of her grandson. Sometimes she acknowledges that Tridib is not totally lazy but he is working on a Ph.D. in branch of the study of ancient history by examining objects dug up from the ground. She believes that Tridib does not live with his father because he has not good terms with his father; she does not much care for his father either but that he has allowed something like that to interfere with his prospects and career. She thinks likes and dislikes are unimportant things when the question is about to make career. Being a teacher, his grandmother has great respect for her academic work.

3.8 Street Corners around Gole Park

The narrator gives reason why his grandmother is cautious about possible danger is that she has seen Tridib a couple of times at the street corners around Gole Park where they live. She fears of him because he spends his time at him street corners addas and tea stalls around there. His friends tell him that Tridib has come. They know that Tridib is his relative. The narrator gives descriptions about his two friends that Montu has gone away to America. Nathu Chaubey has gone back to Banaras and started a hotel. Amitav Ghosh gives some cultural history about the profession in India. How the people of India have to manage to work at different condition when they are forced to do so. He gives description of streets and their conditions. There are poorly made stalls and the tarpaulin counters of pavement vendors. In early sixties, there are no more motors. People give way for bus no.9 in the crowd street. There are only a few scattered shacks on Gariahat Road. They are put up by the earliest refugees from the east. Gole Park is considered to be more or less outside Calcutta: in school when he says that he lives there the boys from central Calcutta and he is asked whether he is coming from central Asia. He is asked if he catches a train every morning. He says that he is treated as if he were a refugee from
remote refugee camp on the border. The narrator describes that condition of the people are not so good at that time. He is also treated as he is a refugee. Amitav Ghosh gives some personal history of the narrator that is a part of cultural history. It is the question existence of human being. The changes can be seen from the earlier life of human being. Tridib is the only person in his family who has spent much time in Calcutta. His grandmother believes nobody can build a strong country without building a strong body. Thinking so, she allows the narrator to run down to the park by the Lake. She is a headmistress and elderly woman who thinks about the family sincerely. Every person thinks as culture makes one think. So, grandmother is not untouched of her own culture. Tridib is a familiar figure within students. The narrator is grateful to him for getting small benefits. He is given sweets from shopkeepers; he is saved from fighting with some familiar young.

3.9 Personal History of Rajkumar

*The Glass Palace* describes personal history of Rajkumar. Among his fellow members of ship’s crew is the subject that is really discussed. There are many among them who are from families that have been hurt, killed and destroyed by the sudden event causing great damage or suffering that are so often visited upon stretch near the sea. When Rajkumar asks Matthew about his leaving, Matthew replies that he is leaving the next day. Rajkumar is surprised to know it because it has been just two days of his coming. Rajkumar is not able to understand why he is leaving so soon. It is more surprising to know the reason of his departing. Matthew says:

“The English are preparing to send a fleet up the Irrawaddy. There’s going to be a war. Father says they want all the teak in Burma. The King won’t let them have it so they’re going to do away with him.”

Rajkumar is unable to understand that wood like things can create war. It makes him laugh. He thinks Matthew is young so he can not understand well so he thinks there can be a war over wood. He thinks Matthew must have seen a dream. Amitav Ghosh describes here immaturity of Rajkumar though he finds Matthew immature. There are
many occasions that prove Matthew’s maturity and shows that Matthew is wiser and having more knowledge of events before they happen. Matthew is superior to Rajkumar in this respect. Two days later the whole city is gripped by rumours of war. A large group of troops come marching out of the fort and go downriver, towards the encampment of Myingan. There is uproar in the bazaar; fishwives empty their articles offered for sale into the matter throwing away as worthless heap and going in great haste towards home. Saya John comes to the stall running. He has a paper in his hand. He reads it. It is nothing but A Royal Proclamation. There is King’s signature under it. Everybody becomes silent while he is reading. He reads:

“To all Royal subjects and inhabitants of the Royal Empire: those heretics, the barbarian English kalaas having most harshly made demands calculated to bring about the impairment and destruction of our religion, the violation of our national traditions and customs, and the degradation of our race, are making a show and preparation as if about to wage war with our state.”

3.10 Compliance with Conventions, Rules, or Laws

They have been replied to compliance with conventions, rules, or laws with the action of using the fact of great nations and in words that are just and regular. If in spite of the foreigner persons practicing belief which goes against traditional religious doctrine should come, and in any way attempt to molest or disturb the state, his Majesty, who is watchful that the interest of their religion and their state shall not suffer, will himself march forth with his generals, captains and lieutenants with large forces of soldiers who fight on foot, artillery, elephanterie and cavalry, by land and by water, and with the might of his army will remove these persons practicing and conquer and seize their country. To maintain the religion, the national honour, the country’s interests will make happen threefold good of their religion, good of their master and good of themselves and will gain for them the important result of placing them on the path to the celestial regions and to Nirvana.
3.11 Royal History of Burma

Rajkumar arrives in Mandalay just as the British are taking over the country. In the thirty-year old ‘Glass Place’ live twenty seven year old Thebaw (1885-1916), King of Burma, and Supayalat. She is a very arrogant because she feels that she is better than others. Supayalat has no sympathy or pity. She is also hard and selfish chief royal wife and has had assassinated all family members who might challenge her husband’s right to the throne. There are not just few persons but there are seventy nine persons who make causes the loss of their relative’s lives. Her closest female servants are children whose parents are no more, and Dolly is the youngest and most beautiful of them. Supayalat is clearly the power behind the throne; the King, on the other hand, is kept in extremely happy knowing very little by his persons who advise him. Actually, he has not lifted and put down his feet out of his large, impressive building forming the official residence of king and his wife Supayalat. It is very surprising that he has not lifted his palace for seven years and has never left Mandalay. In just fourteen days, the British force the King to give in to an opponent and submit to their authority. While soldiers or armed forces come into the city, Ma Cho and others come into the palace compound, which has until then been completely of limits to them- and loot it. In the disorderly condition of the mass of people, Rajkumar unexpectedly meets and is faced with a female servant named Dolly. He is at once impressed by Dolly’s beauty that he puts back into her hands the jeweled ivory box he has intended to steal. Amitav Ghosh describes it beautifully that Rajkumar’s eyes fall on a girl who is one of the Queen’s maids. She is slender and long-limbed of a complexion that is exactly the tint of fine thanaka powder she is wearing on her face. Even Amitav Ghosh pays his attention so closely by describing the name of the powder used by Dolly in her time. She has huge dark eyes and her face is long and perfect in its quality of being similar. She is by far the most beautiful creature he has ever seen.

Amitav has described a perfect model of an Indian girl that shows the cultural history of India. He further describes that she is fairer than imagination. Rajkumar is so impressed that he has to clear his throat which is suddenly swollen and dry. She is in the far corner of the room with a group of other girls. He begins to work his way towards her
along the wall. He supposes about her hat she should be the queen’s employed to provide her service. He starts guessing about her age. He guesses that she should be nine or ten years old. He could tell that the bejeweled little girl beside her is a princess. In the corner behind them lay a heap of richly coloured clothes and objects of yellow mixture of two or more metals of copper and zinc, and ivory. Rajkumar looks down at the floor and sees a jeweled ivory box lying forgotten in a corner. The box has a gold clasp on its sides are two small handles, carved in the shape of leaping dolphins. Rajkumar knows what he has to do. He just goes to her and offers to Dolly. She does not look at him. She turns her head away. The other girl advises Dooly to take it because he is offering her. She hesitates for a while and then she takes it. Seeing a chance, Rajkumar asks her name. She utters her name hesitantly. At once Rajkumar can not think what to say more because he is so impressed to see her. Ma Cho interrupts him by saying that soldiers are coming so they must run. Rajkumar just says her that he will see her again. Amitav turns his description towards the royal family and describes their cultural history. The narrator says that the royal family spends the night in one of the furthest outbuildings in the palace grounds, the South Garden Palace, a small pavilion surrounded by pools, canals and rustic gardens. The next, shortly before noon, King Thebaw comes out to the balcony and sits down to wait for the British spokesman, Colonel Sladen. The King has worn his royal long strip of cloth worn over one shoulder or round the waist and a white gaung-baung, the turban of mourning. The narrator describes the outlook of the king. He is of medium height, with the face that is full and rounded in shape. He has a thin moustache and finely shaped eyes. He has good reputation for his looks when he is young. He is regarded one of the handsomest Burman in the land; he is in fact half Shan. His mother is from a small principally on the eastern border. He has been crowned at the age of twenty. And in the seven years of his reign has never once left the palace compound. This long restriction has worked terrible destruction on his appearance. He is twenty seven but looks to be well into middle age.

