1. INTRODUCTION

Amitav Ghosh writes with an anthropologist’s precision, taking care to situate his characters and themes in a well defined context. He loves to dwell in those little explored spaces where cultures intersect and identities emerge, classes collide and languages equipped with his gift for lucid prose and power to relate, in a way, that is at once modest and deep comes away as being extremely convincing for his pains. Amitav Ghosh, in his novels, thus becomes successful in depicting the social, political and cultural activities of the past and present period. The fictional corpus of Amitav Ghosh is a curious blend of scholarship, history and philosophy with literature. His novels, thus, are about the past from a point of view located in the present and selective put together. His fictional as well as non-fictional works that focus on the socio-cultural confrontations show very dominant movement, that opposes the hegemony. The training of Ghosh in historical and anthropological research, his eschewing of grand theorotist gestures and his links with the subaltern studies project and make his work more interesting.

1.1 Biographical Information and Influences:

Amitav Ghosh was born on 11 July, 1956 in Calcutta to Shailendra Ghosh, a diplomat and Ansali Ghosh. He spent early years of his life travelling with his parents as father’s foreign service took him. He, thus grew up in Dhaka, Calcutta, Baghdad and other places. His family had roots in East Bengal and had spent many years in Burma. He graduated from St. Stephen’s College, University of Delhi. During the emergency he worked for a short period with the Indian Express Newspaper while working in the Delhi School of Economics as a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology. He learned languages, like Arabic and Tunisia. After some years he received scholarship to do a D.Phil. in a social Anthropology at Oxford University. In 1980 he went to Egypt to do field work in the Fellaheen village of Lataifa. These experiences later form the basis for In an Antique Land. Amitav Ghosh has also done field work in Cambodia.
At present, he lives in Brooklyn, New York with his wife Deborah Baker. Apart from it he published number of articles. It is a brief account of his fictional as well as non-fictional work, along with the different awards and prizes, received by Amitav Ghosh. He was influenced by many persons and events in his childhood days. During his childhood days, young Amitav was greatly influenced by the stories of partition, independence and the Second World War. In the article, *The New York*; he recalls his childhood memories about his mother. He, regarding it says, “My mother grew up in Calcutta, and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, non-violence, civil disobedience and the terrors that accompanied partition in 1947,” (1997: 104). The major influences on Amitav Ghosh, were the stories of his father relating to the Second World War (1939-1945) and the Indian Army who fought against German and The Japanese. About the memories of his father he says:

“My Father came of age in a small provincial town in the State of Bihar. He turned twenty one in 1942, one of the most tumultuous years in Indian History. That was the year, the Indian National Congress; the Country’s largest Political Party launched a nationwide movement calling on the British to quit India: It was when Mahatma Gandhi denounced the Raj as a ‘poison that corrupts all it touches.’ And in that historic year of anti imperialist discontent my father left home to become an officer in the British colonial army in India.” (1997:104)

Amitav Ghosh, thus has used these memories, influences in his well-known novel, *The Shadow Lines*. V.S. Naipaul has been a major literary influence on Ghosh since his childhood, “There is a strong influence of Naipaul on Ghosh’s prose style a polished and smooth prose that renders experience transparently,” (website). The greatest influence on Ghosh’s humanism is the modern literary and artistic tradition of Bengal in particular and India in general. The humanism that emerged out of the Bengal Renaissance, later on inflected Indian political and cultural discouragement ever since. The Bengal Renaissance was a multidimensional cultural formation, from it Bengal’s modern Literary Tradition has emerged and Amitav Ghosh is a part of it. Two towering figures from this tradition stand out as major influences not only on Amitav Ghosh but also on all Bengali cultural production in modern times. One is the poet, novelist, dramatist, songwriter and the artist, Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)
and the other is the film maker, artist and writer Satyajit Ray, (1921-92). Ray played in shaping the imaginary universe of his childhood and youth. As Amitav regarding it says:

“Rays influence extended even to the material world that I inhabited in my early years; a World which he formed to a unique astonishing degree through his influence on typography and through his usual style, a style that was itself a development on the distinctive design traditions of Bengal.” (2002:06)

These legacies of Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore and Ray have shaped Amitav Ghosh’s literary career as a novelist of India and abroad. These are the direct and indirect influences on the career of Ghosh. The important events in the life of Amitav Ghosh, can be traced as:

In 1984, he witnessed Anti-Sikh riots in Delhi after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards in 1986, he published his debut novel *The Circle of Reason*. In 1988, he published his novel *The Shadow Lines* and returns to Egypt. In 1990, he was awarded Prix Medicis Etranger in Paris for French version of the novel *The Circle of Reason*. He also received the annual Prize for the Sahitya Akademi Award, India’s highest national recognition for a writer. In 1992, he wrote a story ‘The Slave of MS.H 6’ and published his novel, *In an Antique Land*. During the period 1994 to 1997, he was appointed as a visiting professor, Department of Anthropology, Columbia University, New York. In 1996, he published his novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome* which gave him the Arthusc Clarke Award for science fiction. 1998, he published his novel, *Dancing in Cambodia : At large in Burma* Amitav Ghosh joined as a distinguished Professor, Department of Comparative Literature in Queens College, City University of New York in 1999. He Published his novel *The Glass Palace* in 2000. In 2002, he published his non-fictional work, ‘The Imam and the Indian’ and in 2004 he published his latest novel *The Hungry Tide*. His latest work is ‘The Ibis Trilogy’, two novels of which have been published: *The Sea of Poppies* (2008) and *River of Smoke* (2011)
1.2 Review:

The writing of Amitav Ghosh reflects the recent concern of anthropologists with the porosity of cultural boundaries, “Characters in Ghosh’s novels do not occupy discrete cultures, but ‘dwell’ in travel in cultural spaces that flow across borders the ‘shadow lines’ drawn around modern nation states.” … “More often than we usually care to think,” Renato Rosaldo further argues:

“Our everyday lives are crisscrossed by border zones, pockets, and eruptions of all kinds… Along with ‘our’ supposedly transparent cultural selves, such borderlands should be regarded not as analytically empty transitional zones, but as sites require investigation” (1992:20).

The literary works of Amitav Ghosh express national as well as international, transnational concerns. His novels, thus, reflect cultural aspects in the transnational period. The writing of Ghosh, as James Clifford argues, draws attention to the complex ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ that make up the relations between cultures, “Everyone is on the move, and they have been for centuries, dwelling in travel” (1992:7).

Amitav Ghosh, basically deals with the travelling into different countries, doing research of their cultures, with new and modern approach to the study of Anthropology in the ever changing contemporary context. In other words, the novels of Amitav Ghosh, which are both Indian and Global in perception and treatment, represent a fresh trend in the contemporary postcolonial literature. The novelist, thus have been centred on the exploration of various examples of transnational alliances of the kinds typically silenced by the historical approach in his work. Initially, Amitav Ghosh may appear to be one of the burgeoning groups of post Rushdie Indian novelist, in English for whom globalization is an everyday fact of existence. These novelists are Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Mistry, Amitav Ghosh seems to move effortlessly across national frontiers, In this regard, Robert Dixon, very rightly writes about the novelists of new generation. He puts it not inhabiting:

“A culture rooted in a single place, but a discursive space that flows across political and national boundaries, and even across generations in time.” (1996:2-24)
Amitav Ghosh is a major novelist in this research work, whose selected novels reflect cultural aspects and transnational elements. The present investigation in a way reveals these aspects from his literary works. The reviewers, in this way, have expressed their critical opinions about Amitav Ghosh and placed him as a novelist, who travelled across the nation and visited many nations. In his novel ‘culture’ has crossed the national border and entered into the plural international era.
2. THE CIRCLE OF REASON

2.1 Introduction:

The selected novels of Amitav Ghosh for the present research work are *The Circle of Reason*, *In an Antique Land* and *The Shadow Lines*. Amitav Ghosh in these novels has used the cultural aspects and transnational elements in order to express the ethos of modernism. This is an attempt to examine the first novel elaborately, entitled, *The Circle of Reason* (1986). This is the most significant novel, concerns with the modern man’s problems of alienation, migration and the existential crises of life.

