CHAPTER VIII

GHOSH'S THE CIRCLE OF REASON

Introduction: Ghosh has been identified as the eldest of the children of Midnight's Children mainly for his sensibility is akin to Rushdie. Like Desani and Rushdie, Ghosh problematizes the received notions and his first novel The Circle of Reason is not only an example of post-modernism but also of the nativization of post-modernism. Therefore, The Circle of Reason has been chosen for a detailed study in this chapter. Amitav Ghosh is a multifarious personality. He is a professor by occupation, scholar in social anthropology, a creative writer by choice and what not. Besides a prolific novelist with such novels as Shadow Lines, The Antique Land, The Calcutta Chromosome, Dancing in Cambodia, Countdown and The Glass Palace, he is a recipient of several such awards and prizes as Prix Medicis Etranger Award, Arthur C. Clark Prize, the Pushcart Prize, the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Frankfurt International e-Book Award etc.

The Circle of Reason is divided into three parts namely, Satwa: Reason, Rajas: Passion, and Tamas: Death. But the story is not narrated according to this pattern. The narrative dwells upon the life of Balaram and his nephew. Balram's passion for science from his childhood, the influence of the book The Practical Phrenology and the influence of The life of Pasteur frame his psyche. It makes him get obsessed with a peculiar sense of reason. Thus he spends half of his life practicing phrenology and the remaining half implementing the doctrine of Pasteur namely to cleanse the society with carbolic acid. He fails in both. While his assessments with the help of phrenology go wrong causing disrepute to him, his experiment with carbolic acid proves to be suicidal for he is killed by his own stock of carbolic acid in an encounter with the police. Balarm's nephew Alu comes to stay with his uncle after the demise of his parents in an accident. He is also peculiarly silent. He discontinues his education and opts for learning weaving. He alone escapes from the encounter with the police which was conspired by the local politician Bhudeb Roy. He is suspected to be helping the extremists, and on that account, he is chased by the police officer Jyoti Das. He
flees to al-Ghazira under the leadership of Zindi in order to escape from the police. Vicissitudes of fortune afflict him, and after losing his associates except Zindi and Boss, he is on his way back home in the end.

Subversive Themes: The prominent themes of subversion in *The Circle of Reason* are—the notion of Science and Reason, and Religion.

(i) Subversion of Science and Reason: As the title suggests, *The Circle of Reason* is pre-occupied with the theme of 'reason'. But the theme of Reason is subverted in the narrative. As Dr. Bala Kothandaraman points out: "The title of the novel 'Circle' has structural ramifications, not the least of which is subversion of its own ultimate concern—Reason". Several major characters are obsessed with their own peculiar notion of reason which is a combination of science, tradition and instinct. The author ridicules these obsessions with reason in the post-modernist fashion. The meanings of the word reason are given in FOLENS Combined Dictionary and Thesaurus as: "A reason is an explanation of why something happens or exists... Reason is your ability to think sensibly and reliably." Reason may be defined in simple terms as 'a clear and logical thought'. To reason also means to persuade rationally. These implications of 'reason' are used in an ironical manner in the episodes of Balaram, Toru-debi, Alu and Zindi. To begin with, the episodes of Balaram are taken up for the probe. His mania for reason manifests itself in two aspects. The first is observed in his association with the science of phrenology and the second, in his association with the *Life of Pasteur*.

Balaram is influenced by science from his childhood. The influence of science was so strong that he was insisted that he would study only science. But he was compelled to study History by his parents and schoolteachers. Nevertheless, his interest in science never diminishes during his college days, and it lasts till he breathes his last.

His first heroes are scientists, like Benjamin Franklin and Edison. Though his teachers recognize that he can do better in history and persuade him to pursue his studies in history in the Presidency college in which a luminary in Philosophy like Dr. Radhakrishnan has been recently appointed, he never applies his mind to the study of philosophy and history. He reminiscences
Calcutta as the place of Ronald Ross who discovered the origin of Malaria, and Robert Koch, who found solution for typhoid, and Jegadeshe, who proved that plants are no less endowed with feeling than man. He looks at the Presidency College as the place of the Nobel Prize winner C.V. Raman.

When Balaram reads the Life of Louis Pasteur, he comes under its influence. On several occasions he speaks about reason as if he is an embodiment and a guardian of reason. This is reflected in his response to Gopal's suggestion that someone should write his biography: "How could anyone write a biography of the discovery of Reason?". He participates in the proceedings of Rationalists Association actively and makes objection to the propositions of the President of Rationalists Association. This behaviour of his projects him as a champion of Reason. When he founded a school, he justified his decision to impart education in weaving by stating that weaving was a means of reason. Thus as Ulka Jhoshi says: "Balaram stands for reason and propagates reason".

But the ironical treatment of Balaram's inclination towards Reason makes it clear that the theme is subverted. In other words, all the irrational acts of Balaram as an exponent of reason are parodied in the narrative. Balaram's pseudo reason can be perceived right from his college days to the end of his life. Owing to his childhood love for scientists and the influence of the Life of Pasteur, he begins to argue with his friends at the meetings of Rationalists Association in the Eden Hindu Hostel but only to his own humiliation because his arguments lack logic and sense. His state of mind is described at this juncture by John Thime as: "Alu's uncle and foster father, Balaram, is a passionate advocate of supra national vision of scientific reason, inspired by the work of Louis Pasteur which leads him to undertake a campaign against germs and brahminical superstition in the local village".

Before coming to the failure of his campaign against germs etc., we may cite many instances which are meant to highlight the irony underlying his idée fixe with the notion of reason. His difference of opinion with Gopal with regard to the application of reason is one such. Gopal discusses the concept of Atman at the Rationalists' meeting. He strives to establish that Atman is formless and
shapeless, and hence, the practice of depicting ‘God’ in any shape is humbug and mere mischief of the caste Hindus. He uses Atom as a metaphor for Brahma to highlight the idea of god who is formless. To illustrate this, here are a few lines from the novel: “In fact, Gopal said in sibilant whisper, the Brahma is nothing but the Atom”.

But Balaram mistakes it and argues thoughtlessly that Cosmic Atom is an archaic usage. So it should be replaced with such terms in currency as Cosmic Boson. Gopal accepts it but Balaram tries to provide endless alternatives to Cosmic Atom such as Cosmic Fermions, Italian particles etc. What is evident from this instance is that the focus is deviated from the subject of Brahma to the metaphors of Brahma, like Boson, Fermions and Italian particles. Balaram’s thoughts are unclear and illogical owing to which the purpose of the discussion is deviated and defeated. To prevent his talk from leading the assembly to further confusion, Gopal tells him to stop his arbitrary talk: “No, no, said Gopal. We can’t salute everything. I think we’d better keep to Bosons. Now, sit down, Balaram”.

Balaram’s mind is muddled by his reading of the biography of Pasteur. He, who is an advocate of reason, is overwhelmed with passion on another occasion of the Rationalists’ meeting. This time, the discussion is on tracing rational substitutes for the superstitious incantations. Balaram loses his wit here too and makes a provoking sermon on the evolution of Pasteur as a scientist. He argues that the rational thoughts are of no use to the society and also reiterates that the passions like that of Pasteur alone could help them to reach the people. When Gopal asks how they could indulge in scientific inventions as Pasteur did without being scientists or involved in the scientific research, Balaram utterly fails to answer the query: “Balaram paused. Slowly he said: I don’t know. How can I say? All I know is that this is pointless”.

He has spoken at length to oppose Gopal without being conscious of what and to whom he was addressing. He, who starts the argument, ends up by giving only an opinion without proper substantiation which shows that he is lacking in organized thoughts which is absolutely essential for reason. His speech is a reflection of the theoretical information he has collected from
reading the *Life of Pasteur* but there is wisdom behind his adoption of Pasteur's philosophy in his speech. This is observed in his breakdown in the middle of his speech: "He stopped there and started as though he had only then noticed that everyone in the room was staring at him. He looked around once, in confusion, and then ran from the room".9

(a) Subversion of Science and Reason in Balaram's Adhesion to Phrenology: In Balaram's adhesion to Phrenology, there is an implicit subversion of reason. As the concept of phrenology is not much in currency, a brief note on the same is essential to expose how the subversion is associated with the concept of phrenology in the novel.

Franz Gall Joseph, who was a Viennese doctor, is the connoisseur of this science. According to his hypotheses, phrenology is a study of the conformation of the skull as indicative of mental faculties and traits of character. Gall's adherents are Johann Kaspar Spurzheim and George Combe. These nineteenth century experts gave momentum to the practice of phrenology which lasted up to the twentieth century. It ceased to exist when it was discredited by scientific research in the later part of the twentieth century.

Phrenology is based upon five principles. They are as follows: 1. the brain is the organ of mind; 2. the mental powers of man can be analyzed into a definite number of independent faculties; 3. these faculties are innate; and each has its seat in a definite region of the surface of the brain; 4. the size of each such region is the measure of the degree to which the faculty seated in it forms a constituent element in the character of the individual; 5. the correspondence between the outer surface of the skull and the contour of the brain - surface beneath is sufficiently close to enable the observer to recognize the relative size of the several organs by the examination of the outer surface of the head.

Gall's theory was formulated by a method of pure empiricism, and his so-called organs were identified on quite specious grounds. He has conducted several tests before establishing his system of phrenology. His experiments were initially conducted among the inmates of jail and lunatic asylum to detect the presumed traits that were criminal. Then he named these traits after their excessive manifestations, mapping out organs of murder, theft etc. Later, he
used the heads of his friends also. After having selected the place of a faculty, he examined the heads of his friends and cast of persons with that peculiarity in common in theme; he sought for the distinctive feature of their characteristic traits. His adherents made a slight modification in the names of the traits. Spurzheim changed the names so as to make them align with more moral and religious considerations.