The narrator further tells that the king does not have personal ambition to sit on the throne of Burma. Nor has anyone in the kingdom ever imagined that the crown will one day be his. As a child he has entered into the Buddhist boy’s customary state of being
a novice in a religious order in the monkhood with an enthusiasm unusual in one of his birth and ancestry. He has spent many years in the palace monastery, leaving it just once, briefly, at the request of his father, the inspiring and respected king Mildon. The king has officially registered Thebaw and a few of his step-brothers in an English school in Mandalay. Under the protection of the authority of missionaries who are related to the Church of England. Thebaw has learnt some English and displayed a talent for cricket. But after sometime the king changes his mind and the result is that he withdraws the princes from the school and at the end he forces missionaries to leave school. Thebaw returns happily to the community of monks living under religious vows on the palace grounds, within sight of the water-clock and the relic house of the Buddha’s tooth. He has begun to earn distinction in scriptural study, passing the difficult patama-byan examination at the age of nineteen.

It is regarded that the king Mindon has been the wisest, most careful and thoughtful for future king. He becomes unparalleled king in the matter of ruling. There are forty six other princes in Mandalay whose claims to the throne are as good as Thebaw’s. Most of them are far better in the matter of strong desire and political skill. Thebaw has a step-mother, the Alenandaw Queen, a senior wife and she is a skilled deceitful, hard and selfish type of woman. She is the promoter of palace intrigue. She plans for Thebaw to marry all three of her daughters at the same time. Then she shoulders him past his forty-six rivals and places him on the throne. There is no choice left for Thebaw but he has to give approval and agreement to his accession. He thinks that it will be right to accept than to refuse. He thinks that it would be less harmful. There happens a shocking thing that he falls in love with one of his wives. She is his middle queen, Supayalat. Supayalat is more violent, aggressive, stubborn, and determined. She is the only woman who can surpass her mother in the matter of deceit and cunningness. Of such a woman only indifference could have been expected where it concerned a man of scholarly inclination like Thebaw. Yet, she too, in defiance of the protocols of palace intrigue, falls in a rush in love with her husband, the king.
The king’s nature is ineffective good that seems to inspire a maternal cruelty and violent. Supayalat deprives her mother of her powers to keep safe from the harm of her mother. Supayalat becomes so cruel and the result is that she drives away her mother into a corner of the palace. She does it not only with her mother but also with her sisters and other co-wives of the king. She is not satisfied with only these things but she starts making free unwanted rivals with her great determination. She orders the killing of every member of the Royal who might ever be considered a threat to her husband. She orders to kill seventy-nine princes. Some of them are new born and some of them too old to walk. She has had the wrapped them in carpets and thick stick with a heavy end that used as weapon. She does it to prevent the flowing of royal blood. The dead bodies of humans are thrown into the nearest river.

Supayalat has roused the great council of the land, the Hluttdaw, when the British begins to issue their final warning from Rangoon. The king has been out of a mind for making calm and less hostile by agreeing to their demands; the Kinwun Mingyi, his most trusted minister, has made great emotional appeal for peace and he is tempted to stop opposing. Supayalat rises from her place and goes slowly to the centre of the council. It is her fifth month of her pregnancy and she moves with great deliberation, with a slow, and she can walk without lifting her feet completely from the ground. She approaches in the centre of the chamber lined with mirrors. An army of Supayalats seem to appear suddenly around her. They are everywhere, on every sharp piece of glass, thousands of tiny women with their hands clasped over their swollen waists. She walks up to the brave and resolute old Kinwun Mingyi, sitting awkwardly on his stool. Thrusting her swollen belly into his face, she says why grandfather, it is he who should wear a skirt and own a stone for grinding face powder. When war is over, Colonel Sladen who is spokesman of the conquering British tells the king that the Royal Family is to be transported from Mandalay him next day. The problem is that the king has not stepped out from the palace for seven years. He has not left the surrounding area near Mandalay in all his life. The cultural history of such kings has been shocking that they have never stepped out their palace and live luxurious life in their palace. They are not familiar with melancholy of life. They know only the light side of life. They do not know dark side of life.
Cultural history has been eye witness that such kings are responsible for losing their existence and they can not survive themselves longer as well as kingdom. Sladen has spent years in Mandalay as a British man sent as a diplomatic representative on a special mission and has often visited the palace. Sladen can speak Burmese clearly and in natural manner. He has always shown himself to be correct in his manners. The king asks him for giving more time at least a week or a few days more. There is no matter of asking more time because the British has won and he has lost. Colonel Sladen comes next day to the South Garden Palace and asks about the time of leaving the palace. Sladen has worn his full dress; a sword is hanging at his waist. He expresses his compulsion in front of king that he can not do anything for him. To be auspicious is also a part of cultural history. A guard of honour has already been formed at the palace gates; the king is being waited on. Every part of palace is charged with a sign or warning that something important or unpleasant is likely to happen.

The East gate is supposed to be a good chance of success. It is through these gates that honoured visitors came and departed. For years British representatives and messengers to Mandalay has been transferred to the humble west gate. Sladen has carried on many battles with the palace over such fine points of protocol. King is allowed to leave the palace by he east gate. British have decided to be generous over the victory. Sladen looks at his watch and finds that there is very little time now and an absolutely important matter has yet to be settled and the matter is about the group of people accompanying the Royal Family into exile. Sladen discusses with the king and other British officers have been busy organizing a gathering in nearby garden. Many palace officials have been asked to be present, including the Queen’s maids and all other servants still remaining on the grounds. King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat look on as the colonel speaking formally to their servants. The colonel declares that the Royal Family is being sent into exile. They are to go to India but location yet to be decided. Many of the assembled courtiers have never had a home other than the palace; never woken to a day whose hours are not ordered by the rising of the king; never known a world that is not centered on he nine-roofed hti of Burma’s monarchs. All their lives thy have been trained in the service of their master. But their training bound them to the king
only as long as he embodied Burma and the authority of the Burmese. They are neither
king’s friends nor his persons in whom king confides and it is not in their power to
lighten the weight of his crown. Thebaw remains impressive as he watches his most
trusted servants turning away their eyes and faces, awkwardly fingerling the golden tsaloe
long strip of cloth worn over his shoulder and around his waist that indicates his high
rank. The king can see that he is deprived of power. The king asks Sladen to come with
him because they have been old friends. Sladen expresses his feeling of sorrow for not
coming with him because his duties will hold back him with the palace.

The queen Supayalat is eight month pregnant so the king is worried. She has been
the queen for long time so it would not be easy to live without serving of servants. He is
also worried about the second princess because she has raging uncontrolled outburst of
anger. Her eyes look at quickly assembly and settles on Dolly. Dolly finds queen glaring
at her from her place on the pavilion balcony. She rushes to her. Augusta says that they
are orphans and they are alone of the palace girls who are servant and they have worked
for the family of the king and queen for long time. The king leads Sladen into the
pavilion and unlocks a door. There is the richest gem mines lay in Burma and many fine
stones have passed into the possession of the ruling family. Amitav Ghosh describes the
cultural history of Burma at the time of the king, Thebaw. The king stops temporarily to
run his hand over the jeweled case that holds his most prized possession, Ngamauk ring,
set with the greatest, most valuable ruby ever minded in Burma. In 1885, one hundred
years after King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat are taken to India by the British. Myanmar
was well-known for its wealth in gold, gems and other natural resources. So in the king's
treasury there were plenty of jewels, gold, silver, gems and many more. Among these
precious treasures, Padamyar Ngamauk or the Royal Ruby was the most famous treasure.
Most of the gem merchants and the British colonists were always eager to see the ruby
and its beauty. There was no such ruby like the Ngamauk, as spotless as the one in
history. The King, the Queen and other royal servants are to be taken to India. In the
chamber of the Queen Supayalat, all her royal servants and maids are busy packing much
of the royal accessories and jewelries. Although everyone is busy packing, the frowns on
their faces are clear.
The maids were packing different royal accessories in lacquer boxes, teak boxes and gold boxes as necessary. The King and the Queen were sitting and looking around with very little hope for their future. At the time, Colonel Sladen from the British Army was going from one chamber to another and checking. Finally, he reaches the chamber where the King and the Queen are residing. Colonel Sladen is also telling the maids and servants to take everything the majesties would need and he goes out. Soon again he came back to the chamber, and requests the Queen to show him the precious Padamyar Ngamauk with hands folded as paying respect.