The novel has been translated into many European languages. The fact that Amitav Ghosh has been able to move freely in his writing between anthropology, history and fiction is symptomatic of the extent to which traditional boundaries between those disciplines have themselves broken down. The first novel of Amitav Ghosh in a way concerns with the picaresque adventures of Alu, a weaver from a small village near Calcutta, leaves home to travel across the Indian Ocean to the oil town of al-Ghazira in the Persian Gulf. According to some critics, the novel is an allegory about the destruction of traditional village life by the modernizing influx of western culture and the subsequent displacement of Non-European peoples by imperialism. Balaram, a central character’s interest in western ideas regarding this passion for phrenology and the writing of Pasteur. He establishes the Pasteur School of Reason. Certain historical events, such as the Indian nationalist struggle of the 1930s, the Bangladesh War of 1971, and the international tide of migration to the middle-east of the 1970s onwards are foregrounded the novel, *The Circle of Reason*. As the title of the novel suggests that it closely examines philosophies of reason and its association with science and technology. The author himself has travelled from Bengal to Delhi and later to Egypt and England. In short, the novel deals with the issues in the life of contemporary human being. Examining the novel, a critic Indira Bhatt says:

“The Circle of Reason is the most significant novel by Amitav Ghosh concerns with the modern man’s problem of alienation and the existential crises of life. The first novel of Amitav Ghosh as a master craftsman in the art of fiction.” (2001:12)
Nachiketa of *Katha Upnishada* goes to Yama and learns how to vanguish death and get released from desire the root of decay and destruction. When his hut catches fire, Shambhu Debnath, a character in the novel utters one of the vital and intrinsic lessons of the *Katha Upnishada*:

“... This is what happens when a man tries himself down and builds a house. It burns down. Nobody has to do it: it’s only Sri Krishna reminding you, what the world’s like.” (Swami Gambiranand. 1957:131)

Alu’s journey is an inner voyage and hence the ship carry him to enlightenment and finally like the mythical Nachiketa, he too comes back home liberated. Deriving three gunas Satwa, Rajas and Tamas from *The Bhavadgita*, Ghosh names the three sections of the novel accordingly. Each section of the novel is dominated by the mode (gunas) as it has been named. Satwa is described as light of consciousness, by most of the scholars; Ghosh prefers to call it reason. It is a western concept related to the power to think rationally, scientific way of discriminating between right and wrong a civilized way of life. Reason connects people all over the world; it defines countries. As Balaram further says, “Science doesn’t belong to any nation. They belong to the history, to the world,” (57). According to Ghosh, weaving is also a reason, because it has always been the part of history. The second section Rajas, passion it begins with Alu/Nachiket’s arrival in al-Ghazira. S. Radhakrishnan’s opinion about this mode (guna) is very significant. He says, “Rajas has an outward movement... Rajas is impurity, which leads to activity.” (1996:317). The third section of the novel is Tamas, death, in which the persons like Zindi, Alu and Kulfi are presented in the small town el-Qued. Tamas is described by S. Radhakrishna as, “Darkness and inertia.” (1996:317).

### 2.2 Textual Analysis:

Since Amitav Ghosh makes the use of ancient religious books like *Bhagvadgita*, *Katha Upnishada* and Myth as source material and as background, the cultural elements are implemented by Amitav Ghosh in the novel. Here, the efforts are, to evaluate the novel and find out all the cultural elements used in the novel, There are number of events, incidents and movements that indicate and prove that
there is presence of culture in this novel. The first section of the novel, Satwa, opens with the arrival of the eight year old boy Nachiketa Bose in Balaram and Torudebi’s life, in Lalpukur. He, later on was nicknamed as Alu, potato, as his head was very big than the normal boy of eight year old. Amitav Ghosh, thus describes it in the novel *The Circle of Reason* as:

“But still it was an extraordinary head-huge, several times too large for an eight-year-old, and curiously uneven, bulging all over with knots and bumps. … its not like a rock at all. It is an alu, a potato, a huge freshly dug, lumpy, potato.” (03-04)

Nachiketa was an orphan boy, who lost his parents in the car accident. Balaram immediately decided to study Alu’s head as he was interested in the study of heads of the people, as he was interested in the study of different kind of heads in phrenology. Balaram and Gopal Dev, all the time discussed on science, phrenology and new technology in Calcutta. Balaram, 36 year old man, works in the *Amrita Bazar Patrica*. He, later on enters in the town, Lalpukur, “Lalpukur is a border town and police are given money from their headquarters to get information,” (22). This town is belonged to Noakholi in Bengal, close to Burma. Balaram is interested in science, reason, and rationality. The novelist presents him as a man influenced by new western ideas and science. Regarding this person, Amitav Ghosh writes as, “He would read almost anything he happened to come across in Balaram’s study: history, geography, geology, natural history and biology … Anything at all,” (28). Balaram was influenced by Pasteur, as he carries a book by Vallery Radots *Life of Pasteur*. The character of Balaram plays very important role in the novel. He represents modern ideas which are against the traditional. Though Balaram is interested in science in his house there are images of goddesses. It indicates that Indian religion and culture are rooted in the life of Indian people. Bhudev Roy is interested in organizing the feast on the religious festivals. On this occasion, “A six foot high image of Ma Saraswati, with spinning electric lights behind the eyes and a silver-foil-halo, was commissioned in Naboganj,” (32).

In Indian culture, much freedom is not given to the girls, Maya Bhudev, eleven year old girl is restricted not to go in the house of Balaram, as Alu lived there. During the Puja of Ma Saraswati, in the celebration, the six feet high image lit inside
the head. Bhudev Roy wants to save money, as he refused to give for the festival. In Indian culture, it is said that the goddesses become unhappy if they are not treated with reverence. All the activities, during the festival express that in Indian culture vanity has no excuses, rather they are punished. The novelist, later on describes international activities regarding the beginning of the First World War. In the same month another incident took place, there was an, “application by a Hindu for citizenship in the United States, took refuge in prehistory and decided that high-caste Hindu were Aryans and therefore free and white,” (41).

Balaram’s family lived in Dhaka, then migrated to little village of Medinimandol. His father was a rich timber merchant. Balaram was interested in science and scientists; therefore he decided to live in Calcutta. According to him, the people from Hindustan, India should learn science and rationality. Through these incidents Amitav Ghosh wants to focus on the Indian people, who love both science as well as culture, which has crossed the borders of India and have entered at the international, transnational level. Gopal studies some Sanskrit scriptures with his father. He has attempted a curious parallelism between the ideas of ancient Hindu sages and modern science. Gopal, further criticizes on the modern pandits, priests and Brahmins, for their self interest, easy income by distorting the ancient Hindu ideas of God, the Brahma into their thousands of deities and idols, so that they could make money quicker. Just as a shopkeeper may open new source of income for the priests:

“As for the real Brahma, he was without attributes, without form, nothing but an essence, in everything and in nothing … It has been proved beyond all doubt that the Universal Egg of Hindu mythology in nothing but a kind of cosmic Neutron.” (50)

Gopal and Balaram, while talking on various topics regarding science, rationality, technology and culture, decided to change themselves. These new rationalists and scientists started talking about the finding of rational explanations for various magical events, objects and creature:

“It was decided, for example, that the Sudarshan Chakra, the legendary wheel of fire, was actually an example of ancient fireworks, and Gopal was applauded for his ingeniously down to earth suggestion that the
mythic clawed bird of the *Ramayana*, Jatayu was no early phantasm but one of the last surviving pterodactyls.” (51)

The novelists, through these rationalists and scientists have changed and reformed number of ancient concepts of cultural aspects and religious idea. This is an example of modern meaning of traditional, ancient aspects of culture and religion. Amitav Ghosh, in this way, very courageously has presented these new ideas and has changed meaning of different concepts. Balaram answers the questions raised by Gopal regarding the real meaning and scope of science and reason. He, regarding the same, very aptly says, “Science doesn’t belong to countries. Reason doesn’t belong to any nation. They belong to history – to the world” (57). Amitav Ghosh, in a way, focuses on the transnational elements used in the novel, Balaram, Gopal and other scientists later on started talking about world loom civilization. The cotton trade was very ancient from the time; they built their first houses, and cities. Amitav Ghosh, regarding the development in the cotton trade at the international, transnational level says:

“Indian cloth was found in the graves of the pharaohs. Indian soil is strewn with cloth from China. The whole of the ancient world hummed with the cloth trade. The Silk Route from China, running through central Asia and Persia to the ports of the Mediterranean and from there to the markets of Africa and Europe, bound continents together for more centuries that we can count.” (59)

Amitav Ghosh, here throws light on the transnationality, which was very ancient in practice with cotton trade. In other words, it can be said that India first gave cotton to the world. During the ancient time, the word cotton was hardly differed in its names. There is similarity about the word ‘cotton’ among the different nations. Amitav Ghosh, presents this similarity about the word ‘cotton’ as, “in Sanskrit it was called *Karpasia*, in Persian *Kirpas*, in Greek it was *Carbasos*, and in Latin *Carbasus*. They gave Hebrew its *Kirpas*” (60). The rapid growth and development of cotton trade and its names at the transnational level indicates how people travelled and did business even from the ancient period. It also shows how the word is uttered and pronounced in various sister languages in the ancient period. Finally, Amitav Ghosh
Culture and Transnationality: A Study in the Selected Novels of Amitav Ghosh

Chapter - II

says, “Weaving is hope because it has no country, no continent. Weaving is Reason, which makes the world mad and makes it human” (62).

Lancashire poured out its waterfalls of cloth, and the once cloth hungry and peaceful Englishmen and Duchmen and Danes of Calcutta and Chandannagar, Madras and Bombay turned their trade into a garotte to make every continent safe for the cloth of Lancashire, strangling the very weavers and techniques they had crossed oceans to discover, “Millions of Africans and half of America were enslaved by cotton” (61). The novel, thus expresses that the cotton trade had made India popular worldwide. Balaram, Gopal, Bhudeb Roy and Shambhu Debnath, these four persons discussed about the foundation of School of Reason and other scientific stories. Amitav Ghosh further describes other instances of cultural elements reflected through the singing of artists. The group of singers-wanderers who spend their lives, journeying from place to place, from one village to another, living on alms, dancing and singing of their love of Sri Krishna, in various ragas such as Bhairavi, Asavari etc, “All their Bhajan and songs ended in the same ecstatic chant: Hare Rama. Hare Krishna, Krishna, Krishna, Hare Hare” (73). The novelist, further describes war activities through the characters. Jyoti Das, talks about the war. The people who come across the border, they later on are revealed as extremists, “It comes across the border. That is why they’re extremist” (90).

A meeting of Balaram, Gopal, Bhudeb Roy and others takes place about the planning for the establishment of The School of Reason. All the people in the village agreed for doing service in the school. Thus, in the border town, Lalpukur all the activities regarding science, technology as well as religious and cultural activities go hand in hand. The town, Lalpukur was dominated by the god, Lord Krishna, and the religious activities show the presence of culture in the age of science and technology. Shambhu Debnath says to Maya, as, “remember-this is what happens when a man ties himself down and builds a house. It burns down. Nobody has to do it: its only Sri Krishna reminding you what the world’s like” (131). The reference to the Lord Krishna in the novel describes the spiritual life. The modern world through the vision of Lord Krishna can be freed at any level. Regarding weaving both Maya and Torudebi talk about the stitching of blouses and other clothes.
The underworld activities at the transnational level project the transnational problems. In the chapter ‘Going West’ Alu, along with other people, for instance Mr. Das and Dubey, discussed on ports and sea journey. The DIG Jyoti Das and Dubey are on duty to watch the movements of smugglers. Dubey, regarding it says:

“You won’t believe how much smuggling goes on here. Mainly its gold coming in, from all over the world-Kenya, Tanzania, Iran, the Gulf. But there are other things too- electronic things, watches.” (170)

The activities and movements were illegally going on; it shows that how the underworld activities were going on at the transnational level. The people Alu, Rakesh, Professor Samuel Zindi, Kulfi didi and Chunni Devi, decided to go to al-Ghazira, for the purpose of job. The Boat *Mariamma* was looking after the activities at the harbour Mahe, “What I have in al-Ghazira is a kind of boarding house. Also a little tea-shop. Everybody knows it; in those parts Zindi’s the Apple’s house is famous” (194).

People belonging to different culture, religion came together and discussed on the different topics. There was small image of Laxmi devi, indicates the presence of Indian culture on the boat, which was going to al-Ghazira. At the end of the first section ‘Satwa’ it can be said that, number of events, incidents and activities took place in Lalpukur and later on the sea. It, thus shows that the novelist has referred many cultural activities at the transnational level. Alu and other people on the boat, arrived in al-Ghazira. All sorts of moral disasters take place in this section: hatred, jealousy, lust, temptation and betrayal. The whole novel is designed after the biblical scene suffering, redemption, axiom and the certain curative measures of confession and repentence. All the Ras people gathered together, telling stories and gossiping at Zindi’s tea-stall, shows their passion. After their arrival in al-Ghazira, six months later Alu was buried in collapse of an immense, new building; it was called al-Najma, the star. Indian shops represent Indian culture in the Gulf countries:

“‘Durban Tailoring House,’ the sign read in Hindi, Arabic and English, and Zindi spelt the letters to herself over and over again as though she had never seen them before.” (207)
There are number of people belonging to different culture and nations in the city al-Ghazira, gathered for doing job. These people, are: Zindi, Karthamma, Abu Fahl, Professor Samuel, Jeevan Patel, Rakesh, Boss, the baby Cradle, Frowing Abusa cousin to Abu Fahl, His mother Zaghloul, a village in Nile Delta; Nuri, Chunni, Mast Ram, Kulfì. These people represent their nation and culture migrated to al-Ghazira for passion of money. The Gujrati businessman, Jeevanbhai Patel worked in his Derban Tailoring shop, “He also went into ‘gold trade’ between India al-Ghazira and Africa” (239). The International tradesmen and marchants of jewellery traders went for the first time to Mozambique, Dares Salaam, Zanzibar and Aden:

“Al-Ghazira was marchant’s paradise, right in the centre of the world, conceived and nourished by the flow of centuries of trade. Parsians, Iraqis, Zanzibari, Arabs, Omani and Indians flattened upon it and grew rich, and the Malik, fast in his mudwalled fort on the Great Hill behind the town, smiled upon them, took his dues and disbursed a part of them in turn when British gumboats paid their visits to the little harbour.” (238)

The novelist, Amitav Ghosh, here presents these people from different countries in the transnational era. The house of Zindi is a gathering place for the people for tea belonged to many countries. The third section of the novel, ‘Tamas’: death. Tamas indicates a tendency to decay or to die. In this section, we find Zindi, Alu and Kulfì in the small town El-Qued which is settled in the mid of Sahara desert. For Zindi, the house of Verma seemed as a house of death. Regarding it she rightly says, “I can smell death in this house: it is there in writing-one of us isn’t going to leave this house alive” (281). Dr. Verma’s father taught her that once she started something she must complete it. Her opinions regarding Indian history are, “Look at those Rajput Kings and all those Mughals who sat around in Delhi... and began thing just began” (381).