Gall distinguished on the basis of his model of the head the places of twenty six organs as round enclosures, with vacant interspaces. Later, his followers Spurzheim and Combe classified the whole scalp into oblong and conterminous patches with such designations as amativeness, philoprogenitiveness, concentrativeness, adhesiveness, combativeness, destructiveness, secretiveness, acquisitiveness, constructiveness, self esteem, love of approbation, cautiousness, benevolence, veneration, conscientiousness, firmness, hope, wonder, ideality, wit, imitativeness, individuality, form perception, size perception, ideality, perception, locality perception, memory of things, time perception, tune perception, linguistic perception, comparative understanding and metaphysical spirit.

The practice of phrenology was very popular for a considerable period of time and lost its ground only in the early decades of the twentieth century. The founders of this school were not ordinary persons. They were luminaries in the field of medical sciences. In addition, they constructed this system after a great deal of experiments and experiences. Also they had incorporated this system in their medical profession. This system deteriorated because the persons who followed suit had not possessed the comprehensive knowledge of the system. They had only the partial knowledge of the theoretical information which did not help them to retain the system forever. Moreover, phrenology was not founded scientifically by studying the organs inside the head. It was based on the external shape of the head and the attributes of the behaviour of selected persons for the tests. Subsequently, phrenology was disproved by the scientific research in the early decades of twentieth century, and as such the practice of phrenology prevails nowhere as a science. The adulterated form of phrenology may be similar to the device which is observed in the practice of astrology by
the charlatans. This survey of phrenology is borne in mind while analysing the subversion of the notion of reason in *The Circle of Reason*.

At the very outset, it must be noted that Balaram, who practices phrenology, has been neither educated in science and medicine nor trained in that field, nor does he possess the empirical knowledge of phrenology. As CJV Prasad notes, Balaram’s notion of Phrenology is an expression of his “search for a unified theory to explain the universe. It is this quest that motivates all his misadventures.” He performs phrenology only on the basis of hypothetical knowledge which he has gained from an old book ‘The Practical Phrenology’. There are many instances of irony of Reason in Balaram’s obsessions with phrenology. This is a practice to assess someone’s character and aptitude by examining the shape of his or her skull. Balaram seems to have been influenced by this nineteenth century science, and believes still that he can assess the people through phrenology.

Balaram assesses the character of Gopal as phlegmatic on the basis of phrenology and physiognomy. He goes to the extent of asserting that Gopal is the only person who is alive with a Phlegmatic organ. But Balaram is proved wrong because Gopal: “...was not Phlegmatic; anybody who cared to look at his eyes, shining behind his gold-rimmed glasses, would know that at once. But the trouble with people like Balaram was that theories came first and the truth afterwards”.

His assessment of Dantu, a friend of Balaram and Gopal is proved to be nonsensical. Dantu vanishes time and again. Once Gopal and Balaram learn that he has vanished from a tea company where he had a good job. When they ponder over the reason for his disappearance, Balaram, on the basis of his favourite theory, proclaims that: “Dantu had become a sadhu; that he had abandoned worldly life and was wandering around the country with a begging-bowl. Why? Simple. Because of his sharply domed head, of course, and his thin, hollow face and those two long, peeping front teeth from which he took his name. It’s his bregma, said Balaram. I can see now that it was Veneration that had pushed his skull up so sharply. Besides, he always had the look of a saint”.
It must be noted that Balaram has got the acquaintance of Dantu only for a brief span of time during their college days. And he has never studied the head of Dantu closely at all. On the basis of his external features, Balaram makes the assessment which has no accountability at all. It is not a mark of reason as Balaram claims but that of arbitrariness.

In fact, Dantu has not become a sadhu. He has joined politics and emerged a popular politician with the passage of time. Balaram’s calculation has not only gone wrong but also has been regarded as rubbish by Gopal:

"Nonsense, said Gopal, but only to himself, for he knew how touchy Balaram was about his theories. Nonsense; politics interested Dantu much more than religion - it’s just that your theory doesn’t allow for a Political organ. And sure enough, a year or so later he came upon an article in a newspaper about a Shri Hem Narain Mathur (which was only Dantu under his real name) who had been arrested somewhere in north Bihar for organizing the landless labourers of the area to agitate for fair wages. He snipped the article out and showed it to Balaram later, but he didn’t say, as he had planned to: Veneration is a long way from leading strikes. What about your theory now?"

In depicting Balaram as an advocate of Reason and all his reasons as utter failures, the irony of reason is self-explanatory.

Regarding Alu also, Balaram’s assessment goes wrong. Balaram studies his skill and predicts that Alu is incapable of emotions. His persistent silence is taken for granted that Alu has no vein of emotion at all. On the contrary, Alu is proved to be an emotional being and capable of expressing his emotions.

Alu’s skull is a challenge to the notion of phrenology and reason. Balaram is startled and confused for the first time as he is unable to interpret the skull of Alu which is an embodiment of peculiar features. It is too huge, and there are knots and bumps on it. Balaram judges on the basis of these features that Alu cannot have emotions. On the contrary, Alu exhibits his emotions on various occasions. He loves Maya. He fulfills the desire of Toru-debi, and comforts Balaram by securing the book *The Life of Pasteur.*
In Balaram’s attempt to assess the character of Bhudeb Roy’s last son borders on absurdity. Bhudeb Roy seeks Balaram to examine his sixth son after having consulted some astrologer and palmist. He believes that phrenology is “scientific”. When Bhudeb Roy approached Balaram, Balaram is bloated with pride as if he is a doctor. He also feels that it is a triumph of his theory. He examines the child and withholds the result without revealing it at once. Bhudeb Roy grows anxious and impatient. Finally, Balaram declares:

Bhudeb-babu, I don’t know how to tell you this. I beg that you will not misunderstand. The exhibit, that is to say your son, has distinct protuberances above the asterion and over the temporal muscles above its ears. Furthermore, his mandible and zygomatic arches are already developed to so extraordinary a degree that I can only tell you, with utmost regret, that he reproduces almost exactly the structure of the Typical Homicidal. With careful nurture you may perhaps be able to hold him down to mere felony, but no further, I fear, no further. Pray, Bhudeb-babu, for I know you believe in prayer, pray that you may not be his first victim.

Balaram’s assessment is ridiculed in the narrative. Balaram’s judgement of Bhudeb Roy’s son that he will commit felony and become homicidal and that Bhudeb Roy himself would become the first victim of his homicidal character turns out to be false, because the child dies of double pneumonia in its infancy. The intended sarcasm on the notion of ‘Reason’ is explicit in transforming Balaram’s ‘Reason’ into a farce.

The author has skillfully managed the free play of irony of ‘reason’ in the creation of Toru-debi. Toru-debi is a wife of Balaram. Though Balaram has been sought for and practicing phrenology outside, he is not entertained by his wife to do so in her case: “Toru-debi had never permitted Balaram to examine her skull and never would”. It suggests clearly that Balaram’s claim of authority and authenticity in the practice of phrenology is not based on logic and reason. On the contrary, it is based on his passion for phrenology which amounts to absurdity and arbitrariness. Indira Bhatt’s observation of Balaram in this regard
is worthwhile to note: "Though Ghosh calls Balaram a rationalist and a believer in science and reason, Balaram acts in a very irrational way. His favourite hobby is studying heads, phrenology which is no longer considered a science".17

The height of irony regarding Balaram's adhesion to phrenology is exhibited in the refusal of Toru-debi, who as a life-partner is the best judge of her husband, to allow her husband to study her head. Thus Toru-debi's distrust in her husband's claim is the best proof of Balaram's lack of authority on reason. The employment of irony in Balaram's adhesion to phrenology is highlighted aptly by Joshi: "It is also ironical that he who swears by science relies on nineteenth century pseudo science, phrenology, which is close to the Indian superstition of popular religion and astrology that he opposes".18

(b) Subversion of the Notion of Science and Reason in Balaram's Adhesion to The Life of Pasteur: Besides phrenology, Balaram is influenced by the biography of Louis Pasteur. Hence, he has developed his own theory of reason that purity can be achieved in any walk of life only with the help of carbolic acid.

At the outset itself it must be noted that Balaram has no formal education in any subject of science. A copy of the Life of Pasteur is lent to him by Gopal during their college days. Balaram develops passion for Pasteur's achievements, and comes under the strong spell of Pasteur's research that carbolic acid alone can clean anything.

During the college days Balaram argues vehemently in favour of Pasteur and in favour of using carbolic acid at the meetings of Rationalists, though the issues are not related to either Pasteur or destruction of germs in any way. One such instance is his idea of a 'campaign against underwear'. As soon as he becomes the President of the Rationalists Association in the Eden Hindu Hostel, he proposes to undertake the task of cleaning underwears with carbolic acid. Balaram's idea is looked down upon by several members of the Association. Even his all time loyalist, Dantu, reminds that his idea is wrong, and some more considers Balaram's thoughts regarding the campaign against underwears "fancy ideas."19 There is a doubt among many members whether Balaram could
succeed or not in conducting the meeting to start the campaign against dirty underwear as it is silly to discuss the matters related to underwear.

Though Balaram emerges triumphant in getting more crowd than expected for his meeting in the scheduled venue, there is not even a single evidence of his idea being accepted by any of the assembly. He could gather the crowd only through his tricks. He keeps the subject of the meeting in abeyance which creates curiosity among the students who, in turn, gather in the venue to know what Balaram has to say. The author leaves the narrative incomplete without any information about the outcome of the campaign against the use of dirty underwear. In all probabilities, Balaram's proposal of the campaign would have been turned down as tomfoolery. Further Balaram's addiction to Pasteur is rejuvenated during his stay in Lalpukur. On the occasion of the inflow of refugees in abundance, new settlements come into existence in Lalpukur. When he pays visits to these areas, he finds that the locality has become unhygienic. What comes to his mind instantly is Pasteur's carbolic acid. He starts rigorous campaigns against the disease and raises a fund to buy carbolic acid. With the help of a few volunteers, he begins to disinfect every exposed inch of the new settlements.