Then Queen Supayalat told the maid of chamber, Chuntaung Princess named Thu Thiri Sandar Wadi, who is in charge of these treasures to show Colonel Sladen the valuable ruby. Chuntaung Princess takes out the ruby from one of the cases in the golden box and gives it to Colonel Sladen. The ruby is made as a ring, among many of the royal jewelry. Colonel Sladen stares at the precious stone from all the sides, again in the sunlight and looked at it again and again in many positions.

3.12 Marriage Culture in Islamic Followers

In An Antique Land, Amitav Ghosh describes the cultural history of people of Lataifa. The narrator describes:

“When Shaikh Musa and I were alone in the room for a while, he began to wax expensive, talking about his boyhood in Lataifa and about Abu-Ali as a child. But once the family returned he cut himself short, and there was no opportunity to discuss the matter again for shortly afterwards he got up and left the room.”

Musa’s son Ahmed starts asking questions. He asks the narrator how cotton is grown with the fodder crop berseem. The narrator asks him if his mother is at home. Ahmed replies that his mother is no more now. The narrator becomes speechless to see Shaikh Musa remarryes at the fraction of his age. The culture of remarrying again and again is described here. The narrator describes that he is still innocent of some of the
finer distinctions between salaried people and peasants or agricultural labourer in Egypt. He says that he guess that his uncle’s looking tells that he does not make his living from ploughing the land. His starchy blue jallabeyya and white net skull-cap tells his own story.

3.13 Culture of Egyptians

Jabir introduces his uncle, Ustaz Mustafa with the narrator by saying that he is studying law at the University of Alexandria. Alexandria was founded around a small a king of ancient Egypt town c. 331 BCE by Alexander the Great. It remained Egypt's capital for nearly a thousand years, until the Muslim conquest of Egypt in CE 641, when a new capital was founded at Fustat and Fustat was later absorbed into Cairo. Alexandria was known because of its Lighthouse of Alexandria, a peninsula, formerly an island, in the Mediterranean Sea at Alexandria, Egypt, and the site of an ancient lighthouse, one of the Seven Wonders of the World, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World; its library the largest library in the ancient world; and the Catacombs of Kom el Shoqafa, one of the Seven Wonders of the Middle Ages. Ongoing maritime archaeology in the harbor of Alexandria, which began in 1994, is revealing details of Alexandria both before the arrival of Alexander, when a city named Rhacotis existed there, and during the Ptolemaic dynasty. From the late 19th century, Alexandria became a major centre of the international shipping industry and one of the most important trading centres in the world, both because it profited from the easy overland connection between the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea, and the making a large profit trade in Egyptian cotton.

The culture of Egyptian can be seen when Ustaz Mustafa says that they are honoured to have the narrator’s presence amongst them. The narrator is distressed to be spoken to in such a manner, for in concentrating on learning the dialect of the village he has allowed his studies of classical Arabic to fall into neglect. The narrator finds himself in hesitation to respond because he is not able to speak Arabic. Seeing this that he can not respond well, Jabir answers that he is learning to talk just like them. The narrator describes that hearing this; happiness can be seen through his face. Ustaz Mustafa
becomes so happy because he thinks that the God is willing so why the narrator is trying to learn Arabic and he will be like Egyptian.

The narrator notices that Ustaz Mustafa suddenly makes a sharp movement of the end of sleeve of Jallabeyya up and down in every few minutes, or so to steal a quick look at his watch. The narrator describes this incident in this way:

“I was to discover later that this gesture was rooted in an anxiety that had long haunted his everyday existence; the fear that he might inadvertently miss one of he day’s five required prayers. That was why he looked much busier than anyone else in Lataifa—he was always in a hurry to get to the mosque.”

Ustaz Mustafa is so regular in going to mosque. He believes in prayer though he is well educated. It is a part of his culture to go to mosque regularly. Being curious, he says that there is a lot of chilli in the food and when a man dies; his wife is dragged away and burnt alive. Ustaz Mustafa knows very well that the narrator belongs to such a country like India where this Sati Partha culture has taken its root so it would be better question to know better answer so that he can fulfill his curious desire.

3.14 The System of Sati Pratha

3.14 The System of Sati Pratha

In past it has been the culture of India that Sati Pratha prevailed in the country like India. It was a burning question in India. The word ‘Sati’ started as the name of daughter of Raja Daksha, and wife of Lord Shiva. There is a traditional story concerning the early history of Indian people. The term is derived from the original name of the goddess Sati, also known as Dakshayani. Once ‘Sati’ went to attend a ceremonial occasion planned by her father, though she was not invited. Unaware of the fact that the occasion was kept for humiliating Sati’s husband Lord Shiva, she went there against the will of her husband, convincing him that going to her parents was her rights. But when she found that her husband was getting abused, she became so angry that she jumped into the flame of burning fire, making her father the guilty of her death. Lord Shiva got angry and destroyed Raja Daksha. How is the above myth related to burning of widow – ‘Sati’ was
not a widow when she jumped in the funeral. In medieval India, during Mughal attacks, Kshatriya women used to commit ‘Jauhar’, something similar to ‘Sati’, out of pure fear of assaulting sexually and Rapes done illegally by Muslims after defeating opponent in the battle. Now, if the current literates say that even ‘Jauhar’ was wrong and not the Muslim attitude of assaulting sexually, the story ends here. But if not, then ‘Jauhar’ and the ‘Sati Pratha’ publicized excessively today are two different things, for sure. The above understanding of ‘Sati’ is what is known about it, in both positive and negative aspect. But in Hinduism, ‘Sati’ and ‘Pratha’ have a total different understanding than the above knowing. ‘Pratha’ is any practice that is coming from forefathers and is adopted by upcoming generation as well for the known well-impact. ‘Sati’ actually is a very pure word in Hinduism; it represents the purest form of woman; the purity that has impressive power. The word mentions the natural power of a woman which she develops by the virtue of her truthfulness towards her husband. This truthfulness gives description of the event so many aspects of the women and just not physical relationship. One, her thinking do not go beyond her husband, for the reason she has high opinion about the husband almost as God. Second, she acts to make sure that her actions in no way cause any damage or insult to her husband in any manner.

The narrator has to face such a question of ‘Sati’. Ustaz Mustafa does not know anything about it, he has just read it. Ustaz Mustafa raises the second question about the cultural history of India and the question is about making unable to produce offspring by removing or blocking the sex organs of Muslims in India. According to him, this act is done by Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi. The narrator answers that he made unable to produce offspring by removing or blocking the sex organs everyone not only Muslims. Ustaz Mustafa tells him that he knows all these things because he has already read it in college in Alexandria. He gives detail that he has spent several years in Alexandria as a student. He has specialized in civil and religious law and now he is practicing in a court in Damanhour. He further tells that at university, about the room he has lived in and books he has read. Two sons of Abu-Ali also come up to join them, carrying a tray of tea. The narrator feels relief when informal spoken exchange between them, it is turned to village but Jabir does not allow him to do so. Jabir says that Ustaz
Mustafa’s question has not yet solved. He tells his uncle to ask more questions about the narrator’s country. The next question he asks if he is a Muslim. The narrator shakes his head and replies that he is a born Hindu. Ustaz Mustafa asks him that there are many religions. He explains that he knows the religion of the Muslims, based on belief in one God and revealed through Muhammad as the Prophet of Allah. He knows about the religion based on the teaching and works of Jesus Christ called Christianity, he also tells that he knows the religion of the members of the people whose traditional religion is the religion of the Jews, based on the Old Testament and the collection of ancient writings on Jewish civil and ceremonial law and legend and asks about the follower of major religious and cultural traditions of the Indians including beliefs and the worships. Ustaz Mustafa asks about Hindu’s prophets. When the narrator replies him that there are no prophets in Hinduism, he is surprised. He says that he is like the three wise men who visited Jesus Christ as a baby, according to the Bible. He says that it means he worships fire then. At once Ustaz Mustafa asks him if he worships cows in India. His curiosity enhances question after question. The worshipping of cows is surprising thing for them because they think that there should be worship of God not animal. Jabir and others start calling upon God to protect them from the major personified spirit of evil, ruler of Hell, and foe of God. The narrator knows very well that a lot depends on his answer to satisfy them so explains that it is not like that what they understand but actually in his country some people don’t eat beef because cows give milk and plough the fields, and so they are very useful. Ustaz Mustafa is not contented with this false ecological argument given by the narrator.