El-Qued is an old town and number of people from different countries visit it. Muharram Bey asked the questions to Zindi, as where they were going, Zindi answered “We are going west, where the saving Machines are.”(395) Mrs. Verma has decided to explore realistic Indian culture in the Gulf countries. The Indians in El-
Qued have planned to perform a play *Chitraganda* as a cultural activity. Mrs. Verma’s father read it in her childhood days. According to her, the play is:

“Based on a legend from the *Mahabharata* I think. Chitraganda is the king Manipur’s daughter; she’s been brought up like a man, and she’s a great hunter and warrior and all that, but she is not-well, very pretty.”

(413)

These migrated Indian Hindus talk about ancient Indian culture, traditions and customs that influenced the Indians very deeply. They, therefore are referring *Manu-Smriti* in their regular life living in the Gulf countries. It indicates that Indian culture has crossed Indian borders, with the number of traders. These people discuss about Hindu cremation. After the death of Kulfi the Indians decide to do her last ceremony. The dead body is kept on the pure land made by spreading ‘cow dung’. Ganga jal is essential to pour it into the mouth of dead person. As Mrs. Varma says:

“First you have to find a clean place on the floor somewhere and you have to purify it with Ganga jal. If I remember correctly, you are meant to cover it with cow dung, too. But since you’re not going to find much cow dung on the sand dunes. I suppose you could always use camel dung instead and do a few penances when you get back.” (444)

Indian culture is still alive among the people living in the Arab countries. The people here belonged to different states of India, but when they live the other country, continent, they become one of their cultures. The novel actually does not come to an end but its end is in its beginning and the novel completes its circle of birth, growth and death. In this way, the novelist, Amitav Ghosh has depicted a picture of a transnational era in which the story of the novel takes place. He also has presented different people belonged to various countries having their own culture. These cultural elements are implemented in different contexts. It is an attempt therefore, to investigate and find out these cultural elements reflected in the novel. Culture crosses the borders of their nations, and entered into the international era. It may be said that the novel ‘*The Circle of Reason*’ narrates the contemporary transnational society, the global society.
3. IN AN ANTIQUE LAND

3.1 Introduction:

The second novel selected for the analysis in this thesis is Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* (1992). This novel is a story of two Indians in Egypt, an Indian slave, and Ghosh himself, the student anthropologist and writer, who traces Bomma some 800 years after it occurred. The reviewer, Datta Pradip says about the research work in social anthropology related to history, ethnography. He thus states, “This novel is a part based on research that Ghosh conducted for a D.Phil., in social anthropology, but manages to appear as travel narrative, ethnography, history and fiction” (1988:78).

The novel, includes the text published in Granta as ‘The Imam and the Indian’ and a scholarly article ‘The Slave of Ms. H.6’ published in *Subaltern Studies* in 1992. Both these articles are incorporated into the ethnography in “*In an Antique Land*”. In this regard a critic, Renato Rosaldo says:

“This novel is an archaeology of a great mercantile civilization that, from about the tenth century to sixteenth century extended from Fez and Seville in the west through Cairo and Aden around Red Sea, across the Indian Ocean to Calicut and the Malabar Coast.” (1992:17)

The novel also deals with the global trade and commerce and certain rules about international business. The merchants belonging to different countries travel worldwide for their business. Regarding the mobile borderless a famous reviewer Clifford Geertz, thus observes:

“In this mobile, polyglot and virtually borderless region, which no one owned and no one dominated, Arab, Jews, Iberians, pursued trade and learning private lives and public fortunes, bumping up against one another.... but more or less getting along or getting by, within broad and general rules for communication propriety and the conduct of business. It was, we might say, a sort of multicultural bazaar. Today this part of the world is divided, like the rest of the globe, into singular and separated national states.” (1993:30)
The novel, in a way, is a study of ancient social religious, political and cultural life of the people, that through their journey to different countries for their trading encounter the cultural elements and the transnational elements implemented by the novelist. A well known critic Ramchandra Guha writes about crossing boarders in the novel. He, thus says, “In an Antique Land”, this novel is marvellous exemplification of the creative trespassing across scholarly boundaries and across the line between, what is ostensibly ‘fact’ and what merely fiction” (1993:45). After this brief estimate of Amitav Ghosh as a novelist and the novel, and a study of ancient culture of Egypt and India, it becomes very important to see the sources and evidences on which the novel is based.

Amitav Ghosh’s point of entry into this space is a fleeting reference to an Indian slave in a collection of letters written in Egypt in the eleventh century. The slave, whose name was ‘Bomma’ belonged to the Jewish Merchant Abraham Ben Yiju who traded between Aden and Mangalore on the Malabar coast. Bomma’s first appearance in print was in a letter to Ben Yiju from another merchant, Khalaf ibn Ishaq, written in Aden in 1148:

“Amitav Ghosh’s reconstruction of Bomma’s life and time is intercept by accounts of his search for textual evidence, which takes him to achieve in England, North Africa and the United States and his field work in Egypt in 1980-81, 1988-89 and in 1990, just before the out break of the Gulf war.” (1996:27)

In 1978, while going through Manuscripts in Oxford University Library, Amitav Ghosh happened to come across a reference about Abraham Ben Yiju, a Tunisian Jewish Merchant who came to India via Egypt around 1130 A.D. and his south Indian slave Bomma. Two original records found in Geniza- a store house of old records-of the synagogue of Ben Ezra in Babylon. For his source and evidence for this novel, Amitav Ghosh further followed traits left by a Hebrew Journal, Zion, letters of medical traders translated and edited by professor S.D. Goitein, of Princeton University. There was a short article by the Scholar E. Strauss in the 1942 issue and it bore the title “New Sources for the History of Middle Eastern Jews” and contained transcriptions of several medieval documents. These are the evidences and documents
used as base and source for the novel, *In an Antique Land*. The title of the novel, *In an Antique Land* denotes ancient Egypt and its rich culture. It also recalls the past glory of Mangalore during the twelfth century as a bustling port. The title of the novel is ambiguous, suggesting that although he is researching the history of Medieval Egypt the historian at every turn discovers continuities between past and present. The title of the novel is also a reference to Shelley’s sonnet, ‘Ozymandias’ which talks about futility of earthly achievement and the perishability of name and fame. The novel, *In an Antique Land* operates in ‘two time frames. The twelfth century Shalley’s poem observes the antique land from the west, in spirit of orientalism, treating Ozymadias as the ‘other’. The nineteenth century Romantic poet talks of, “A traveller from ‘an antique land’ Ghosh makes a slight change for his title *In an Antique Land*” (Naik M.K., Shamla N. 2009:245).