Though Balaram is very happy with his deeds, his work is not approved by others. The pungent criticism comes from none other than his own wife Toru-debi. Besides objecting to his husband's mania for phrenology, she dislikes Balaram's obsession with Pasteur's disinfectant. She becomes intolerant of his preoccupation with the books of science, and at one stage she bursts out her anger in destroying the collection of Balaram's books: "Even with Maya and Nonder-ma's help, it took Toru-debi a long time to carry the books out into the courtyard. But she did a thorough job. At the end of it the study was empty as a dry eggshell. Not a leaf of paper nor a scrap of binding remained to remind Balaram of his library. Then, after sprinkling kerosene over the huge mound of books in the courtyard Toru-debi struck a match and set them alight".20

Through this act of Toru-debi's, the author suggests that a blind pursuit of science is hazardous. Toru has borne with Balaram for a considerable length of time. Every assessment of Balaram with the help of phrenology meets with
utter failure. The impact of this reaches the most serious stage in his assessment of the sixth son of Bhudeb Roy. Had he not asserted that the child would grow monstrous, Bhudeb Roy would have taken sufficient care to protect the child from pneumonia. In a sense, Balaram’s misjudgment is the chief cause of Bhudeb Roy’s son’s death. Hence his wife becomes intolerant of Balaram’s absurdity and destroys his library.

The subversion of the notion of science is explicit in the depiction of Balaram’s endeavour to establish a school in the name of Pasteur - Pasteur School of Reason in Lalpukur. Balaram establishes this school to impart training in looming. He uses his house itself as classrooms, and makes the courtyard a work-shop for the practical classes in looming. He divides the school into two departments, namely, the Department of Pure Reason and the Department of Practical Reason. In the department of Pure Reason, lessons are given in elementary reading, writing and arithmetic, history of science and technology. In the Department of Practical Reason, the pupils are taught weaving or tailoring. So far as the design of the curriculum is concerned, the idea of the School is all right. But in the selection of teachers and students for the school there is a pungent satire on the notion of School for sure.

Shombhu Debnath has been appointed not only to teach the lessons in Advanced Weaving but also to function as the head of the Department of Practical Reason. The irony is that Shombhu Debnath who has given up weaving several years ago, admits that he is incapable of weaving now. Besides, he has had no formal education. He is a full time alcoholic. He is an adulterer as he has been having not only an illicit relationship with Bhudeb Roy’s wife but also is the father of her last child. Shombhu Debnath admits his inability to teach. “You’re wrong, Balaram-babu, he paid hoarsely, you couldn’t be more wrong. I’m no teacher. I certainly couldn’t be able to teach in a school”. But Balaram forces him to accept the appointment by stating his assessment of him as: “Teaching is your destined vocation – it’s written all over your skull. You can not squander your gifts. You could teach them your craft and together we could teach them more than a craft. We could show them the beginning of a new history”. Shombhu deceives Balaram’s expectation for Shombhu never turns
up to the school to impart education. Thus his selection as a teacher is a dig at Balaram's Pasteur School of Reason.

Toru-debi has been appointed not only to teach tailoring but also to be the head of that section. Toru-debi readily accepts the assignment but she is not at all qualified for such an assignment. She has been a housewife and obsessed with a passion for stitching with her sewing machine ever since her appearance in the narrative. She has no calibre to impart lessons in tailoring for she has never undergone any formal education in that subject. The irony is that she fails in her endeavor to complete six blouses of Bhudeb Roy's wife in time. In addition, when the sewing machines need repairs, she does not know how to repair them. Such an ignorant person as Toru-debi is appointed the head of the Department of Tailoring, which is nothing but a mockery.

Rakhal, who is appointed the sales manager, has a notorious record. He has been involved in the manufacture and sales of country bombs. He is a crazy boy of films and Kung Fu. It is a disgrace to the notion of education to appoint such a person on the staff. Balaram is the head master of the school. He is supposed to teach in the Department of Pure Reason. As in the 'campaign against underwear', he has a hidden motif in the establishment of this school. He wants to prepare the students in administering carbolic acid to disinfect the village.

The admissions increase; the classes are conducted and profit is made considerably. At this juncture, the narrative takes an unexpected turn to subvert the notion of science and reason. Balaram prepares for the extension programme to clean the village with carbolic acid. This is his life-time mission, which is betrayed by his own students. Bhatt's note in this regard is illuminating:

It is this passion (passion for Pasteur)... He starts a school of reason but fails in his attempt to educate the village youths to think rationally. They are interested more in learning tailoring and weaving, the practical training of learning the skills for survival. He also fails in educating Alu since he refuses to attend the village school, though he loves to read books from Balaram's library.
Balaram's knowledge of Science and his faith in Reason have no base in real life situations. His is the abstract knowledge and knowledge without worldly wisdom is likely to bring about disaster.\textsuperscript{23}

In the mean time, Bhudeb Roy lodges with the police a complaint against Balaram that he has been associated with extremist activities. Balaram's house is surrounded by the police and the encounter ensues. In the encounter, the whole house of Balaram, along with Balaram, his wife, Maya and Rakhel, is set ablaze. Since Alu has been out in the forest, he escapes the destruction. Thus Balaram's school of Reason comes to an end. The destruction of the Balaram's Pasture School of Reason suggests the subversion of notion of science and reason. Balaram's carbolic acid which Balaram considers to be the ultimate solution to eradicate microorganisms becomes the source of his own destruction. His entire house is engulfed by fire when the carbolic acid stored in the shed catches fire. Balaram is made to pay a heavy penalty for his foolhardiness to fight against germs which cause epidemics. His failure is the failure of his great faith in science and reason.

The escape of Alu is not a sign of the success of science. He goes abroad and follows the path of his aunt in sewing. He makes a considerable progress in it. He recovers a copy of the Life of Pasteur from Dr.Uma. If the recovery of the book is to be regarded as the victory of science, it does not last long. When Kulfi dies, Alu is disillusioned. He burns the book on pyre along with the body of Kulfi. Dr. Uma also decries the \textit{Life of Pasteur} and Microbiology in her argument with Dr. Mishra: "I hate microbiology".\textsuperscript{24} This can be read as subversion of science.

A.S.Rao relates this to post-modernism in an effective manner: "The post-modernist quality of text lies as mentioned earlier in the subversion of reason. The text, unlike the other two covered in this study, is more mimetic than diegesic. It reverses the very reason, which it chooses to enthrone earlier, in as much as Louis Pasteur's book is thrown by Alu in the funeral pyre of Kulfi".\textsuperscript{25}
Therefore, subversion of the notion of science and reason is very predominant in the episodes of Balaram in the novel. Robert Dixon's observation on the adverse consequence of Balaram's obsession with the notion of science and reason is worth noting: "Balaram, the village school master, is obsessed with Western ideas, epitomized by his passion for phrenology and the writings of Pasteur. Balaram establishes the Pasteur School of Reason, alternatively bores and terrorizes people with his scientific notions, and eventually destroys the village by sterilizing it with carbolic acid."  

Though Balaram is killed, his spirit of pasteurization continues in the next generation also. Alu tries to continue the 'cleaning movement with carbolic acid', which his foster father has left behind him in Lalpukur, in al-Ghazira. But ultimately fails in his endeavour for, as Bhatt observes: The same Carbolic acid creates trouble in al-Ghazira when the 'displaced' persons living with and around Zindi decide to clean every house and shop. Zindi is the only person who does not believe in this cleanliness movement. When they take out a sort of procession and try to clean the shops and stores in this foreign place, the police shoot them and most of them die. Only Alu, Zindi, Kulfi and the child Boss are saved".

The irony of Alu's adhesion to Pasteur is that while Pasteur's knowledge was useful to save the lives of the patients, the pseudo knowledge of Alu is not only useless but also destructive.

Nevertheless, Balaram's mission— which is the use of carbolic acid, has not been stopped. It is continued in the episode of Dr. Uma. Zindi, Alu, Kulfi along with Boss who reach El Oued near the Shahara where they happen to meet Dr. Uma an Indian doctor. On taking Boss to Uma for treatment for his fever, they are retained with Uma. Kulfi is persuaded by Dr Uma to perform the role of Chi Trangada in the proposed annual social gathering.Unexpectedly, Kulfi dies while they are in the rehearsal. While performing the funeral rites a dispute arises. While the conservative Dr. Mishra is insistent upon the Ganges water to be dropped in the mouth of Kulfi and to clean the corpse and the place, Dr. Uma uses carbolic acid instead of the Ganges water. This has to be viewed in
the light of the proverbial saying ‘Be a Roman in Rome, when you are in Rome’ because it rather suggests that depending upon the prevailing circumstances, adjustments should be made in the norms of tradition. It should not be read as an espousal of science because Alu and Dr Uma realize the futility of foreign science subsequently, and the Life of Pasteur is burnt along with the corpse of Kulfi on the pyre : “I don’t want your book, he said in a rush, holding it out to her. The Life of Pasteur . . . Oh, she said, pushing it back, that’s a problem. I don’t want it, either. What do we do with it now? I don’t know, Alu said. She took the book from him and turned it over in her hands. Then she gave it back to him. Maybe we could give it a funeral, too? she said. She left him staring at it in silence. After a long while he raised it high in both his hands and placed it reverently on the pyre”.

From the funeral of Life of Pasteur, it becomes clear that Alu, who claims himself an heir to Pasteur and Dr. Uma who is a microbiologist with the help of the same text, honours the science of Pasteur in its breach. The narrative first gives prominence to The Life of Pasteur, and then turns it down by consigning it to fire, which shows that the narrative is a subversion of Science and Reason.