3.15 Hinduism Versus Islam

There is great mixture of historical issues with personal history and cultural points in Amitav Ghosh’s books. Ustaz Mustafa entreats the narrator to go to the mosque for prayer but he denies going there because Mustafa thinks that if he goes to the mosque, he will learn about the Islam. And then he can make up his mind whether he wants to stay within that the religion of theirs. Stretching his hands, Mustafa asks him earnestly to go to the mosque. He says:
“That is where we are going-for the noon prayers. You don’t have to do anything. Just watch us pray, and you will understand what Islam is.”

Here it can be understood that Ustaz Mustafa thinks that the narrator should follow his religion because there is regular prayer in the Islam and this is the chief way for salvation in life. He seems to be well-wisher of him. When Ustaz Mustafa finds him hesitating to go to the mosque for prayer and making excuses of doing many works, he says nothing is better and more important than prayer. The narrator strictly denies going. Ustaz Mustafa again states forcefully without accepting refusal that he must go and watch that is all he is asking for him. Hearing the voice of the man who calls Muslims to prayer, Ustaz Mustafa and other boys disappear suddenly from the room. This suggests that he strictly believes in prayer. The narrator does not accept his proposal to visit the mosque and watch him at his prayers. To avoid the matter, the narrator starts talking about the hamlet’s history and his family’s line of his origin traced from the ancestor but he finds that he is not interested in this matter.

3.16 Indian Politics

Ustaz Mustafa begins to ask questions about his family and Indian politics. The narrator says:

“Eventually he brushed my patter aside and began to ask questions, first my family and then about Indian politics-what I thought of Indira Gandhi, was I for her or against her, and so on. Then, with a wry, derisory smile he began to ask me about ‘The Man from Menoufiyya’ the current nick name for the President, the Rais(elite).”

Ustaz is disappointed to see that the narrator is not familiar with some questions about the India. Ustaz Mustafa asks him whether he is supporter of political system whereby all property owned by the community and each person contributes and receives
according to their ability and needs that is a system derived from Marxism. Ustaz Mustafa asks him if he is not supporter of communism then who made the world, and who were the first man and woman if not Adam and Hawa. The narrator is surprised and confused as to how to react him. The narrator says something indistinctly and quietly that is not harmful or offensive about how, in his country, people think the world has always existed. His answer makes him quick nervous. He hugs his sleeping son hard against his chest and says that they don’t think of their Lord at all. They live only for the present and have no thought for the life after the death. Ustaz Mustafa thinks that his religion is better than he so he says:

“Tomorrow, I will take you with me to the graveyard, and you can watch me reciting the Quran over my father’s grave. You will see then how much better Islam is than this “Hinduki” of yours.”

Ustaz Mustafa says him that he hopes that he will convert and become a Muslim and in this matter he will not disappoint him. Here one thing is clear that Ustaz Mustafa wants the narrator to be Muslim but behind this conversion he has no bad intention. The narrator is not ready to his culture and Ustaz Mustafa is not ready to leave him uncultured without conversion into the Islam. Both of them are indomitable in their way of following the religion of their own country. The narrator makes excuses to go to the field. He does it to avoid the controversial matter of accepting others’ religion. It is not so easy to leave ones own culture whether it is the question of converting religion or changing culture. Ustaz Mustafa hesitates for a while but he goes with him to the field. Both meet by chance some of his relatives, working in a vegetable patch. They invite them to sit with them and begin to ask him questions about the soil and the crops in India. Mustafa does not like this. He says that they are fellaheen so they can not have interest in religion. Ustaz Mustafa can not understand why the narrator is not ready to convert into Muslim. He says to the narrator that he thinks that he is giving up his hope that he will become a Muslim. Ustaz Mustafa thinks that the narrator is not converting himself into Muslim because of his father’s fear. Ustaz Mustafa tells him that if his father read them, he will surely convert himself. The narrator answers none question. Both of them are strictly
stick to their religion. At last he says that it is right way because he should not upset his
to father on the matter of the religion. Both of them are culture rooted. Both of them think
that they are satisfied with their religion. The narrator asks Shaikh Musa’s wife whether
Ustaz Mustafa is her real uncle. Here one thing is clear that in Egypt people get married
with their uncle’s daughter and other relatives.

In Indian culture it can not be seen that a person can marry his own real uncle’s
daughter or with other relatives. Both of the cultures of countries are different so Ustaz
Mustafa is found unable to understand the narrator and his culture because both of them
have different cultures. Shaikh Musa’s wife is so shy so she can not answer his question
especially in front of Ahmed’s presence. Ahmed tells him that Ustaz Mustafa is her real
father. He adds that her father and he were carried in the same belly. The narrator says
that Jabir must be her cousin. Ahmed says that she is Jabir’s girl or woman, his father’s
brother’s daughter. He adds that if Jabir were older he could have married her himself.
Certainly Jabir’s parent’s and relatives would probably have wished for nothing better,
since a marriage between first cousins, the children of brothers, is traditionally regarded
as an ideal sort of union-a strengthening of an already existing bond. The narrator’s
curiosity forces him to ask about Abu-Ali’s ancestry. Ahmed tells him that Abu-Ali is her
father’s first cousin. His half-sister is her grandmother as well as Jabir’s. She still lives in
their house and he adds that he has met her. Hence she is Abu-Ali’s lineage. Egyptians
seem to have taken mates in what most often appears to be lifelong monogamous
relationships. Marriage and a close family played an integral role in ancient Egypt.
Marriages between kin were familiar among the common folk. Step-brothers and sisters
married, as did uncles and nieces quite frequently, and cousins still more so. Between
very close blood-relations, however, it was wholly exceptional among ordinary people
the tradition of brother, sister or father, daughter marriages was mostly confined to the
royalty of Egypt. In tales from Egyptian mythology, gods marriage between brothers and
sisters and fathers and daughters were common from the earliest periods, and so Egyptian
kings may have felt that it was a royal thing to do. However, there are also theories that
brother, sister marriages may also have strengthened the king's claim to rule. In Egypt a
man may not marry his mother, stepmother, wife’s mother, son’s daughter, daughter’s
daughter, wife’s son’s daughter, real sister, wife’s sister, brother’s wife, father’s sister, mother’s sister and father’s brother’s sister. Ahmed further gives detail about the culture of genealogy of Lataifa. He says that Abu-Ali’s father is her great-grandfather’s brother, and of course his father, Abu-Ali’s grandfather, is his great-great-grandfather’s brother. It seems a large banyan tree that has many branches of line of the ancestors of the family so the narrator feels that he has fallen in the well of labyrinth where he finds no way to go out. The narrator says:

“it was only much later, when Shaikh Musa helped me draw up a complete genealogy of the hamlet of Lataifa (all of whose inhabitants belonged ultimately to a single family called Latif) that I finally began to see why he was always so careful never to voice a word of criticism about Abu-Ali: his wife, Sakkina, was Abu-Ali’s great-grand-niece.”

The list of the ancestor of the family leads impossible to stop the conclusion that Abu-Ali has played an important part in arranging the marriage. Hence cultural history of Lataifa is wonderful and strange for the narrator. The people of Lataifa are not ready to believe that an animal like cow can be object of worship. They can not believe that a culture is there where circumcision is not necessary. It is impossible for them can not believe that the dead body is cremated not buried. People follow prophet and they have prophet in their religion but they are surprised to hear that that there is no prophet in Hinduism. Their ignorance make them unable understand Indian culture. The culture of language that is old and modern has also been a problem for the narrator. This is the complexities that make the narrator speechless. It can be seen that narrator remains speechless while people of Lataifa ask him many questions about India and her culture.