The title of the novel suggests that it is a story of the antique land. Regarding it the novelist further says that the antique land in its time is not the past alone; it overlaps with the present and with the future. There are three travellers; Ben Yiju, his slave mentioned in the letters, and Amitav young doctoral student. All three civilizations of twelfth century Middle East Egypt in the 1980 and Mangalore, both past and present, are lovingly recreated from the inside. The cross cultural encounters of the twelfth century reveal a culture which is not rigidly compartmentalized; the Jews from Africa and Egypt, the Muslims in Arabia, and the Indian traders are involved in the spirit of co-operation. Ghosh observes that the peaceful traditions of the oceanic trade may have been, in a quiet and inarticulate way. The product of a rare cultural choice, cross-cultural encounter is one of the most important themes of Indian English fiction, as the generic itself is a product of Indian encounter. In the novels of Amitav Ghosh, the encounter is not between British, American or French culture and Indian culture; he writes about the cultures of countries like Burma and Malaya, India’s interacting with people in the Gulf countries and in North Africa or the culture of the Raj in India. The protagonist of *In an Antique Land* is Amitav, a student of anthropology, living in an Egyptian village. The novel has the characteristics many fictional and non-fictional generics. It presents many characters with a Dickensian touch. There is Abu Ali ‘who is probably, profoundly unsolvable; Khamees the Rat waiting many years to marry the rich girl he loves, and the genial Shaikh Musa,
whose young son suddenly dies. There is Ustaz Mustafà, who ‘studied law at The University of Alexandria. He has the habit of checking his watch every few minutes, because he does not want to be late in getting to the Mosque. His comments show an ordinary Egyptian villagers stereotypical notion of India. Amitav Ghosh presents an array of characters. Apart from senior ones like Abu Ali and Shaikh Musa, Ghosh introduces Nabeel and Ismail, the representatives of young generation. The travelling of Amitav Ghosh in the foreign countries creates a kind of transnationality. The cultural space that Ghosh resituates as Robert Dixon in his article “Travelling in the West: The Writings of Amitav Ghosh” observers “a vast borderless region with its own hybrid languages and practices which circulate without national or regional boundaries (2003:3.24).

The text In an Antique Land is a converging point of various cultures. Within the framework of the text, we find civilizations, meeting, crossing and getting merged with one another. Thus, it shows the birth of new cultural space. As Renato Rosaldo argues, “In contrast with the classic view, which posits culture as a self contained whole made up of coherent patterns, culture can arguably be conceived as a more porous array of intersections where distinct process cross from within and beyond its borders” (1992:20).

3.2 Textual Analysis:

The analytical approach to the novel, thus reveals the cultural aspects and transnational elements used in novel. The ancient Indian culture crosses borders and enters into the different countries and their cultures in the transnational era. The very presence of Indian culture of the ancient as well as medieval period shows that how it crossed the national as well as social boundaries and entered into other countries. The novel, ‘In an Antique Land, is divided into six sections. “A prologue, an epilogue, and four sections entitled, ‘Lataifa, ‘Nashaway’ and ‘Mangalore’ and ‘Going Back’ respectively. The first two parts deal with the social and cultural history of Egypt. The novel, In an Antique Land begins with the prologue and ends in the prologue itself the novelist describes the entire framework of the novel. In this concern, Amitav Ghosh writes:
“I was a student, twenty two years old, and I had recently won a scholarship awarded by a foundation established by a family of expatriate Indians. It was only a few months since I had left India and so I was perhaps a little more befuddled by my situation than students usually are. At that moment the only thing I knew about my future was that I was expected to do research leading towards a doctorate in social anthropology. I had never heard of the Cairo Geniza before that day, but within a few months, I was in Tunisia, learning Arabic. At about the same time the next year 1980, I was in Egypt installed in village called Lataifa, a couple of hour’s journey to the south east of Alexandria.” (Ghosh Amitav. 1992:08)

The researcher attempts to analyze and investigate the presence of culture and transnationality scattered everywhere in novel. The novelist’s search, thus begins in a small village called Lataifa which comprises the first section of the novel. Amitav Ghosh, a researcher in the social anthropology, when he visits Egypt for the study of the social, political, religious and cultural life of the natives he in his stay at Lataifa lived in the house of Abu Ali, a respected person in Hamlet, a rich businessman. Amitav Ghosh, the representative of Indian culture, in a way lives in the Egyptian culture of the villagers.

Amitav Ghosh observes and describes all the activities and the routine life of the inhabitants. Abu Ali was often reminded of this by cousin’s son Jabir, a boy in his late teens, with bright eyes and a tongue that bristle with barbs, while narrating his experiences in the Egyptian village, that the natives have a rich and ancient culture. Some times when they were sitting in Abu Ali’s guest room in the evenings Jabir would turn to Amitav and ask questions like, “What’s the name of the captain of the Algerian soccer team? Or who is the Rais of India? Isn’t it Indira Gandhi?” (Amitav Ghosh. 2008:13). In Egypt, Amitav Ghosh has been brought to Abu Ali’s house by Doctor Aly Issa, professor in the University of Alexandria and one of the most eminent anthropologists in the Middle East. An acquaintance of Doctor Issa had led him to Abu Ali who had claimed:
“I swear to you, ya doctor, the Indian shall stay here and we will look after him as we do our own sons, for your sake, ya Doktor, because we respect you very much.” (16)

The research student, Amitav Ghosh received very warm welcome and treatment by Abu Ali in Lataifa, who not only provided him a room for stay but also offered him food in his house without any charges with great enthusiasm in welcoming the guest, he says, “No, no. It’s not question of money, you are our honoured guest” (17). The way in which the Egyptians welcomed Amitav Ghosh in their country shows the Egyptian culture, which is similar to Indian culture. In India, the guest is regarded as God, therefore, should be welcomed warmly. This is a kind of similarity between culture of India and the culture of Egypt. The novelist describes Cairo as Egyptian town. The novelist also explains the meaning of Masr, meaning to ‘settle’ or ‘to civilize’. The languages of India, for instance, new Masr by variations of its Arabic name: ‘Mishor’ in Bengali, ‘Misar’ in Hindi and Urdu. The novelist then gives the information about Fustat, which served as Egypt’s capital for more than three centuries. Concerning it Amitav Ghosh says:

“But in fact there was nothing remotely rustic about medieval Fustat, whatever its appearance. With the political ascendance of the Fatimid Empire, it had come to play a pivotal role in the global economy as the entrepot that linked the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean: the merchandise that flowed through its bazaars came from as far a field as East Africa, southern Europe, the western Sahara, India, China and Indonesia. By Ben Yiju’s time Fustat had long since became the largest island in the emerging archipelago of Masr: the juncture of some of the most important trade routes in the known world and the nucleus of one of the richest and most cosmopolitan cities on earth.” (23)

The native person Jabir introduces the novelist to his uncle, Ustaz Mustafa, who studied law at the University of Alexandria. Ustaz Mustafa knows about India. He expresses it as:
‘I have read all about India’, said, Ustaz Mustafa, smiling serenely. There is a lot of chilli in the food, and when a man dies his wife is dragged away and burnt alive … You have Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi, who used to sterilize the Muslims…..‘No, no, he sterilized everyone, I said.” (30-31)

Jabir, further requests to his uncle, Mustafa to ask more questions to Amitav Ghosh about Indians and their culture. Ustaz, therefore asked many questions to the novelist: “All right then, he said to me, motioning to the boys quit. Tell me, are you a Muslim? ” When Amitav says no, then he again asks another question about it, “So, then what are you? ‘I was born a Hindu’, I said, “reluctantly, for if I had a religious identity at all it was largely by default” (31). Being a curious person, Mustafa again asks about Hinduism. He continues as: “What is this “Hinduki” thing? I have heard of it before and I don’t understand it. If it is not Christianity, nor Judaism, nor Islam, What can it be?” who are its prophets? (31). Amitav Ghosh tried to answer these questions. Still Ustaz asks another question, “Tell me something; he said, tell me, are you a communist.” (34). The novelist, in this way, explains the culture of both the countries, Egypt as well as India, through the question asked by the native people. The novelist describes about the synagogue, It is a chamber, in which religious documents were kept, it is also called Geniza. This word came into Hebrew from a Persian root, Ganj, meaning store house. The Geniza of the synagogue of Ben Ezra was added when the synagogue was rebuilt in 1025 A.D. During the conversation between Amitav Ghosh and Ben Ezra, thus reveal number of religious and cultural references and activities of both the nations, India and Egypt. All these movements and conversations are taking place about the cultural life of the people of both the countries at the transnational level itself. Amitav Ghosh, later on describes the caretaker of the synagogue, Amm Shahata, dressed like a Egyptian Muslim. The local muslims describe and narrate the religious practices. The use of the word ‘circumcise’ derived from a root that means ‘to purify’ ‘Mawlid’ is a fair in the honour of a saint’s birthday in a village lay across the fields. Amitav Ghosh, later on, describes another tradition of the local people. Jabir, then marched us off across the squire again, towards the Sidi’s tomb:
“We should see the Zikr’, he said sternly to his cousins. ‘That’s the most important part of the mowlid.’ … ‘They are Sufis’, Jabir said for my benefit. They are invoking God by chanting his name.” (49)