Thus the subversion of Science and Reason is found in the novel at various places and in various manners. In the episode of Balaram Reason is found in combination with science. Phrenology and Pasteur’s carbolic acid are dominant influences on the mindset of Balaram. His attempts to put these theories into practice meet with failure at all stages. The author seems to deconstruct the hegemony of the nineteenth century science and its influence on the east. Though this stance gives a touch of the post-colonialism to the narrative, the narrative is more akin to post-modernism for it subverts the notion of Science and Reason. By virtue of its subversive theme, The Circle of Reason takes its seat among the prominent post-modernist novels.

Subversion of Religion: In the foregoing part, The Circle of Reason has been discussed as a subversion of Science and Reason. It should not be mistaken for a plea in favour of religious tradition either. Indeed, there is unanimity among the post-modernists to contest certain notions of religious practices that are dominant. Desani has contested the notion of Guru in the Hindu tradition.
Trishanku has ridiculed the notion of purity and monogamy. Cowasjee has contested the notion of platonic love. Rushdie has contested the fundamentalist tendency not only in Hinduism but in Islam also. The novelists, that follow Ghosh in this thesis like Shashi Tharoor and Arundhati Roy, are not exceptions. Tharoor contests The Mahabharata as a Hindu epic, and Roy has questioned the validity of the Hindu codes of love and marriage.

Ghosh challenges certain practices of Hinduism in The Circle of Reason with a humanist bent of mind. There are three instances which read as a subversion of Religion. Firstly, it is traceable in the episode of ‘the Rationalists’. This is a forum of students of Calcutta Presidency College in the Hindu Hostel. The employment of irony is found at the outset itself for the Rationalists, who are residents of the “Eden Hindu Hostel’, oppose the Hindu norms. The first whip on the Hindu religion is the replacement of ‘Om’ with Hail, Cosmic Boson. For the Hindus, ‘Om’ is synonymous with breath. Their prayers, rituals, festivals and blessings, etc, start with the primeval letter ‘Om’ only. Doing away with ‘Om’ is not only impossible but also regarded as offensive. But the author depicts the Rationalists as beginning the chant with: “Hail to thee, O Cosmic Boson”. Gopal spent half of one meeting exhorting them to begin their letters of correspondence with Hail, Cosmic Boson instead of the sacred syllable Om”.

The notion of sacredness associated with ‘Om’ is ignored. ‘Om’ is viewed as a received notion of sacredness. If chanting is required for the meetings, it could be conducted in any form with any slogan. As the Rationalists view ‘Om’ as it is not so significant they have replaced it with something else which suits their temper. The idol worship in the Hindu tradition is criticized severely. Though the Hindu priests are identified as learned, they are accused as selfish in the narrative. Gopal realizes this after comparing his exposure to Sanskrit scriptures with his exposure to science education. Gopal states: “there could no longer be any doubt that there were certain very curious parallelisms between the ideas of the ancient Hindu sages and modern science. If that was true, and many very learned authorities believed it to be so, then it was definite proof that over the centuries those ancient and completely rational ideas had been perverted by scheming priests and Brahmins to further their own interests. It
was urgently necessary, therefore, that the society make known to the masses of Hindoostan how they were daily deceived and cheated by the self-styled purveyors of religion.30

The author tries to highlight how the Hindu idea of God has been distorted by the fake pundits. He, thereby, distorts the received notion of the Hindu pundits as: "... it was certain that the pandits and brahmins had distorted the ancient Hindu idea of God, the Brahma, into their thousand deities and idols, so that they could make money quicker. Just as shopkeeper might open new counters, so each new god was a steady new source of income for the priests".31 It speaks about decadence of values among the Hindu priests. This is in line with Desani and Rushdie in whose works also the fake priests are exposed. Besides, Gopal contemplates a few substitutes for the ritual norms. Thus *The Circle of Reason* shows its subversive tendency towards certain non-secular norms in Hinduism.

Secondly, the notion of purity in the Hindu Religion is subverted. According to Hinduism, impurity is a caste factor. The people born in the last rung of Varna are regarded as defiled. Their shadow and touch are believed to cause defilement to the caste Hindus. This notion is symbolically contested in the episode of Balaram. As uncleanliness is an external factor, which can be removed through some scientific method, he suggests carbolic acid as the one with which the society can be kept clean. In this episode only the author introduces the union of a caste Hindu woman and a low caste man. For example, Bhudeb Roy’s wife Parboti-debi has an affair with Shombhu Debnath, a low caste person and his own wife (Parboti-debi) admits in Balaram’s house that “Shombhu is the real father of her last child”.32

The notion of social change is also suggested in *Creation of Balaram* who wants to eliminate germs not only in the pollution in the environment but also in the pollution in social life. He has admitted Maya (daughter of Shombhu, a low caste person) to work and cook in his house. Though admitting a low caste person into the house of a caste Brahmin is regarded as defilement by others, he never feels like that at all. He has also agreed to make arrangement for marriage between Alu (his nephew) and Maya. Thus the notion of impurity to be caused
through inter-caste marriage and extramarital relations with a low caste man is contested through a subtle presentation of the above themes in *The Circle of Reason*.

Thirdly, subversion of religion is strongly launched in the episode of Kulfi’s death. Kulfi is a whore and unmarried. She dies during a rehearsal of *Chitrangada* at the house of Dr.Uma Verma in El Oued. Then question of the last rites for Kulfi arises. This situation is noted by Rao as: “Mrs Uma Verma keeps it (the Life of Pasteur) as a precious possession, which she inherits from her father. But in the end Alu places it on the funeral pyre of Kulfi suggests the subversion of reason which has been enthroned earlier. The ambivalent and skeptical note prevails in respect of religion. The predominance of the ambivalence lends a kind of post-modern confusion and suspicion as regards truth and its basic structure.”

Dr.Uma Verma and Dr.Mishra are divided in their opinion about Kulfi’s funeral rites. Dr.Uma insists that Kulfi must be cremated in the manner of the Hindu tradition whereas Dr.Mishra objects to it on various religions grounds. How Dr.Uma manages to meet the requirement of the Hindu tradition is graphically presented and its process shows the subversive tendency to the received notion of Samskara.

Dr.Mishra suggests to Dr.Uma that she should ignore the death of Kulfi for they are not responsible for her death and are not her relatives. Dr.Uma declines his suggestion and is determined to see through Kulfi cremation. She feels so because she has sheltered her for a few days and should not shrug off the responsibility of the last rites as a fellow Hindu.

As a first step, she brings water from the kitchen in a brass bowl and asks Alu to pour some water into her mouth. She considers it to be a norm of ritual in the Hindu tradition and it must be adhered to. To this Dr.Mishra objects by stating that only the holy water of the Ganges must be poured. His objection is presented with a visible tinge of satire. To elucidate Dr.Mishra’s objection: “If you are going to do this you have to do it properly. You can’t just pour water from an artesian well down her mouth and pretend it is Ganga-jal you can’t. There are certain rules.”
Dr. Uma does noffred to his words, and asks Alu to leave some drops of water from the artesian well in Kulfi’s mouth. Though Dr. Verma is also an orthodox person, she is ready to adjust to the prevailing situation. She thus manages to overcome the traditional obstacles. When Dr. Uma asks Dr. Mishra for a suggestion about the next course of action, he again dissuades her from giving a traditional kind of cremation to Kulfi. He suggests her to inform the hospital and the police so that it would be taken care of by them. But she ponders over the reactions of the police and the alternatives to her cremation in her house. She decides that her body would not be sent away but that the cremation should be conducted here only to the greatest annoyance of Dr. Mishra. Dr. Mishra’s reaction is typical of an orthodox person: “Dr. Mishra slumped back, stunned. After a while, his voice hoarse with a shock, he murmured: How can we do that? There’s no crematorium here. What will the authorities say? We can’t do it. There’s a proper procedure for these things”.35

Dr. Uma assures that she would manage to get the permission of the local government and asks him to explain what he has meant by ‘proper procedure’. To this Dr. Mishra raises a question whether she is eligible for a proper cremation. The narrative shifts its focus from the notion of proper cremation to the narration of the career of Jyoti Das. It permits the readers to recollect the norms of the eligibility for a proper cremation as prescribed by Hindu Samskara.

Dr. Mishra points out two reasons for not providing a proper cremation. He states that the proper cremation is forbidden for those who die accidentally: “Don’t you know that, strictly speaking, some who’s died accidentally is not entitled to a proper funeral? If you don’t believe me, have a look at the Baudhayana Dharmasutra— you can see yourself. The argument, if I recall correctly, is that someone who dies accidentally can’t enter Pitroloka anyway, so why bother? I can’t quite remember off hand, but I think in scriptural times the bodies of people who died accidentally were thrown into rivers or left in forests”.36

He further suggests that her corpse may be left to the vultures since there are no forests there and no rivers either and the dropping the body in the well is
not admissible. He also bursts into laughter while saying this without any feeling of sympathy for Kulfi. Dr. Uma cuts him short and asks where he has learnt all these norms. He replies that he has learnt from Manu’s Smiriti. He poses another impediment to a proper funeral by stating that Kulfi, being an adulteress and fallen woman, is not entitled to it.

Dr. Uma manages to overcome this problem by dismissing the rules as inhumane. She sharply reacts against the imposition of these rules as they are utterly inhuman: “Rules, rules, she said softly. All you ever talk about is rules. That’s how you and your kind have destroyed everything-science, religion, socialism-with your rules and your orthodoxies. That’s the difference between us: you worry about rules and I worry about being human”.37

The authorial stance is reflected in the words of Dr. Uma. It clearly suggests that tradition has to be human concern oriented and the unnecessary orthodoxy has to be removed from the tradition. It echoes the rationality of Gopal in the earlier chapter. Dr. Mishra is not the type of a person who easily gives up. He suggests that the body should be cleaned before cremation. He insists that the cleaning should follow the proper procedure of Hindu practice: “It’s not quite as easy as you think, Dr. Mishra said with relish. You’ll have to reach into the bowels and clean out all the dead faces. You’ll have to scrape the insides of the rectum and the anus to make sure that they’re absolutely clean; that not the faintest trace of mortal shit remains to defile the sacred fire. Are you sure a well-brought-up woman like-you will be able to do it, Mrs. Verma? I’m not”.38

In this instance the author exposes the custom. Ironically, he hints that the fire at pyre is treated as sacred by the custom. The body has to be cleaned not for the purpose of hygiene but for the purpose of protecting the sacredness of the fire. The fire which can turn anything into ash, is in need of protection. The belief that because the unclean corpse affects the purity of ‘fire’ on the pyre a wash of it with the Ganges water must be observed before the cremation in order to protect the purity of fire prevails in the Hindu Samskara. But the idea of fire getting defiled is a human construct which is ridiculed in this episode.
Dr. Uma is made to reconsider her former decision, since cleaning a corpse as Dr. Mishra has prescribed, does not appear to be easy for her to undertake. Unexpectedly Zindi comes forward to conduct the cleaning. Here also, it has to be viewed as the author’s intervention to see to it that Kulfi is not denied the last rites.