3.17 Connection with Personal History

The culture is the quality in a person or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellent in arts, letters, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc. Amitav Ghosh has beautifully described it in his books and connected it with history. In *The Shadow Lines*, he has described the cultural history between India and England especially of
London. He has covered both of cultures together and connected them each other. The development of culture can be seen when he describes narrator’s grandmother and narrator’s cousin’s daughter called Ila. The novel is set against the backdrop of historical events like Swadeshi movement, Second World War, Partition of India and Communal riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta. The narrator’s journey through the “shadow lines” of geopolitical boundaries, through the past and present, is really an attempt to find some meaning of such meaningless violence. Grandmother and Mayadevi are sisters, who grew up in Dhaka before the partition. While Mayadevi, the more gregarious of the two, marries a diplomat and enjoys a life of stature abroad, Grandmother loses her husband in Kolkata and has to fend for herself and her only son, the narrator’s father. She’s a fighter, refuses any charity, and manages to raise her son, the narrator’s father, who eventually becomes a successful executive.

Amitav Ghosh too, is joining the nerves or temper to show the effects of strain, questioning the fixity of culture and whether cultures can be contained within boundaries set the boundary by maps. He brings forth all sides of this intellectual difficult situation or problem through his various characters and the different opinions they hold about nations and patriotic feeling often to an excessive degree. Here we discuss the nationalistic views and ideas of the two main female characters, the narrator’s grandmother Tha’mma and his cousin, Ila. She has a blind love for her nation, though her nationality is certainly questionable as she is a migrant from Dhaka during the partition of India. The inquiry into her nationality as well the determination of nationality is made when Tha’mma has to fill out a form on her trip to Dhaka, to persuade her nonagenarian uncle to leave Dhaka, which is in the midst of a revolution and come to Calcutta with her. While filling out the form, she fills in her nationality swiftly and without hesitation as ‘Indian’ but starts wondering about her roots and origin once she writes her place of birth as Dhaka, Bangladesh. Ila’s views can’t totally be ruled out because as a woman there are many restrictions put on her while she is in India. A major incident where, she is forced out of a Cabaret Bar in the Grand Hotel in Calcutta by her uncle Robi shows how constrained and restrictive, life for women in India is.
The author portrays her narrator’s mother as the middle-class wife, whose main aim in life is to make life for the husband and child as comfortable as possible. This certainly wouldn’t wash down very well with western feminist movements. The author embodies the ideas of western nationalism and the denial of history to the third world through the narrator’s ‘white-washed’ cousin Ila. Through Ila, Ghosh challenges the western orientation of history, the history written by the victors but not necessarily the true history. Ila also compares her activist living to that of Alan Tresawsen and his friends during the Second World War. She notes that ‘there’s a kind of heroism in their pointless end of life. The novel derives its material from Ghosh’s experience of the fracture following the Partition and the resultant rupture in the affiliated bonds of the communities across the border. In *The Shadow Lines*, Ila is incapable of such intercultural negotiations because she lives intensely in the present with “easy arrogance,” which limits her cultural grasp. She revels in passing infatuation with places. The narrator, from moment Ila first mention’s Nick, sees Nick as his mirror image, yet an unattainable model in which the narrator will never be able to reach. The narrator, throughout the rest of his life, does everything he can in order to be thought of as similar to Nick Price, an English boy of the same age. By trying to be equal such characteristics, the narrator proves his acceptance of other type of civilization, the English culture. The story is also placed in a very real Calcutta, London and Bangladesh and reference to real places in these cities like Gole Park, Dhakuria overbridge and Gariahat Road in Calcutta and Lymington road in West Hampstead only add to the reality effect. Amitav Ghosh’s theme has represented as a domain of political and cultural encounters, encounters which actually shape the connection of different characters with territory and location. Hence, space is represented as a dynamic arrangement between people, places, cultures and societies.

The narrator's secret love for his cousin Ila was forced to remain in the shadows because the feeling itself, was dark in nature. Anything that is considered taboo, such as sexual relations between members of the same family, automatically vibrates with a slight rapid motion in the shadows of its own dark truths. Ila’s knowledge and understanding to her cousin's feelings for her was good in that it marks a promise of
change in her behaviour towards him which she hoped would help to dissipate his obsession. On the other hand, from the narrator's viewpoint, this revelation and his cousin's subsequent rejection caused him a great deal of emotional distress. The novel gives description of the study of the past events of an Indian family living in Calcutta, but with family, ethnic and cultural origins in Dhaka on the Pakistan side of the border and connections in Britain. The twisted together the study of past events of the family and their British familiarity with, the Prices, is formally introduced as stories gradually become known through with a person whose name is not known who gives the description of the novel. Most of these stories are told by the narrator's grandmother, his uncle Tridib, his cousins Robi and Ila, and the British family friend, May Price.

The stories bring together life in Dhaka before Partition, life in London during the war, and the life the narrator leads in the Calcutta of the 1960s and London of the 1970s. Through these stories, a picture is formed of the personal, communal and national identity of this migrant family living in India with connections both to the then East Pakistan and Britain. The experience of Partition and of living in the nation-state of India in the 1960s is presented through the symbolism of lines, be they geographical, temporal or cultural, or lines dividing differing realities, consciousness or identity. In general, the novel comments on the artificial nature of cultural, ideological, geographical and psychological borders in favour of a broader a system of thought that rejects religious beliefs and centers on humans and their values, capacities, and worth that has traditionally been very unfashionable in the discourses of style and movement in the arts that features a deliberate mixing of different styles and draws attention to artistic and it is a tendency in contemporary culture characterized by the problem of objective truth and inherent suspicion towards global cultural narrative or meta-narrative. It involves the belief that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. Postcolonialism is a specifically post-modern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to, and analysis of, the cultural legacy of colonialism. Postcolonialism comprises a set of theories found amongst anthropology, architecture, philosophy, film, political science, human geography, sociology, feminism,
religious and theological studies, and literature. Amitav Ghosh has described all these things in this book. The narrator says:

“Illa lived so intensely in the present that she would not have believed that there really were people like Tridib, who could experience the world as concretely in their imaginations as she did through her senses, more so if anything, since to them those experiences were permanently available in their memories.”

The culture between Ila and Tridib are different. She is not in the least interested in the narrator's stories of the Price family or pre-war London. Ila’s time dimension is the present, her world is the actual one and her way of travelling is physical: for her the current is real. She experiences the world through her senses, not through her imagination. She believes in present whereas Tridib believes in ideal world. She lives in abroad so when she describes her lover’s leg she is not excited on the discussion because all these things are normal in her culture. She believes that the current is the real. This is the reason why she lives in the present. Amitav Ghosh describes the culture of Covent Garden in London through narrator. He says when narrator arrives in London a couple days after, Ila takes narrator to Covent Garden. Covent Garden, London is famous for its shops, street performers, bars, restaurants, theatres and the Royal Opera House. Covent Garden is an Italian-style piazza packed with restaurants, bars and small shop selling fashionable clothes. It is surrounded by Theatreland, in the heart of London's West End; the area is recognized as the capital's premier entertainment and leisure destination. Covent Garden is the only area of London licensed for street entertainment and as such attracts performers from around the world. But narrator has no interest. Then he describes Victor Gollancz. Victor Gollancz Ltd is a major British book publishing house of the twentieth century. The narrator tries to recall for her how Tridib has told them that Alan Tresawsen, Mrs Price’s brother has worked there before the war, in the Left Book Club. Ila takes him to a Chinese Café that she knows in Neal Street.

The narrator describes Indian culture that Ila’s family comes that year for Durga Puja in Calcutta because after many years her grandparents are going to be there too, just
in time for the festival. Durga Puja - the ceremonial worship of the mother goddess, is one of the most important festivals of India. Apart from being a religious festival for the Hindus, it is also an occasion for reunion and rejuvenation, and a celebration of traditional culture and customs. While the rituals involves ten days of fast, feast and worship, the last four days - Saptami, Ashtami, Navami and Dashami - are celebrated with much gaiety and grandeur in India and abroad, especially in Bengal, where the ten-armed goddess riding the lion is worshipped with great intense enthusiasm and religious worship. It is also a part of Hindu’s cultural history. Ila’s father is on leave that is granted for travel from his job with the U.N. at the time. He is spending the year teaching in a university in the north of England. He has been glad to accept when the university invites him to be Visiting Professor in their newly-founded institute of development studies. Ila and her mother have looked forward it, too.