There was communication between Egypt and India in different fields, for example, in social, political, religious, and trades and commerce. The Egyptians like the machineries from India. The Egyptian Mabrouk called the writer to show the water pump. The diesel water pump, manufactured in India, arrived in the house of Mabrouk, in Egypt. Mabrouk called Amitav to his house to see Indian’s product:

“It was a brand new diesel water-pump, the first of its kind to come to Lataifa. There were several such pumps in the surrounding villages: they were known genetically as ‘al-Makana al-Hindi,’ the Indian machine, for they were all manufactured in India.” (53)

Amitav Ghosh, later on describes about the Indian ocean trade and the culture that supported it. The transcontinental trade was no longer shared enterprise and the merchant shipping of the high seas was not controlled by the naval powers of Europe. Amitav Ghosh, further, describes the Muslim festival Ramadan. They are not ready to allow Amitav Ghosh to take part in the festival. They, concerning it, said, “No, you can’t fast you’re not Muslim-only Muslims fast at Ramadan” (55). As, the people belonging to different countries, in the ancient as well as in modern period, travelled to Egypt for the purpose of trades and business, to study their social, political, religious and cultural life. The culture as well as agriculture of both the countries are similar, with certain exceptions to it. The trades and business between Egypt and India also was in full form. Slavery system was in practice in the medieval period. The research student Amitav Ghosh was in Egypt for doing research in social anthropology. In his research work, Amitav Ghosh focuses on the investigation and to collect information about the slave of MS H.6 and the slave ‘Bomma’ Professor Goiten’s article regarding the same was published in India in 1963, “in which he had tried to interest, Indians in the Geniza” (76).

The theme of novel is divided in two parts. Amitav Ghosh, a research student visits Egypt to study social anthropology. The second part of the novel focuses on the spread of trades and business. The Egyptian tradesmen visited many countries for
study. When researcher Amitav Ghosh decides of his research about Ben Yiju’s documents, there was problem for Amitav, because the documents were in hybrid language. Regarding it he further says:

“Ben Yiju’s documents were mostly written in an unusual hybrid language: one that has such arcane sound to it that it might well be an entry in a book of Amazing Facts. It is known today Judæo-Arabic; it was a colloquial dialect of medieval Arabic, written in the Hebrew script.” (78)

In 1988, Amitav Ghosh visited Cairo-Nashaway. He reached Damanhour. When he came at the Ramses Station, all the tickets were sold he travelled by the taxi and truck. The writer completed his journey with the help of Shaikh Musa, who was introduced to Ustaz Sabry. The caretaker of Ustaz Sabry, Amm Taha in Nashaway, where the writer was welcomed in his house warmly. “welcome, welcome’, she said. Please come in, you’re welcome, but Ustaz Sabry isn’t in this minute” (98). Amitav Ghosh, introduces himself to the people of Nashaway as:

“I was a student from India, he told them, a guest who had come to Egypt to do research. It was their duty to welcome me into their midst and make feel at home because of the long traditions of friendships between India and Egypt.” (106)

There are number of things in Egypt similar to India. Ustaz Sabry, later on talks to Amitav about the similarities between these two countries. The discussion between the scholar Amitav from India and the local villagers reveals that in both countries the majority of people live in villages. The novelist thus attempts a comparative approach to the social, political, religious, economic and cultural life of the people of Egypt as well as India. Regarding it Amitav Ghosh says:

“Our countries were very similar for India, like Egypt, was largely an agricultural nation, and the majority of its people lived in villages, like the Egyptian fellaheen, and ploughed their land with cattle. Our countries were poor, for they had both been ransacked by imperialists, and now they were both trying, in very similar ways, to cope with poverty and all other problems.” (106)
Now the novelist presents the political relationship between Egypt and India. The political leaders also visited Egypt, for example, Mahatma Gandhi had come to Egypt to consult Sa’ad Zaghloul Pasha, the leader of the Egyptian nationalist movement, and later Nehru and Nasser had forged a class alliance. No Egyptian could ever forget the support that his country had received from India during the Suez crises of 1956, when Egypt had been subjected to an unprovoked attack by the British and the French. The Germans also visited Egypt, they can speak Arabic language. The conversation between the German and Sabry reveals the cultural, social and political relationship between them. Their discussion regarding God and his existence goes on between these two persons. The German asked question, “‘Do you believe in God?’ The German had asked, and when Ustaz Sabry answered yes, he certainly did, the German replied: So then where is he, show me?” (117).

The cultural activities and traditional celebrations in the marriage in the Egyptian community are described by the novelist, when he was invited for the marriage of Ali. The cultural activities were organized, in which there would be singing and dancing in the programme. Amitav was invited for the cultural programme. He describes it as, “‘We will sing and dance for the bride and groom,’ said Isma’il. ‘You must come: it will be a right that you will remember.’ I shall be honoured to come, I said. ‘It will be a privilege.” (121)

Another Egyptian native, Khamees the Rat asked many questions to Amitav Ghosh regarding Indian cultural and traditional customs and other activities, “-that’s the doctor from al-Hind, where they have ghosts, like we do” (134). He continues asking questions about the activities, customs and rituals in Indian culture:

“All right, ya Doktor,’ he said, once I had settled in beside him with my legs crossed. “Tell me, isn’t it true what they say, that in your country you burn your dead? Amitav answered, ‘Yes, it’s true; some people in my country burn their dead.” (135)

The questions regarding Indian customs and religious activities indicate that how these people are very eager to know about the cultural activities, religious customs of other nations. Khamees wants to know about Indian people and their
customs and religious rituals. Zaghloul, in this regard asks, “The people in your country-do they have a Holy Book, like we do?” (137).

The tradesmen and businessmen from India and Egypt do their journey regularly. The Indian merchants also travelled to other countries with the cargoes fully loaded by many things. Now, the novelist describes the relations between these two countries in the field of trades and commerce. The Egyptian tradesmen also visited India. Amitav Ghosh says:

“For Ben Yiju the journey from Egypt towards Aden and India would have begun with a four hundred miles voyage down the Nile. … Much of their cargo consisted of goods from India; the loads of pepper, in particular, were so many ‘as to seem to our fancies to equal the dust in quantity.’” (140-141)

The novelist says about the interest of the Egyptians in Indian Hindi film, “the people are interested in Indian film. The people in Nashaway are familiar to Indian. “…. and a few pictures for decoration, including a poster from a cinema theatre in Damanhour, of Raj Kapoor in Sangam” (146). The traditional as well as modern women express Egyptian ancient as well as modern culture. The traditional life of Egyptian woman was restricted by religion and society. But much freedom is given to modern women. They even talk to the travellers from other country. Ustaz Sabry’s mother asks many questions to researcher Amitav Ghosh. The Women in Egypt have freedom. Ustaz Sabry’s mother gave carrot to Amitav and asked what he is going to do of it.