When Zindi and Dr. Uma get ready to go about the cleaning, Dr. Mistra makes fun of them by stating that cleaning the corpse of Kulfi amounts becoming an international feast of love over adulterous corpse. Not content with his bitter sarcasm, he objects to them for cleaning the corpse by stating that the authority must be contacted to clarify whether an autopsy is required. In the meantime he suggests that the corpse must be shifted to a clean place. According to him, clean place means the floor which is washed with the Ganga water and cow dung. Dr. Mishra advises her to give up the funeral since she could not procure all these.

To every one's surprise, Dr. Uma gets a bucket of carbolic acid and proposes to use it in the place of the Ganga water: “Mrs. Verma dropped the bucket, went up to his chair, and stood over him, arms folded. What does that matter? she cried. What does it matter whether it's Ganga-jal or carbolic acid? It's just a question of cleaning the place, isn't it? People thought something was clean once, now they think something else is clean. What difference does it make to the dead, Dr. Mishra?”

She continues to deliberate that rationality is not the unique feature of doctor. She argues that the mechanic who repair automobiles are also like doctors in respect of rationality. She abuses all the professionals who are content with their occupation for their failure to imbibe human values. She stands for constructing the society of better human beings than professionals. This echoes the humanist doctrine in which Ghosh has got strong faith.

Dr. Uma succeeds in obtaining the permission from the authorities to conduct the funeral for Kulfi of her choice. Again, Dr. Mishra interferes and discourages Dr. Uma by saying that without wood and some pieces of sandal wood the cremation will not become proper. She does not lose heart. She collects the wooden furniture from her house and his friends' houses. She
brings the battered sandal wood bookends carved like elephant to manage for the sandal wood pieces.

Dr. Mishra plays his last card to deviate Dr. Uma by stating that without ghee the funeral will not be complete. Dr. Uma’s management of this is dramatic. She persuades Dr. Mishra’s wife Mandodari to lend some butter. After some moments of reluctance and hesitation, she comes forward to offer two kilogram of butter.

Dr. Uma asks Alu to get his head shaved and light the pyre. He agrees for the former and refuses to do the latter stating that he has no thumb to light the pyre. Dr. Uma emerges as a great figure to encourage him that he could do anything with his thumbs. She reminds him of his success in spinning and sewing with his thumbs. Alu is inspired by the words of Dr. Uma, and she ultimately succeeds in cremating Kulfi’s corpse. Alu performs it. Bhatt’s note on this episode hints at the subversive tendency in the theme of religion as: “Ghosh makes mockery of the Hindu death rituals”.40

In this episode, the author has shown how it is not wrong to alter the rules concerning the religious custom. He has presented the unthinkable in the normal situation. The received notion of purity of the Ganga water has been altered. The other essentials such as sandalwood and ghee are treated with indignity. Ghosh passes the message that humanism should be preferred to the orthodox rules. Therefore it may well be considered as subversion of religion.

This is endorsed by Rao: “The subversion of science and religion towards end, ends up in postmodern vein”.41

_The Circle of Reason_ is a novel of subversion of popular notions of Science, Reason and Religion. He has used several devices to demonstrate the subversion, which is undertaken in the following section.

IV. Subversive Technique in _The Circle of Reason_: Amitav Ghosh follows the path of Indian post-modernists, like Deorn and Rushdie not only in terms of subversive themes but also in terms of technique. His _The Circle of Reason_ is both a novel and a treatise on the art of the novel. Prasad opines: "In a sense, like other contemporary metafictional texts, _The Circle of Reason_ is about narration..."
The structure, characterization and diction in *The Circle of Reason* testify to the truth of this statement.

(i) The Structure of *The Circle of Reason*: To all appearances the structure of the novel is divided into three parts Satwa: Reason, Rajas: passion and Tamas: Death. A close study of the novel will reveal that a number of narratives are woven into one another in a tightly knit pattern as that of a loom. It is like an ocean into which several rivers have flown. It contains many narratives in an entertaining manner. This web of stories does not brook segregation.

The narrative is woven around Balaram, Alu, Zindi, Jyoti Das as major poles and the stories of Gopal, Bhudeb Roy, Karuthama, Rakesh, Professor Samuel, Jeevanbhai Patel, Kulfi and others are subsumed cleverly in the major stream of the narrative. No character is excluded from sufficient depiction.

As the title suggests, the narrative is marked by a circular narrative structure. It begins with the portrayal of Alu’s arrival at Lalpukur: “The boy had no sooner arrived, people said afterwards, than Balaram had run into the house to look for the claws”. Then it moves from the story of one person to another in the disorderly and hotch potch manner. The narrative tells the story of the family of Balaram, Gopal, Bhudeb Roy, Shombhu Debdath and the life of the individuals like Bolai-da, Jyoti Das, Zindi, Rakesh, Professor Samuel, Kulfi, Jeevanbhai Patel, Dr Uma Verma and others, and it finally comes back to Alu who after a great misadventure in a Ghazira, is waiting for the ship to return to Lalpukur: “they(Alu and Zindi with Boss) settled down to wait for Virat Singh and the ship that was to carry them home”. Thus the narrative is given a circular structure.

**Intertextuality as a device of Parody:** The device of intertextuality is predominant among the post-modernists and Amitav Ghosh is not an exception in this regard. There are numerous references to other writers’ texts and evidences of relying much on his own Ph.D thesis for the narrative.

The presence of *The Life of Pasteur* is felt throughout the narrative. The reference to it occurs first in the episode of Balaram in the Presidency College. When Balaram and Gopal become close friends, the former is lent a copy of it by the latter: “A few days later Gopal lent Balaram a book he had recently bought
at Chakerbutty & Sons in College Street. It was a copy of Mrs Devonshire’s
translation of Rene Vallery- Radot’s Life of Pasteur”.45 It must be noted at this
juncture that neither of them is a student of science. Where as Gopal is student
of ‘Literature,’ Balaram is a student of history. Yet the reference to this is made
frequently. This is an integral part of the theme to subvert the notion of science
and reason.

This work whets the appetite of Balaram in science which has attracted
him from his childhood. The impact of this work is reflected in Balaram’s
argument in which he applies the Life of Pasteur to imbibe passion for service
Gopal is depicted to be repenting for having lent that book to Balaram as he
feels that his mind has been muddled by this book. Gopal sees it basically as a
hegemony of Western Science because he, being a rationalist himself, does not
find any reason behind the absurdity of Gopal other than the craze for the
western science.

On various occasions, Balaram cites the Life of Pasteur to defend his
concern for the eradication of gems. One simply wonders how Balaram can clean
the society with the carbolic acid when the most part of impurity is found in the
social, political and religious systems and institutions. The reference to this
book occurs again while Balaram is still in the Hindu Hostel. After having read
the book, he gives it to Dantu to preserve it carefully. He writes something
inside the book for Dantu. This is to appear only at the end of the narrative.

Surprisingly, Balaram is in possession of the copy of the Life of Pasteur
which he has donated to Dantu. He reads a page from the book to Alu who has
joined him after the demise of his parents. The reference to it occurs twice.
Firstly, when he reads it for Alu: “ he reached for the copy of Vallery-Radot’s
Life of Pasteur which always lay beside his chair, and began to read him the
chapter about that turning-point in the history of the world-6 July 1885 - when
Louis Pasteur took his courage in his hands and at the risk of his reputation and
his whole professional life”.46

His wife sets fire to the whole stock of books in his library. Balaram does
not stop her. But Alu takes the copy and gives it to Balaram. Here once again
there is reference to the book: “Alu climbed on to the arm of his easy chair and
slipped a book out of his shorts into Balaram’s lap. Then he put his arms around his neck. It was the *Life of Pasteur*. This time the tears were Balaram’s”.47

Alu, who has never shown any interest in getting into his library, procures the book for him as if by a magic trick, when all the books are burnt to ashes. This is nothing short of magic realism. Besides the magic realism, one can notice the device of weaving the book into the thematic pattern. The stories of Balaram, Alu, Dantu’s daughter are mixed with one another. It also suggests the recurrent irresistible influence of the West on the East.

After the death of Balaram whose life-breath was the *Life of Pasteur*, there is no reference to it for a good length of time except for a while during Alu’s journey to al-Ghazira. But towards the end of the novel, once again there is reference to it. This explains how integral the text is with the narrative. Alu comes across the same copy of *Life of Pasteur* his uncle had lent to Dantu during his college days: “It’s the Life of Pasteur, he said quietly, looking up at Mrs. Verma”.48

The book has passed from Gopal to Balaram, from Balaram to Dantu and from Dantu to his daughter Dr. Uma Verma. It has not only passed from person to person but also from generation to generation and from country to country as it has passed from India to El Oued. Though the book is destroyed, its spirit pervades both the thematic and formal structures of the novel. Thus the *Life of Pasteur* is woven intricately into the texture of *The Circle of Reason*.