Queen Victoria and Ila are living when they come to Calcutta for that holiday. They live in Mrs Price’s house in West Hampstead. It is an area in northwest London, England, situated between Childs Hill to the north, Frognal and Hampstead to the northeast, Swiss Cottage to the east, and South Hampstead to the south. Mrs Price has even arranged for Ila to go to school with her son. They come in to Calcutta a few days before the festival began. Soon after they arrive Queen Victoria rings narrator’s mother and invite all of them, his parents, his grandmother and narrator also to drive out with them to visit their old house in Raibajar. Early in the morning, two days later, the four of them, narrator’s parents, his grandmother and he walk down to Gole Park where they have arranged to meet them. It is the day before Shoshti, a perfect Puja day, with the clear October sunlight lying golden in the galis. Amitav Ghosh describes that the narrator and his family wait out side of the Ramakrishna Mission building and the pavements near the sweet shops. The Institute is well known for its philanthropic, educational and cultural activities all over the world. Based on the philosophy of the unity of human life, the Institute endeavours to make people aware of the richness of different cultures all over the world and also of the need for intercultural appreciation and understanding. Amitav Ghosh describes the culture of Calcutta including Gariahat Road. Gariahat falls under Ballygunge area and is a Retail Market for saris, electronics, and good restaurants and all
together provide a very long stretch for window shopping too. It is the hub and shopping capital of South Kolkata. It is the main road of South Kolkata that starts from Ballygunge Phari-Hazra Road crossing and from there travels southwards towards the Gariahat market. The Ballygunge AC market and the Dakshinapan shopping center are two of the main attractions that one will find on the Gariahat Road.

3.18 Historical Concern

*The Glass Palace* is full with love that is not returned and caused by intense passion. There is consummation of desire; it is a narrative of dramatic adventure, great moving to settle and to find work, and unbelievable chance encounters. It is also filled with historical details that are shown that they are true and accurate as well as justified, such as area under the control of another country like British and occupied from India. Their invasion of Burma and making public statement about dates in chapter headings to remind of the plot’s covering with a design in which one element covers a part of another with historical study of records to establish the dates of the past events. However, its thematic material is carefully organized according to the principles that govern the crafting of fiction: language, narrative level of practical skill, and category of art. After the British invasion, many of the king’s soldiers escape into the countryside with their weapons. Mandalay becomes a city of ghosts. They begin to act on their own, staging attacks on the occupiers, sometimes appearing suddenly inside the city at night. Several hundred British soldiers fall inside the ox-carts and the girls. They are heavily armed, prepared for trouble. The people of Mandalay are not expected to sit idly by while their King and Queen are moved in a large group into exile. Reports have ben heard of planned riots and demonstrations, of extremely serious attempts to free the Royal Family. The British high command believes this to be potentially the most dangerous moment of the entire operation. Amitav Ghosh describes the culture of British that they have attacking and capturing attitude on other countries. When they attack on India, Bahadur Shah Zafar’s condition is miserable. He describes:

“Some of them have served in India and an incident from the recent past weighed heavily on their minds. In the final days of the Indian
uprising of 1857, Major Hodson had captured Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last of the Mughals, on the outskirts of Delhi. The blind and infirm old emperor had taken refuge in the tomb of his ancestor, Humayun, with two of his sons.”

When major has to accompany as a person to provide protection Bahadur Shah Zafar and his sons back into the city, people gather in large numbers along the roadside. These people become more disorderly and disruptive, increasingly threatening then Major orders the princes’ execution to control the disorderly crowd of people. One of the stories the Thonzai Prince tells is about Bahadur Shah Zafar is the last Mughal emperor. After the suppression of the uprising of 1857 the British have exiled the deposed emperor to Rangoon. He has to live in a small house not far from the Shwe Dagon. He becomes very blind and old there. There is a street in Rangoon the Prince has said, that is named after the old emperor-Mughal Street. Many Indian live there, Prince has claimed that there are more Indians than Burmese in Rangoon. The British have brought them there to work in the docks and mills, to pull rickshaws and empty the latrines. Local people are not seen doing these manual jobs. In Burma no one ever starved because everyone knows reading and writing. On arriving in Madras, King Thebaw and his group of people accompanying him are taken to the mansion that has been made over to them for the duration of their stay in h city. Neither the soldiers nor their royal captives know the way to the port. The procession loses its way in the geometrical maze of Mandalay’s street. Rajkumar finds a chance when he ten feet far from Dolly, he offers her sweets. She stares him with surprise. She offers them to a soldier who is marching beside her. He gets angry on her but Rajkumar spies Dolly, a royal household maid who becomes his lifelong love.

After five days on the Irrawaddy the Thooriya slips into the Rangoon River in the near darkness of the late evening. Matthew, Saya John’s son has says about the British invasion being provoked by teak. Rajkumar and Saya John are busy when rivers rise. Rajkumar gets a job under Saya John, ne of Ma Cho's customers, and a supplier to teak camps. A fascinating description of how men and elephants cooperate in felling and transporting thousands of massive logs of teak wood from upcountry forests to Rangoon
follows. Rajkumar himself becomes a tycoon trading Timber. The Rivers have been livelihood for people since men came in this world. Every few weeks they load cargo of sacks, wooden cases for transporting goods and boxes on to one of the Irrawaddy Steamship Flotilla’s riverboats: Shuddering, paddle-wheeled steamers, captained, more often than not, by Scotsmen, and crewed mainly by Chitagong khalasis, such as Rajkumar has himself once sought to be. The novel also follows the change in Burma, as the British treat unfairly their colony and the teak industry comes to have a very strong influence over the nation. Rajkumar remains in Burma, taken into his protective care of Saya John, another orphan, from Malacca, who looks Chinese but is a sort of everyman, comfortable in the entire South-East Asian area. They work in the lumber branch of commercial activity; gather some wealth, obtaining greater estate of being free from outside control. The Indians themselves are victims of the practice of acquiring control over another country, occupying with settlers, and exploiting economically but they also use it. Rajkumar and others are settled dispute by each side making concessions, owing much of their success to the British, while the Burmese are presented entirely as persons who are tricked. Ghosh gives detail descriptions of the court of Queen Supayalat and King Thebaw pays particular attention especially on one of the girl who employs to provide a service for one of the infant princesses, a young girl named Dolly who is the only one who can handle one of the infant princesses. For much of the novel he then also moves behind the story of the royal family in their sad Indian banishment. It is Europeans who come and use elephants for the purposes of logging. He describes:

“**Their elephants were used only in pagodas and palaces, for wars and ceremonies. It was the Europeans who saw that tame elephants could be made to work for human profit. It was they who invented everything we see around us in the logging camp. This entire way of life is their creation.**”¹⁷

Hence some cultures are gifted by Europeans. Amitav Ghosh tries a variety of approaches in providing this information, but they rarely fit smoothly in the rest of the story.
The King Thebaw spends hours on his balcony every day, looking steadily and intently out to sea with his gold-rimmed glasses in Ratnagiri. The Burmese royal family’s removal to Ratnagiri reflect an earlier national shame, the removal of Bahadur Shah Zafar to Rangoon, in an imperialist attempt to wipe out a nation’s history and the collective conscious. Princesses are seen around the town three or four times every year. They visit Mandvi jetty and the Bhagwati temple and the houses of those British officials whom they are permitted to visit. The townsfolk know them all by sight that the First, Second, Third and Fourth Princesses in the second year of the King’s exile. The last one is born in Ratnagiri. They dress in Burmese clothes-angyis and htameins. They start wearing their hair braided and oiled like Ratnagiri schoolgirls. They learn Marathi and Hindustani as fluently as any of the townsfolk. The customs of the ruling dynasties of Burma is to marry very closely within their houses, only a man descended of Konbaung blood in both lines is eligible to marry into the Royal Family. It is the Queen who is to blame for the fact that there are now very few such pure-blooded princes left: it is she who has killed her dynasty by massacring all of Thebaw’s potential rivals. She announces that not a single one of them is a fit match for a true-born Konbaung Princess. She allows her daughters to impure their blood by marrying beneath themselves. They speak Burmese with their parents. At the Mandvi jetty, fishing boats slip into the bay at dawn with cargoes of dried fish. Traders ride on ox-carts that are loaded with pepper and rice. Dolly is now fifteen and there is an outbreak of the plague along the coast. Ratnagiri particularly hard hit. Fires burnt people and day in the crematorium. Many people left town and others locked heir houses.