The traditional women in Egypt were controlled by many rules. But now a days there is great change. Much freedom is given to them. The villagers also support to the unfortunate women. There was control on the behaviour of abandoned women, who’s husbands left them but now the Egyptians, having changed as modern, support this unfortunate woman:

“Her family had welcomed her back after she left her husband, and according to the custom of the village they had given her all the support they could, and would go on doing so, even if her husband did not meet his obligation to send money for children.” (151-153)
The natives also asked many questions regarding Indian agriculture. The novelist also answered them. The comparative approach of the novelist, thus presents the similarities as well as differences between the village life in Egypt and India. There is similarity in the field of agriculture. The main crops in India are wheat and rice. In Egypt their main crops are also rice and wheat. In India there are peasants, in Egypt they have fellahen, who lived in villages and turned the earth with cattle drawn ploughs. The natives asked more questions as, “Are most of your houses still built of mud bricks they are here? Do your people cook on gas stoves or do they still burn straw and wood as we do”? (162). Amitav Ghosh, as a student in Egypt studied the Egyptian culture by living there comparatively. The novelist has to answer to the questions asked by the natives. Which are, for instance:

“ ‘Tell us then,’ said someone, ‘in your country, amongst your people, what do you do with your dead...?’ They are burned, I said, puffing, stoically on my shusha as they recoiled in shock. ‘And the ashes?’ Another voice asked. ‘Do you at least save the ashes so that you can remember them by something?’ ‘No,’ I said No: even the ashes are scattered in the rivers.”” (165)

Ben Yiju gave freedom to his slave girl Asha in Mangalore on 17 Oct, 1132. Ashu belonged to Nair Community, lived in southern part of the Malabar Coast. Later on, Ashu was converted as Judaism before their marriage. Imam again continued asking questions to Amitav about Indian culture and civilization, as well as religious activities. His questions are, for instance, ‘Why do you worship cows?’ (192).

In the second section of the novel, Nashaway, Amitav Ghosh, describes, number of events and incidents of the Egyptian people along with their religious and cultural activities and customs. In other words, the Indian culture has already crossed the national border, as he lived in Egypt for his research work. The third section of the novel is Mangalore: the novelist describes Mangalore as a business centre:

“The merchant of the city, including the large community of expatriate Middle Easterners would have had their offices and godowns close to the Bander, probably on the hill sides above from where they could keep an eye on the incoming ships? The expatriate merchant community of Mangalore was a large one, by all accounts.” (198)
Another traveller from Moroccan, Ibn Battuta, visited the city after Ben Yiju, two hundred years later. Other merchants from different countries, for instance, Yemen, China, Sumatra, Ceylon, The Maldives and Fars (Iran) also visited Mangalore for the business purpose. The settlement of the foreigners at Mangalore was the cosmopolitan on the coast Calicut. As Ben Yiju lived in Mangalore, the Muslims of Mangalore formed a community of about 4000 people.

Later on, the Portuguese Sailor Duarte Barbosa visited the city in the 16th century, noted that city merchants included them. They lived in Malabar with their wife’s and children. The life style of these traders was modern and sophisticated. Regarding it Duarte Barbosa further says, “They have large houses and many servants: They are very luxurious in eating, drinking and sleeping” (199).

The Middle Eastern travellers who gave, this part of the coast, the Arabic name ‘Malabar’. As there was common culture in the southern third west coast, which resulted Mangalore as perfectly true of its medieval heritage. The language of Mangalore is called Tulu, and it is one of the five siblings of the Dravidian family languages, “It is rich in folk traditions and oral literature, but it does not possess a script of its own and is usually transcribed in Kannada” (200).

The name of the language of this area was Tulunad: like so many other parts of the sub-continent it forms a cultural area which is distinctive and singular. The novelist finally comes to the conclusion that the name of slave is Bomma, because this name was widely popular within Tulu culture and was found in and around Mangalore. Professor B.A. Vivek Rai, who helped the novelist with the riddle of the slave of MS. H6, “He was one of the world’s foremost experts on Tulu folklore and Philosophy” (201). During the middle ages, the slave trade in Ben Yiju times was a wide ranging transcontinental phenomenon, “The name of ‘Bomma’ had once, had wide currency with Tulu culture” (205). The people of Tulunad were divided by tradition into several castes, rich and powerful landlords and poor peasants and untouchables.

The Brahmins played an important role in altogether different aspects of the religious life of the region: they were the standard bearer of the Pan-Indian Hindu tradition, which formed the contemporary other half of the folk religion of Tulunad.
The language Tulunad and Sanskrit are mixed in one another. The two religions are in existence as in Sanskrit ‘God’ and in Muslims ‘Allah’. Judaism left impact on Sufism. Most sufies would have regarded the Vachankara, Saint Poets, “The imagery of the Vachankaras and the Sufis would seem to be far distant from Bomma and Ben Yiju, and the workaday relations of a trader and his business agent” (215).

The expatriates wear customary garments of the middle east robes, turbans and the like-he was in India. Thus, the novelist, Amitav Ghosh, in his research work regarding the slave has presented number of evidences for illustrating the cross bordering of Indian culture in the Egypt, results in the conclusion that Indian culture was popular at the transnational level. Among the many castes and religious communities of the Malabar coast, there was a small group of fisher folk known as Magavira. Traditionally, the Magaviras have always been closely linked with the foreign merchants and mariners who came to trade in Malabar. As fishermen they would perhaps have been the natural associates of middle eastern sailors and seafarers, partly because of their expertise in sailing and partly because of their position on the margins of the caste structure of Hindu society which would have rendered them free of the restrictions that might have hampered other groups in trades and travels. Magavira links with foreign merchants were commememorated in the traditional symbol of their distinctive identity-a deity known as the Bobbariya-Bhuta, deemed by legend to be the spirit of a Muslim mariner and trader who died at sea. Ben Yiju’s life in Mangalore was extraordinarily rich in relationships, his connection with Ashu. Ben Yiju and other traders, group of merchants his friends referred to as the Baniyan of Mangalore-Hindu Gujratis of the Vania or trading caste. Long active in the Indian Ocean trade Gujrati merchants had piled the trade routes for centuries, all the way from Aden to Malacca, and they exerted a powerful influence on the flow of certain goods and commodities. There were three traders in Mangalore, each of different social or geographical origin one a Muslim, one a Gujrati Vania and the third Member of the landowning caste of Tulunad. Ben Yiju stayed over 18 years in India. Malabar coast, it means Bomma, slave is Indian. Amitav Ghosh thus, presents the comparative approach between cultural, social, political, religious and agricultural life of the Egyptian people with Indians. Along with it he also describes the trade and business not only at the international level but also at the intercontinental one.
4. **THE SHADOW LINES:**

4.1 **Introduction:**

The third novel selected for this research work is *The Shadow Lines* in which, the novelist presents relationship between the Hindu community and the Muslim community in Dhaka and Calcutta along with the Christian community of England. The encounters among these cultural, religious customs, rituals and traditions are the main concern of Amitav Ghosh in the novels. The reviewers have placed the Indian novelist in English, Amitav Ghosh, not only at the national level but also at the transnational level. The novels of Amitav Ghosh, which are both Indian and global in perception and treatment, represent fresh trend in today’s post-colonial literature.