Tagore’s *Chitrangada* has been skillfully incorporated in the narrative structure of *The Circle of Reason*. The author has masterfully included this dance drama in the climax of the novel. The Indian doctors decide to enact of Tagore’s *Chitrangada* in the annual social. The manner of its adaptation explains the sensibility of the new generation. Dr.Uma selects Kulfi for the role of Chitrangada and Jyoti Das, from whom Kulfi and her group run away from place to place, for the role of Arjun. This is a novel of mixing the unmixable because Kulfi would not have agreed to play the role of the beloved of Jyoti Das who is viewed as a vulture to her team. Dr.Mishra, an orthodox Brahmin is selected to play the role of Madana. Had he known Kulfi was a whore, he too would have refused to play the role. This troop is typically hybrid.
Dr. Uma gets Alu to explain some sections which are not clear to her in *Chitrangada*. The song and the dialogue are played by the tape recorder. Here it is important to notice the mixture of tradition and modernity. But the rehearsal turns out to be a parody of Tagore's *Chitrangana*. While Kulfí plays the mythic character Chitrangada, Jyoti Das speaks about his own feelings for Kulfí, omitting the speeches of Arjun. For example:

I am Chitrangada....

Kulfí whirled around and came to rest on her knees. He fell to his knees, too, as he had been instructed.

*I am no goddess*...

I know who you are he whispered trying not to move his lips. Don’t be afraid of me, I beg you. I know you’re Kulfí-didi. I know who the others are. There’s nothing to be afraid of and there is nothing to hide. I won’t harm you or them. Listen to me, Kulfí, please... 49

In the forthcoming dialogues, Kulfí adheres to the text of Tagore whereas Jyoti Das expresses his deep heartfelt passion not for Chitrangada but for Kulfí only. He proposes his love for Kulfí and pleads with her to meet him in the garden at night after all are asleep. Dr. Uma and Dr. Mishra are unable to hear the private dialogue of Jyoti Das since the play back voice from tape recorder makes his speech inaudible. But the readers are facilitated to know the speech. This is a brilliant form of modern ‘aside’ which is one of most innovative devices in Indian Fiction in English.

Earlier, *Chitrangada* has been summarized by Dr. Uma’s father. Now she summarizes it for Dr. Mishra with what has remained in her memory from her father’s narration of the drama during her childhood. It serves two purposes. Firstly, it serves as an abridged form of the dance drama of *Chitrangada*. Secondly, it is used as a fable to teach the moral to Uma that the physical beauty should not be given top priority. Dr. Uma’s father tells her the story to remind her that she should not worry about physical beauty.

It is also suggestive of a subversion of the tradition because the author does not hesitate to deviate from the mythical story. It is in perfect concord with
the thematic structure that science and religion should not be rigid but susceptible to alteration, according to the need of time and situation.

Lastly, a brief note on the narrative's dependence on Ghosh's doctoral thesis is provided. Dixon notes on the doctoral thesis of Ghosh as follows: "His Ph.D thesis at Oxford was a history of weaving and cloth trade between Britain and India in the nineteenth century". 50

If weaving and cloth trade between Britain and India in the nineteenth century is the topic of Ghosh's Ph.D thesis, it is clear that its incorporation in the narrative is abundant. Balaram is associated with weaving in multiple ways. He shifts Alu from his school to the house of Shombhu Debnath to learn weaving. He opens a school of weaving and the trade of cloth in the name of Pasteur as Pasteur school of Reason. He appoints Shombu as the Head of the Department of Practical Reason where he is actually expected to give practical lessons in weaving. Maya is inducted to look after the sales of cloth. His wife is kept busy sewing a : series of Petticoats.

Alu continues to weave even after the destruction of the school and his family. In the Ras, he is occupied with weaving in an endless manner. Even after losing all his associates, Alu dreams of resuming the sewing with those two machines after his return home. Thus weaving becomes an indispensable theme, which has obviously been borrowed from his doctoral thesis.

In respect of technique too, weaving plays a vital role. Indeed, weaving is the metaphor of this novel with a new sensibility. The Circle of Reason is a work of four hundred and twenty three pages and is packed with multiple stories -- the stories of Gopal, Shombu Bhideb Roy, Alu, Jyoti Das, Karuthamma, Rakesh, Professor Samuel, Nuri, Ghazri family, Kulfi, Zindi, Dr. Uma etc. There are too many stories, and they are woven together so intricately that it resembles an intricate cloth design.

The narrative pace is also similar to the nature of weaving. The first part, Satwa: Reason, spans for several decades, the second part, Rajas: Passion for three weeks and third part, Tamas: Death for less than a day. The speed in the pace in descending order creates the impression of compression as the threads are compressed into cloth. Hence weaving appears as a metaphor of novel
writing, Shyamala A. Narayan aptly comments on this as: “The close-knit life of village, and Balaram’s college life in Calcutta, are described vividly. Alu is not interested in reading and writing, he wants to become a weaver, a trade quite unsuitable for his caste. But the loom fascinates him; the loom is considered the highest manifestation of reason”. Thus the loom as a symbol of Reason subverts Reason.

**Mixed Genre**: A few words on the device of ‘mixed genres’ in the narrative without which the discussion of the narrative devices on which structure of the novel stands will be incomplete. *The Circle of Reason* belongs to a complex genre because various genres such as drama, travelogue, ornithology, science and detective fiction are assembled together to present a single novel of collage art. With the result that the art of fiction turns into an artefact. Rabinranth Tagore’s *Chi trangada*, a music drama is used in the narrative with some modifications required for modern setting and foreign audience.

**Magic Realism**: In the episode of Alu, who is a ‘wonderhead’ the device of magic realism is employed. Alu’s head is in the shape of potato. The description of his skull and face is characterized not only by visual property but also by the magical property. With such a head, the survival is possible only in magic. Balaram observes the shape of his head and states that he will not survive unless he changes his head. Balaram’s phrenological assessments are proved wrong everywhere. In the case of Alu, it’s surprising to see that Alu, with an uncommon human head, not only remains alive but also proves to be excellent in his enterprise. His figure fits nowhere but in the fairy tale and the magic world.

Bhudeb Roy is cuckolded by Shombu Debnath who belongs to a low caste. Roy’s wife gives birth to Shombu’s child. Their illicit relationship has been continuing for a long time. They have hidden their affair from Bhudeb Roy cleverly. They used to meet in the night. Shombu’s presence in Bhudeb Roy’s Coconut grove in the night has been mistaken that he has been indulging in the theft of toddy, and Roy’s wife has been pretending that she suffers from hysteria at nights. To represent the illicit lovemaking of Shombu and Parbotidebi, the author has adopted the mode of magic realism:
And then, a couple of months later, someone spotted Parboti-debi, who had disappeared for a while, on the veranda of their house. She was unmistakably pregnant.

Calendars of every sort and variety, sweet Shop and government-issue, Bikrami, Hegiraic and Gregorian, rustled under the banyan tree that night. The conclusions of the Bikrami were supported by the Hegiraic and were not contradicted by the Gregorian. But still people couldn't believe it. They woke the oldest midwife in the village and put the problem to her. She had no doubts, either.

The plane had conceived the child. There could be no other conclusion. Nobody could believe Bhudeb Roy capable of fathering another child (though gossip had it that hardly a night passed without his trying). It had to be the plane. Or at any rate it had happened on the night of the crash, which was a gigantic chrome-plated penis thrown down by the skies to Bhudeb Roy's wife; a sort of metallic, heavenly starch, sent to stiffen Bhudeb Roy's ageing member.52

Alu's achievements in the weaving without his thumbs are matters of magic again. It is obvious that thumbs are the most essential organs for weaving and weaving is impossible without them. The fact that Alu weaves the largest quantity of cloth without his thumbs creates the impression of magic.

Alu's escape from death in the massive collapse of the Star typifies magic realism. Everyone presumes that Alu has perished in the crush except the gossips of Bhaskaran and the woman in the oil shop. Alu remains alive at the center of the collapse of an avalanche of thousands and thousands tones of bricks, concrete and cement. The unpresentable event of the survival of Alu is presented through the device of magic realism about which K.Damodar Rao says that: "The weird happening is described in a prose that is incantatory, deliberately attempted to invoke the impossibility of the happening, without losing the immediacy of its experience."

The episode of Karuthamma is another example of magic realism. When Karuthamma boards the Mariamma along with Zindi, Rakesh, Alu Professor
Samuel and others, she is pregnant and is expecting a baby. She suddenly behaves madly to prevent the child from being born. She literally inserts her arm into her womb so as to hold the child on there itself. The author depicts this in an precedent manner as: “Rolling her eyes, Kulfi said: Yes, No, it’s her time but she won’t ... She won’t let the labour start. She’s sitting on the floor and kicking and fighting. She’s stuffed her hands into her womb, right in, up to her wrists. , May be she’s trying to kill it. She keeps saying things in her language ...”

This cannot be attributed to anything else than the trick of magic.

In the episodes of Abusa and Mast Ram also, there are instances of magic realism. Whereas Abusa is endowed with fine fingers at the touch of which things become fruitful, Mast Ram is endowed with the hand the touch of which causes destruction. For example,: “Abusa had one great gift: all living things grew under his fingers as though to please him alone. In his village ever since he started working on his father’s land, their cotton grew longer and heavier than anybody else’s. In years when the whole village’s fields lay devastated by worms their crops threw off insects at will as though they found strength in Abusa’s very presence”. Abusa therefore gets a good job in the house of the Sheik in Alghazira. He is also liked by Kulfi. But Mast Ram’s endowment is contrary to Abusa’s. He is depicted as a harbinger of destruction: “In the middle of that stories about Mast Ram began to reach the Ras: how a live flowering bush had withered and died moments after Mast Ram touched it; how Abusa’s famous pumpkins, each one the size of a fattened sheep, were opened and found to be as hollow as footballs after Mast Ram had watered them”.

The attributes of Abusa and Mast Ram are rationally incomprehensible. How Abusa’s touch endowed something with the life force and the touch of Mast Ram causes destruction to everything are beyond the purview of normal human ability. They occur like mythic and weird happenings. This mode of conveying reality through fantasy amounts to magic realism.