There is description of Qutram House is situated at a good distance from the sites of the outbreak. Dolly serves as the intermediary between the compound’s staff and the Royal Family. It is not so long ago that Thebaw’s great-grandfather, Alaunpgaya, and his grandfather, Bagyidaw, invades Siam, crushes her armies, unseat her rulers and sack Ayutthaya, her premier and Bangkok has become the country’s new capital. It is because of the kings of Burma because of Thebaw’s ancestors, because of the Konbaung dynasty that Siam has its present dynasty and its ruling king. Many lives intersect—Dolly, Rajkumar, Uma and her Collector husband, and later, Jaya, Bela, Kishan Singh, Arjun,
Dinu, and even the iconic Aung San Suu Kyi. Through these intersecting and defiant characters, there are the policies of extending a nation's authority by territorial acquisition or by the establishment of economic and political hegemony over other nations and policy by which a British maintains or extends its control over Burma’s dependencies become bywords for political upheavals that rend apart a nation and its culture and people. The Burmese royal family’s removal to Ratnagiri reflect an earlier national shame, the removal of Bahadur Shah Zafar to Rangoon, in an imperialist attempt to eliminate a nation’s history and the collective conscious. With royalty driven away from its kingdom, the Burmese people, as were Indians earlier, lose their symbol of being able to recover quickly from difficulty and being bold disobedience. The symbol is resurrected in the book much later, in another epoch, through the riveting figure of Aung San Suu Kyi.

Amitav Ghosh describes about The Royal family’s first meeting with the new Collector comes close to ending in disaster. Collector Dey and his wife have arrived at a time when politics is much on people’s minds. Every day there are reports of meetings, marches and petitions: people are being told to boycott British-made goods. Women also participate in making bonfires of Lancashire cloth. Amitav Ghosh describes:

“In the Far East there was the war between Russia and Japan and for the first time it looked as though as Russian country might prevail against a European power. The Indian papers were full of news of this war and what it would mean for colonized countries.”

The king tells the collector that the Japanese have defeated the Russians in Siberia. The collector’s wife Uma and Dolly becomes good friends. It can be seen that through there are historical, political, and social events, starting with the British invasion of Burma in 1885 to Aung San Suu Kyi and the junta-ruled Myanmar of 1996. Between the two framing epochs of repression and dominance, it can be seen that there is description of Russo-Japanese turmoil, the World Wars, India’s epic struggle for independence, and a family’s search for its roots. Ghosh uses the personal to illuminate the social, political, and historical changes in Burma, India, and Malaysia at the close of
the British Empire. Further, he skillfully illustrates the fact that, as he suggests, the angle, or the path followed by object moving through the air of people’s entry into the future is inexorably set by its starting point. There is a great deal about the history of British relations with its Asian colonies and the nature of the racism. When Uma's husband the Collector dies, she reinvents herself dramatically as a world traveller and, later, a political radical for the cause of Indian self-rule. Her nephew Arjun, first an eager young recruit in the British Indian army, undergoes a huge a violent change in his moral sense of right and wrong when he realizes that serving the person who treats very harsh and unfair way is morally indefensible.

Amitav Ghosh describes about the soldiers who are originally Indian but fight for British. Arjun, Hardy ands Kishan Singh are Indian soldiers fighting for British. They fight for the British because they cherish an idea that the British will make free India. There is the news that Queen Victoria is no more now. Hardy tells Arjun that they have got the orders. They have been instructed at the Military Academy in Dehra Dun:

“The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next...And your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time.”

They think about country and they find that they have no country. Their own country is not free. The fact is that both of them have no country so there is no question of safety, honour and welfare are come to first, always and every time. They think that whatever has been taken in their oath is for the King and Emperor not for their own country. Just before the battalion’s departure from Saharanpur, a new war equipment tables arrives. The train leaves for Bombay on schedule. AT Ajmer there is slight delay. The 1/1 Jats are shunted aside so that a trainload of Italian prisoners of war can pass by. The Italians and Indians stare at each other in silence across the platform through the barred windows of their respective carriages. This is the first glimpse of the enemy. There has been a cultural history for fighting but aim fighting has been changed now. Amitav describes:
“Hundreds of years ago soldiers had fought out of religious belief or because of allegiance to their tribes, or to defend their kings. But those days were long past: now soldiering was a job, a profession, a career. Every soldier was paid and there was none who not a mercenary.”

Hardy says that they are the first generation of educated Indian soldiers. There is a large-scale military exercise, models of automobile and aircraft, drilling of oil, timber trade, food, clothing, and every detail is historically specified. A person is remembered not as Burmese, Indian, Chinese, Malay or American - but merely as Uma, Dolly, Saya John, Alison, Dinu, Neel or Daw Thin Aye. That Dinu is also called Tun Pe and Neel's other name is Sein Win further destabilizes nation-based identities. The moral crisis comes to a head in a forest hide-out in Burma where they lie injured after a Japanese attack. There is story of the Japanese invasion of Malaya and Burma and the subsequent family losses of lives and properties. Hardayal confesses he cannot carry on with his divided life. Arjun's code of honour will not permit him to think these thoughts and to him the idea of joining the Japanese for the liberation of India would be a senseless exchange of one set of rulers for another. The conflict is further tangled by Arjun's relationship on the one hand with his loyal batman Kishan Singh who wants to know what the English word 'mercenary' means and whether it can be applied to them, - and his admiration for and allegiance to his British commanding officer. Arjun is Uma’s nephew who dies in battle with his batman Kishan Singh. Amitav Ghosh further describes the culture about the bond between Uma and Dolly is further strengthened when Uma's niece Manju marries Neel, one of Dolly's sons. The other son, Dinu, falls in love with Alison, the granddaughter of Rajkumar's old mentor Saya John. Neel Raha is Rajkumar and Dolly's elder son. Neel dies when he tries to take his father's place in the family business. Bombs frighten the elephants and he is crushed by falling timber. Elsa Hoffman is Matthew's wife who dies in the accident which kills Matthew. Alison is Matthew and Elsa's daughter. She also dies in a battle of sorts; she kills four soldiers and then shoots herself. Timmy is son of Matthew and Elsa who moves to America.
3.19 Ben Yiju’s Family History

*In An Antique Land*, Amitav Ghosh describes that Ben Yiju’s family history. His origins lay in Afriqiya-in the Mediterranean port of Mahdia. It is now a large town in Tunisia. His family name ‘ibn Yiju’ or Ben Yiju, in Hebrew-is almost certainly obtained from the name of a Berber that has once been the protectors, patrons, or of his lineage. The study of records to establish the dates of past early life is not clear and the result that his birth place and his birth date is not clear. It is supposed that it may be in the last years of the eleventh or the first of the twelfth. His friends occasionally mention him as ‘al-Mahdawi’ may be his birth place. It is a main centre of Jewish culture and as well as one of the most important ports in Ifriqiya. He has two brothers called Yusuf and Mubashshir. He has a sister called Berakha. His father’s name is Perahya. He is a Rabbi, a respected scholar and a person who copies out documents. He may have taken part in business activity in a casual way like most scholars of his time but his family’s circumstances seem to have been modest and in all likelihood his principal hand down to his sons lay in the excellent education he provided them with. Ben Yiju is a well educated scholar and well versed doctrinal and religious matters. His personal natural tendency is more literary than scholastic. He is an occasional poet and he writes a clear, carefully crafted prose with some arresting images hidden under a deceptively plain surface. The Eastern trade must have seemed too tempting to choose his business. He leads from Ifriqiya to Fustat and then to Aden, the port that he takes a long decisive step of the most important sea-routes that connects the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. Amitav Ghosh describes:

“However, it is clear enough from his later correspondence that his early years in Aden played a formative part in his life. It was probably there, for example, that he made the acquaintance of a man who was to become first his mentor and then his partner in business, a wealthy and powerful trader called Madmun ibn al-Hasan ibn Bundar.”

Madmun ibn Bundar is the chief representative of merchants in Aden. He is the head of the city’s large and wealthy Jewish community. He is also the superintendent of the port’s customs offices. He is of central importance in the Indian Ocean trade whose
network of friends and acquaintances extended all the way from Spain to India. Ben Yiju must know Madmum long before leaving Egypt. His friends and relatives are sure that Madmum should be provided essential information with letters of introduction when he sets out for Aden. Madmum knows his arrival by his own networks of information.

3.20 The Geniza Documents

The mementoes about Bomma is so less but the consequence that is not expected of the search. Ben Yiju gives Bomma a fairly generous monthly allowance while he is in Aden. He is paid two dinars a month, or about the wage of any skilled worker but the figure is a very small one compared to the sums of money that Bomma is handling in Aden. The Geniza documents provide no indication at all about how Bomma’s path comes to cross Ben Yiju’s. He is a business agent and helper soon after he has established himself as a trader in Mangalore. At a more modest level, merchant and traders often used slavery as a means of finding apprentices and agents; the ‘slaves’ who entered employment in this way often took a share of their firm’s profits and could generally be sure of obtaining manumission, and even of attaining the rank of partner or shareholder. It shows presenting facts in comprehensive but concise way image of his master, Ben Yiju. He is a junior associate, partnered with a merchant Madmum. The letters between these two are full of directions and some insisting on immediate attentions wide spread underneath of the informal polite and considerate language.

Madmun’s enthusiastic and affectionate and happening time to time irritable tone expressed indirectly that Madmum respected Ben Yiju with an very nearly like a fatherly feeling of fondness. Madmum’s earliest still in existence letters date from after Ben Yiju’s departure from Aden, when he is engaged in setting up in business in the Malabar. Ben Yiju’s relationship with Madmum at that time falls somewhere between that of an agent a junior partner. The letters are full of detailed instructions and beneath the surface of their conventionally courteous language there is a certain immediate attention as though Madmum are doubtful of the abilities and efficiency of his inexperienced associate. But at the same time it is largely clear from Madmum’s warm but occasionally hot-tempered tone that he regards Ben Yiju with an almost parental feeling of liking. His state of being
well known with his liking and habits suggests that he may even have taken the young Ben Yiju to live in his household, regarding him as a part of his family in much the same way that skilled workers making things by hands sometimes make their apprentices, they are founded on probability of his family and relations. The whole of Madmum’s close-knit social circle welcome Ben Yiju in Aden. His two other principal correspondents there are both related to Madmum. One of them is Yusuf ibn Abraham. He is a judicial functionary and a trader. He has self-absorbed and irritable natural quality. The other is Khalaf ibn Ishaq who is the writer of the letter of MS H.6 and it is possible that he is the closest of Ben Yiju’s friends in Aden. The fortunes of each of these men are founded on the trade between India and the Middle East but their part in it is that of brokers and financiers rather than travelling merchants. They travel extensively in the Indian Ocean but by the time Ben Yiju met them they are all comfortably settled in Aden. There is no lack of travellers in their circle. In whatever way, at least two Madmum’s friends deserve to be counted amongst the most well travelled men of the middle Ages, perhaps of any age before the twentieth century.

The first is a prominent figure in the Jewish community of Fustat, Abu Sa’id Halfon ben Nethan’el ha-Levi al-Dimyati, a wealthy merchant, scholar and patron of literature, whose surname links him to the Egyptian port of Dumyat or Damietta. A large number of Abu Sa’id Halfon’s papers have been preserved in the Geniza and their dates and places of writing bear witness to a pattern of movement so fluent and far-ranging that they make the journeys of later medieval travellers, such as Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta seem unremarkable in comparison. There are merchants like Abu Sa’id Halfon and Abu Zikri Sijilmasi. He has a slave MS H.6-to transact his business there while he himself remains in Mangalore. For Ben Yiju the journey from Egypt towards Aden and India begin with a four hundred mile voyage down the Nile. For about five hundred years Aidhab functioned as one of the most important halts on the route between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Nothing else is known either about the writer of the letter or where the two men met. In any event the old man clearly felt that Ben Yiju owed him a large sum of money for transporting goods of the weight of five bahars. As it turned out he eventually even succeeded in persuading Madmum of his claims. October 1132, in
Mangalore, Ben Yiju publicly granted freedom to a slave girl by the name of Ashu. Ben Yiju leaves India as early as 1130 or 1131; in any event the date must have preceded Ashu’s emancipation by a good few years. About Ashu’s origins there is only a single clue. In a set of accounts written carelessly on the back of one of Madmun’s letters, Ben Yiju refers to a sum of money that he owes to his brother-in-law called Nair.

3.21 Trading Culture of Mangalore

Amitav Ghosh describes the cultural history of Mangalore. The merchant community of Mangalore living outside their native country is a large one. The Moroccan traveller Ibn Battuta visits the city some two hundred years after Ben Yiju reports that it is the practice of most merchants from the Yemen and Persia to leave the ship there. The Sumatrans on the other hand along with others from the eastern reaches of the Indian Ocean seem to have preferred other cities such as Calicut and Fandarina, a little further to the south. A Portuguese sailor, Duarte Barbosa visits the city early in the sixteenth century and notes that the city’s merchants including Arabs, Persians, Guzarates, Khorasanys, and Decanys are known collectively as foreigners. These pardesi merchants are not all merchants who travel from place to place. Many of them who live outside of their native settle in Malabar for considerable lengths of time. Barbosa notes that they possess in Malabar wives and children and ships for sailing to all parts with all kinds of goods. About their life style the narrator describes that the merchants have splendid and expensive things. They have worldly experience and taste in matters of culture and fashion. Sophisticated travellers and courtiers are used to refinements of royal courts. They have large houses and many servants. They are very luxurious in eating, drinking and sleeping.

For many hundreds of years, a large numbers of foreign visitors gathered into a crowd in the cities of this region and it was Middle Eastern travellers who gave this part of the coast the Arabic name ‘Malabar’. The name is applied loosely to the southern third of the west coast, an area that shares many aspects of a common culture. Malabar is also divided into several smaller sub-regions, among which the district around Mangalore is perhaps the most distinctive. It forms kind of double-headed raised road over shallow
water between the south and the north on the one hand and between the seaboard and the
interior on the other. The language of Mangalore is called Tulu, and it is one of the five
siblings of the Dravidian family of languages. It is rich in folk traditions and oral
literature. Tulunad is not large. It is contained today within a single district yet it had a
distinct identity since antiquity. Greek geographer Ptolemy refers to it as ‘Olokhoira’ is a
term which is thought to have been derived from ‘Alupa’, the name of Tulunad’s long-
lived ruling dynasty. Tulunad’s Alupa rulers succeeded in preserving a measure of
autonomy for their small kingdom by picking allies judiciously among the various
dynasties that followed each other to power in the remote areas of country away from the
coast and major rivers. It was during their rule that Mangalore became one of the
principal ports of the Indian Ocean and it was in the reign of the king Kavi Alupendra
that Ben Yiju came to the city. Like other merchants of the Middle Eastern, he is also
attracted to Mangalore because of the economic opportunities it offers as one of the
premier ports of an extremely wealthy district lying inland from the coast. It is a region
that is well endowed with industrial crafts apart from being one of the richest spice-
producing territories of the medieval world. Later the area’s wealth is to attract the much
less welcome attention of the European shipping taking place at sea and colonial powers
and it is in the course of the struggles that happens afterwards that Mangalore comes to
lose virtually every trace of its remarkably past:

“The Brahmins play an important role in an altogether different
aspects of the religious life of the tradition; they were he standard-
bearer of he Pan-Indian Hindu tradition which formed the
complementary other half of the folk-religion of Tulunad.”

3.22 Conclusion

Amitav describes Indian cultural history by asking questions with the help of
people. When the narrator looks upset hearing such question, Nabeel persuades him:

“They were only asking questions just like you do; they didn’t mean
any harm. Why do you let this talk of cows and burning and

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circumcision worry you so much? These are just customs; it’s natural that people should be curious. These are the things to be upset about.”

Amitav Ghosh has described cultural history of the villages of Lataifa and Nashawy in Egypt. Amitav Ghosh makes an effort to create past events from evidence. He describes the cultural history of Indian people especially in Bihar, Calcutta, Mandalay, Burma, Mangalore and other business places in India.
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