Metafiction and Self - reflexivity: Ghosh makes use of the cinematic device to bring heterogeneous people together. Gopal and Balaram watch Aradhana, a popular Hindi film in Calcutta. The ensuing discussion between them on the notion of realism in the film unfolds several things about the novel. Firstly, it
shows the novel as a metafiction because the deliberation of Gopal and Balaram forms a discourse on the craft of novel:

How can you bear these noisy melodramas? he burst forth at Balaram's back in annoyance.

Balaram turned to him angrily: Noisy melodramas?

So much predictable rubbish, said Gopal. No story, no plot, just hours of weeping and breast-beating. There's nothing remotely real even about the way they talk. It's just speeches all the time.

Real? Balaram cried. Is it real to be cut to size with a tape? What you heard is rhetoric. How can rhetoric be real or unreal? Rhetoric is a language flexing its muscles. You wouldn't understand: you've spent too many years reading novels about drawing-rooms in a language whose history has destroyed its knowledge of its own body. The truth is your mind is nothing but a dumping-ground for the West.57

The instance of this dialogue between Gopal and Balaram is viewed by Rao as self-reflexivity: "The novel is in possession of post modernist self-reflexivity. This is exemplified in the argument of Balaram and his friend Gopal".58 Rao's inference should be realized in the irony lying hidden in the words of Balaram. Actually, Balaram's mind is under the influence of the West. His thoughts are governed by phrenology and pasteurization both of which are imported from the West. On the contrary, he accuses Gopal's mind as a dumping-ground for the west which reflects his own mind rather than the mind of Gopal.

The Circle of Reason is a narrative of unconnected people and events. The film "Aradhana" is one device of the author to connect the unconnected people. It is obvious in the narrative that there is no connection between Gopal, Balaram and Rakhesh. Rakesh appears in the narrative after the demise of Balaram. But he is associated with Alu who is the foster child of Balaram. The link is symbolically highlighted through the film 'Aradhana', a song from which changes Rakesh's life. And then, passing the opening of a narrow lane, he (Rakesh) heard the unmistakable throbbing of Mere Sappon ki Rani spilling out.
For a while he stood there transfixed, overwhelmed by reminiscence. The song was from the first film he had ever seen – he and a cousin had stolen out of his aunt’s house in Indore, where his mother had taken him to visit her sister. Despite the thrashing afterwards, the magic of that burning July afternoon had stayed mirror-clear in his memory; even years later when he was seeing three or four films a week".59

Thus the film Aradhana has been used as a viable link between the unconnected people. In addition, it also contributes to the hybrid diction which has been amply used in the novel.

Characterization: The art of characterization in *The Circle of Reason* reminds one of the art of characterization of Charles Dickens in so far as the scope for the vast galaxy of characters and sufficient space for every one of them in the narrative is concerned. It defies the classification of major and minor or round or flat characters because all the characters are involved in the narrative pattern both in theme and in form with equal scope to everyone in the narrative. Darshana Trivedi endorses this assumption by saying: “The characters in the novel do not fall into the conventional categories of round and flat or types and individual characters, either. They are descriptive characters. Ghosh’s power of imagination, and his keen sense of observation are beautifully revealed in his art of characterization. Here we have a doctor, a professor, a scientist, a sales man, weavers, a merchant, a lawyer, and house wives”.60

Let me begin with, Balaram, who is one of the important characters in the novel. Balaram is created to highlight the concept of internal Diaspora and as the representation of colonial influence. Balaram is a native of Dhaka, the then capital of East Bengal and of the present Bangladesh. He is obsessed with science from the very beginning of his childhood. But he is forced to opt for history in his higher education. He joins the Presidency College Calcutta. His inclination towards science, particularly to the principle of Pasteur is developed here. After his college education, he works in a press for *Amrita Bazar Patrika* for sometime and emigrates to Lalpukur. Lalpukur is a place more of emigrants than of natives. Shombu Debnath is also an emigrant. Though Balaram emigrates to Lalpukur to work as a teacher in the school of Bhudeb Roy on the
latter's invitation, he is made to opt for opening a school of his own on the
decision of Bhudeb Roy to close his school. He opens a school of spinning and
weaving. In Balaram's establishing a school of weaving, there is an allusion to
Gandhi. Like Desani, Ghosh has never mentioned the name of Gandhi but his
image is reflected in the narration of Balaram's efforts to impart education to the
common lot in the field of craft. This is something which is disproportionate to
the occupation of his caste. Mr. Rao's observation in this regard is worth while
to note: "Balaram concentrates on carbolic acid, loom and sewing machine,
which are symbolic of self reliance. Mahatma Gandhi preached and practiced
the principles of self-reliance as a part of his economic policy and signified it
with his committed popularization and propagation of charaka". 61

But Balaram's support to weaving is a parody of Gandhi's mission.
Balaram, unlike Gandhi, fails in his mission and becomes a betrayer of his own
self. There is conspiracy by the local feudalist cum politician Bhudeb Roy. This
explains about the life condition of the internally displaced people.

His obsession with the nineteenth century science is also proved to be
futile because he is destroyed by the carbolic acid in which he has held faith.
Balaram is not only disillusioned but also destroyed by the implementation of
foreign doctrine in the underdeveloped and alien society such as Lalpukur.
Balaram's character is suggestive of western science, which does not work in the
Indian countryside. As Dixon says: "Balaram's enthusiasm of Reason can
certainly be read as satire on those diasporic Indian intellectuals who
enthusiastically embrace the theories of the west". 62

In fact, The Circle of Reason opens with the description of Alu, who is
present in all the three sections of the novel. At the beginning, Alu appears as a
boy of eight years of age. On losing his parents in a car accident, he becomes the
foster son of Balaram and Toru-debi. His character is an embodiment of odd
things. His original name is Nachiketa Bose. In this regard, the author has relied
on our native myth' Katha Upanishad'. It is so because he, like the mythic
Nachiketa, escapes death in the collapse of Star in al-Gazira. But Alu is only a
parody of the mythic Nachiketa in so far as the knowledge he acquires from the
death escape. While the mythic Nachiketa learns the philosophy of life, Ghosh's
Nachiketa learns the knowledge of dirt (money as dirt). While the former fulfills the wish of his father, the latter fulfills his foster mother's wish. And while the former returns from Yama, the god of death, the latter returns from the jaws of death in the crush of a multistoried building.

The next characteristic of Alu is with regard to his physical constitution. The size and shape of his head become the talk of Lalpukur town. Among various comments two emerge as prominent. Firstly, his head is compared to a rock covered with fungus. But Bolai-da makes the most appropriate one by comparing it to a potato: "He said at once; No, it's not like a rock at all. It's an alu, a potato, a huge, freshly dug, lumpy potato". Hence his nick name as Alu. He resembles Ekalavya in so far as the losing of his thumb is concerned. On one occasion Shombu Debnath makes a jovial statement regarding his thumbs. When asked what Alu could pay for Shombu's teaching of weaving, he asks in a lighter vein to cut his thumbs and give them to him. "Wait. Wait a moment. I'll get you a knife. You can cut your thumbs off and give them to me. I'll pickle them in mustard oil and chillis and hang them up for the village to see". This parallel is justifiable on the ground that like Drona, Shobhu never taught Alu directly at all. Alu learns it from his children Maya and Rakhel. It is also a parody because While Drona asks Eklavya to give his right thump in order to prevent him (a low caste person)from emerging more talented than Arjuna, Shobhu's demand for the thumb of Alu is characterized by animal passion for meat.

Besides the models, Alu is a powerful character with all the odd characteristics. His head is like potato, disinterested in studies, determined in weaving and absolutely silent. Though a protagonist, he is given little scope to speak. This is purposefully done to represent the preaching of action in the Gita of the Mahabharata which is symbolic of the title The Circle of Reason.

There is a brief episode of love in the life of Alu. Alu, who is presumed to be devoid of emotion, proves that assumption to be wrong by showing his passion for Maya. Alu is a man of action and a metaphor for hybridity.

In Bhudeb Roy, the author has highlighted the power of local politicians. He is a conspirator of the destruction of Balaram and an exploiter of the
common people. He also exploits the government by forgery to gain money from the Insurance Company for the destruction of his school. He is also an informer to the department of police. Thus the character of Bhudeb Roy is created not with a single identity but with multiple identities.

Jyoti Das is the only other character who is present in all the three sections. Though he is introduced as a police officer, his interest lies only in bird watching. He takes undue advantage of the privilege of his assignment to nab Alu for gratifying his hobby of bird watching. His negligence causes destruction to the family of Balaram and the Indian emigrants in al-Ghazira. He falls in love with Kulfi in the most unusual manner and causes doom to her life too. Finally, after having lost his job as police officer, he follows his passion of birds watching.

The author has used his skill to the maximum in the creation of Zindi. Zindi rises to the state of owning a brothel from that of a whore. But nowhere is she addressed as a whore nor is her house called a brothel. She has been projected as 'mother' to all her dependents- Kulfi, Karuthamma, Alu, Rakesh, Professor Samuel, Abu Fahl, Mast Ram, Chunni, Boss etc. She is endowed with wisdom gained from experience. She is prophetic in her speech and her prophesy of certain things comes true. She is pragmatic with regard to everything unlike Balaram and Alu. Her concern for Boss is symptomatic of post humanism - the humanistic philosophy that transcends all the man made barriers. Ghosh reflects his own post-humanist aspirations through the character of Zindi.

Indeed, all the characters are unique in their own ways. Creating a vast galaxy of characters and making them stand for their unique values respectively and intertwining them together is a unique achievement of Amitav Ghosh. Damodar's observation with regard to the art of characterization serves the purpose of summing up this section in a nutshell:

In Circle of Reason, the attempts of the novelist are obviously oriented to floating the events and characters through a medley of metaphors and select ideas. The all-embracing structural
principles of magic and irony eloquently ‘weave’ the total pattern of the novel and ideas, characters, and metaphors are explicated through attendant motifs. In fact, the characters themselves are converted into possible metaphors. Their quest is for a specific structuring of their entity in the totality of experience, however, trivial and absurd it is. The characters achieve this appropriation of their significance through their creative/ manipulative capabilities while the novelist himself realizes this through magic and irony and by diverting some of his story telling abilities to the character.65

Diction: The author has deviated from the notion of standard language at various levels. Amazing indeed is Ghosh’s use of English. With regard to Ghosh’s use of English language Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam observe as follows: “Another feature . . is the writers confidence in the use of language. He no longer has to defend the choice of English as his language for creative writing. He is free from the British way of using English. He has no restrictions of spelling, sentence-structure, grammar, etc. He twists and turns words and succeeds as Rushdie and Roy have done in making the English their own”.66 True it is that the rules of syntax are not adhered to in many sentences. Obviously, the syntax of a sentence requires a noun and a verb as minimum units. On the contrary, there are numerous sentences without abiding by this rule. For example, “Very dirty”, ‘Dreary, dreary work’ ‘Not science or history or reason, Nothing,’ ‘Constipation?’, ‘As if,’ etc.

1. There are several infinite expressions. The expressions are left incomplete with a few dots at the end as in the following:1. But even at a distance he felt a theory stirring ....2. Whatever comes his way and hope... 3. We can’t set about it in a hurry... 4. We can persuade her....5. He’d do anything..., 6. Let’s turn back....

2. In more than three fourth of sentences, the auxiliary verbs are found in contracted form as in: You’re putting his health at serious risk. People like us can’t do that kind of work. He’ll fall ill and you’ll be responsible. He’ll have to drink water there, may be even eat there.
3. There is a series of abstract nouns in *The Circle of Reason* - Destructiveness, Secretiveness, Veneration, Combativeness, and Acquisitiveness. These words are used with reference to phrenology. But these words do not begin with a capital letter in any international reference books like the Encyclopedia.

4. There are a number of abbreviations: ASP, DIG, DSP, DCRO, IMFL. There are nicknames like – Alu for Nachiketa, Middle parting- for a senior student, Bird man for Jyoti Das and Goats Arse for the junior Malik.

5. There are numerous expressions in the fashion of Salman Rushdie. For example, the notion called leitmotif, which is repeated in the speech mannerism, is found in *The Circle of Reason*. Uma Verma uses the phrase ‘you know’ frequently in her speech as in:

   Mrs Verma tried to listen as the thin, pale woman chattered excitedly on: ... and, then, you know the firm gives him a holiday bonus, so we thought why not? Every one else buys VCRs and TVs but we already have all those things and we thought you know, we should see the world, too, especially since we have an ayah and everything. Of course, it was a problem, you know, our house there is so huge and I didn’t know who to leave it with, servants are so unreliable nowadays, but if you think of all that you can never do anything ... .

6. There are also run on words, like: Tellustelluetellus, I don’t know yet, dictionaryglossarythesaurus, and there are several instances of repeating words. For example: Fasterfaster, water, water, Quite, quite, Me, Me, Me. Talk, talk, take and weave, weave, weave.

7. The words in combination with their equivalent in other languages also occur frequently: “In Sanskrit it was called karpasia, in persian kirpas,. In Greek it was carbasos, and in latin. Carbosus. They gave Hebrew its kirpas-Arab kutin

8. There are non-English expressions with English translations like: 1. Kolnorod in Noakhali, neta-norod in Tangal, cloth in English. 2. Ashchhe re, aschhe... they are coming 3. key who is there? 4. Khahan? Where are you


10. There are words of abuse:- 1. You son of whore- 2. Your sister-fucking alehohole- 3. Motherfucker- and the words of abuse with local pronunciation: 1. Shat up goddam forf fuckers- 2. You cuntlyou’d fuck n dog if it had money-

11. There are expressions in the Joycean manner: For example, Green was greener, for hidden as for moutriwpher-you’ll never-learns. And improper tag questions like: It will be in your house? Will it?

12. The reversal of certain colloquial expressions takes the reader by surprise. For example: 1. Chit-chat, Shit-shat- 2. Reading-sheading?

13. There are several alliterations: From the other sizzle of the fence, faces stared silently out-Filipino faces, Indian faces, Egyptian faces, Pakistani faces, even a few. Ghaziri faces, and whole world of faces.

14. The rhythmic expressions such as follows seem to echo nursery rhyme: Hul-lo hul-lo,jol-ly fel-low. This is repeated six times by an un identified boy to make fun of Bubey in Mahe.

15. The improper punctuations simply shock the reader: ‘HE sent back marked urge’ In this regard, Shyamala A. Narayan’s observation is worth while to note: “The sheer vitality of Ghosh’s language ensures The Circle of Reason a place beside Midnight’s Children”.

Amitav Ghosh follows Rushdie in respect of the manipulation of technique. The structure of The Circle of Reason is a medley of multiple genres, disciplines and stories. As a votary of post-modernism and post-colonialism, he does not comply with the norms of the conventional plot and its development. Without abiding by the norms of cohesion – proper beginning, middle and end and three unities, The Circle of Reason moves in a hotchpotch manner, and defies the notion of a single chronological narrative.

Characterization and diction also challenge their counter parts of traditional novels. In characterization, the emphasis is laid on what the characters are rather than on why they are so. This is a typical stance of post-
modernism in characterization. In diction, preference is given to the context, and several versions of English are accommodated so as to suit the context. On the whole, *The Circle of Reason* follows the trend set by *Midnight’s Children* and continues post-modernism in the Indian manner.

**IV. Conclusion:** *The Circle of Reason* applies Bernard Shaw’s watch-words “Question! Examine! Test!” not only to the old superstition of religion but also to the new superstition of science. Many of the major themes of Shaw—poverty, prostitution, feudalism, religious dictatorship etc—are introduced into *The Circle of Reason* with new vigour. However, Ghosh has departed from Shaw in respect of the narrative mode. Whereas Shaw’s is a realist mode, Ghosh’s is a magic realist mode. The novel reviews the notions of reality of science and religion from a humanist perspective. He has paved the way for the forthcoming writers to question boldly the received notions of reality.

In respect of themes and technique, besides the parodying of Science, Reason and Religion, the process of nativizing post-modernism can be clearly perceived. The titles of the three sections i.e. Satwa: Reason Rajas: Passion and Tamas: Death respectively are drawn from Indian philosophy. They appear in the *Samkhya* school founded by Kapila. According to *Samkhya*, there are two eternal and immutable principles in nature: ‘prakriti and purusha’. Further, *prakriti* is composed of three gunas called ‘satwa’ (goodness, joy), ‘rajas’ (passion, pain), and ‘tamas’ (darkness, sloth) It is believed that *prakriti* is the cause of the universe and is functioning through the gunas.

The title *The Circle of Reason* is an echo of the philosophy of the *Gita* which upholds that life and death move in a cyclic manner. Gopal gives birth to the march of Reason by establishing a students forum called ‘Rationalists Association’. It is given momentum by Balaram. Balaram is influenced by the nineteenth century Western science and scientists. He tries to apply the received notions of reason to cleanse Indian societies and falls prey to his own boomerang. Alu takes up the incomplete task of his foster father and with him the march of Reason comes a full circle. Mere obsession with and passion for Reason leads the path not to the reason but to chaos. This idea has been conveyed in the march of Reason from Gopal to Alu.
The theme of weaving is also drawn from the Gandhian concept of weaving. The allusions to Nachiketa, Eklavya are drawn from Indian mythology and epic. The incorporation of Tagore’s *Chitngada* in which the Indian mythical characters like Chitrangada and Arjun appear, adds some native flavour to the novel. The theme of death rituals is also borrowed from the Hindu scriptures and *mirtis*. Thime observes in this regard substantiates the argument that the Indian post-modernism is nourished by Indian Culture and literature: “Indian influences include the Sanskrit classics and twentieth-century Bengali literature and these two strands come together towards the end of the novel, when a character attempts to stage a production of Tagore’s *Chitngada*, a dance drama based on an episode in the *Mahabharata*”.69

Reference to the Hindu funeral rites is also found in U.R. Anantamurty’s *Samskara*. In *Samskara* those who allow a Hindu funeral for the diseased are depicted as greedy and hypocritical because they give their consent only with a view to inheriting his property. On the contrary, Dr. Uma’s reaction to the situation of Kulfi’s funeral is based on her sympathy for a fellow human being and rationality.

The major part of the narrative takes place in West Bengal, and hence the backdrop is also Indian. The narrative mode is akin to Indian ancient narratives like *Kadambari*, *Kathasaritrasagar* and *Panchatantra*. Thime confirms this in his observation by saying that: “Its brilliance lies in its *Panchatantra* or *Thousand and One Nights*-like capacity for juggling a range of stories”.70 Therefore, it may be conceded that *The Circle of Reason* has taken a step further in nativizing post-modernism.

While Ghosh has subverted the notion of the Hindu funeral rites, Shashi Tharoor ventures to subvert the story of our ancient epic the *Mahabharata* which is the fifth Veda for the Hindus. Shashi Tharoor looks at the *Mahabharata* from the revisionists’ point of view and prompts his readers to read it again in the contemporary context. The next part dwells upon how Tharoor recreates and recasts the *Mahabharata* from the post modernist perspective.
NOTES


Ghosh, The Circle of Reason, 104.


Indira Bhatt, “Outside the Circle : A Study of Circle of Reason” The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh ed. Indira Bhatt and Indira Nityanandam, 21


Ghosh, The Circle of Reason, 47.

Rao, Myth and History in Contemporary Indian Novel in English, 52.

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Ghosh, The Circle of Reason, 406

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Rao, *Myth and History in Contemporary Indian Novel in English*, 36-37