*The Shadow Lines* is the finest novel. Amitav Ghosh gained international critical acclaim and also received The Sahitya Academi Award, India’s highest national recognition for a writer in 1989. The novelist in his work expresses national as well as transnational issues and problems of social, political, religious and cultural life of a human society. In this regard, the famous critic Edward Hower of the New York Times Book Review considers Amitav Ghosh as an International literary figure. According to him the novel, *The Shadow Lines* is, “A stunning book-amusing, sad and truly international in scope” (1989:10). The fictional work of Amitav Ghosh has international recognition, in supporting to it Nyla Ali Khan says about the ability of the texts of Amitav Ghosh as well as the recent social, political and cultural life of Indians living in the other nations:

“The ability of Ghosh’s texts to draw on various cultural traditions, along with his own diasporic subjectivity as an Indian of Burmese origin, who spent time as a child in Bangladesh, Iran, Sri Lanka, has done his writing in Egypt and now does it in U.S. Subjects of emigration, exile and cultural displacement addressed in his work. His diasporic subjectivity and the subject matter of his fiction have led many critics to see him as a blossoming postcolonial writer. Ghosh’s work is crucial component of Western literary studies classified as “postcolonial literature.” … By confronting burning social, political
and economic flows, these transnational writers deploy their sensibilities, one western and one home-grown, to engage in a dialogic relationship with society and to overcome restraints that deradicalize the literary works of “The Third World.” Ghosh remains engaged with his cultural and historical past throughout the novel by rejecting the process of historicizing the imperial past in favour of personal memory and imagination.” (2005:100-101)

The Indian people migrated to different countries for different purpose. The novel explores the author’s major concern about wider, cross border humanity with a striking insight into the issue of ethnic nationalism and communication; it also reveals new levels of his technical prosses. A well-known critic, Murari Prasad regarding the same further says:

“He proposes the theme of “The complex culture imbrications, as a crossings and inter-cultural flows. This preoccupation with transnational cultural processes, including author’s nuanced critique of the exclusive notion of descrete cultures, gains a new focus and dimension in The Shadow Lines.” (1991:81-95)

The reviewer here emphasizes on the multiple level themes as well as the complex narrative structure of the novel. The narrator narrates the theme of the novel from the childhood experiences through the grownup adult’s point of view. The critic, therefore says; The Shadow Lines, is a modern novel in the transnational period. Chote Lal Khatri while reviewing it rightly says:

“Critical pluralism is essential for the study of modern fiction. To him the novel, The Shadow Lines multiple layers of themes and the complex narrative, structure, structured on a pattern of contrast between imagination and reality, the novel allows the narrator to view childhood experiences from adult point of view.” (2001:50-55)

Another critic appreciating the novel emphasizes on the historical approach to the novel. A well-known critic Noya Kapadiya concentrates on the same aspect, thus she focuses on the social, political and cultural life of the Indians as well as people
belonged to England. Amitav Ghosh also has used the historical events, as a background base of the novel, *The Shadow Lines*. According to Noya Kapadiya these historical events, are, “Freedom movement in Bengal, The Second World War, The partition of India and the feelings of communal hatred that erupted in East Pakistan (New Bangladesh) following the Hazratbal incident in Srinagar in 1964” (1990:205).

Thus, the reviewers have examined the novel at the different levels, regarding its central issue, which is the exploration of transnationality. This is done purposefully in time space co-ordinates, which are a prior; opposed to each other, or at least apparent desperate enough to seem with examining in conjunction. The realities of World War II, London, Pre-Independence India, and partition communalism are integrated under the same frame narration view to blurring the boundaries into which historiography has tried to compartmentalize them. Amitav Ghosh makes the difference between the historian’s history and the history presented by writers. In his work, Amitav Ghosh writes:

“I think the difference between the history historians write and the history fiction writers write about the human history. It’s about finding the human predicament it’s about finding what happens to individuals, characters. I mean that’s what fiction is.... exploring both dimensions, where as history, the kind of history exploring the causes, causality is of no interest to me.” (2000:30)

Through this concept, people are liberated and made free to enjoy their life. The nationalism is related to popular freedom and sovereignty of the people. Tha’mma, thus expresses her opinion on the concept, nationalism well-known reviewers. Hutchison and Smith observe it:

“Nationalism was, first of all a doctrine of popular freedom and sovereignty. The people must be liberated, that is, free from any external constraints; they must determine their own destiny and be masters in their own house; they must concern their own resources they must concern their inner voice. But that entailed fraternity. The people must be united they must be gathered together in a single
historic territory, a homeland; and they must have legal equality and share a single public structure.” (1994:3-13)

Amitav Ghosh succeeds in refashioning the flexible, permeable identity of the nation by questioning its competing master narratives informed by skewed impression of South Asian Culture. The unnamed narrator negotiating diverse temporal and spatial plains configures the concept of a nation that can cope with the intermeshing of cultures. Robert Dixon’s assessment of Ghosh’s novel is quite cognate:

“The Shadow Lines is ..... a fictional critique of classical anthropology’s model of discrete cultures and the associated ideology of nationalism. The reality is the complex web of relationships between people that cut across nations and across generations... [so that the novel] builds its critique of cultural borders upon the notion of a universal humanity.” (2003:24)

The Shadow Lines, however, is especially notable because it delineates the agonies and raptures of that period in such poignant detail. It also underlines the challenge of cultural dislocations ambiguous citizenship, and highlights the illusions of militant nationalism. The approach of Ghosh to cultural and narrative authority is not only pluralistic: despite his Indian roots, he is explicitly adapted the transnational setting. When readers share experience of privilege and exclusion, he becomes part of the new diaspora of transnational literati. A well known scholar Abhinaba Chatterjee says:

“The Linguistic and cultural dislocation generated by the experience of migration can become the part of the process of reinterpreting the repressive frameworks of colonialism, nationalism, proto-nationalism, patriarchy and universalism that essentialize the identities of post colonial and transnational subjects and lend moral justification to the attack on native societies and kindle religious and nationalist bigotry process because, as the displaced group is assimilated its native language and culture became devalued.” (spring 2014, Vol. 14 No.-I)
The reviewers have evaluated Amitav Ghosh as a national and transnational novelist, who has crossed national borders and entered into the culture of other countries, this cultural confrontation and border crossing thus have become inseparable features of his writing, which is resulted Amitav Ghosh as a transnational novelist.

4.2 Textual Analysis:

The analytical and critical appreciation of the novel *The Shadow Lines*, reflected cultural aspects and transnational elements. It is, therefore, the sincere efforts to investigate and find out the cultural aspect and transnational elements in the novel. A novel is divided into two major sections. The first section is again divided into sixteen sections, and the second one has fifteen. The first section of the novel begins with the observation of Amitav Ghosh about the movements of the characters away from their joint families, “The novel begins with “In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my father’s aunt, Mayadebi went to England with her husband and her son, Tridib” (Amitav Ghosh. 1998:01).

The novelist tells about Mayadebi, who was Grandmother’s only sister. For the narrator, she was Maya Thakuma. Mayadebi was twenty nine when she left India while Tridib was eight years old. The novelist tells about Tridib’s family. Tridib has two brothers, Jatin-Kuka. The elder, who was two years older then Tridib, was an economist with the UN. He was always away in the countries like Africa or South East Asia, with his wife and daughter. Robi, the younger brother lived with his parents. The grandmother lived in a village Ballygunge Place, in a old, vast family house, Tridib lived in Calcutta for many days. Tridib was working on Ph.D. in Archeology. He was doing some sights associated with the Sena Dynasty of Bengal. The novelist uses first person narration in his novel. Grandmother takes care of Tridib, and she says regarding the health of him, “You can’t build a strong country, she would say, pushing me out of the house, without building a strong body” (08).

The novelist later on describes Gole Park where Tridib used to go to see and talk to his neighbours. The people all the time discuss about Tridib and his rich family. They further say that Tridib’s family was rich and powerful. His father was a diplomat and a Judge. His brother was an economist staying in UN. When Tridib was
asked by the people about him and his visit to London to visit his relatives; Price family. In this family, Mrs. Price lived in north London, Lymington Road. She had a daughter named, May. May Price is studying in Royal College of Music, intends to join an orchestra. The novelist, Amitav Ghosh thus presents these two families, one is Dutta Chaudhary of Calcutta and the Price family in England. These two families relate very closely to each other. They have crossed their national boundaries. May Price had a brother Alan, who had been in Germany. The narrator, now tells about his visit to England:

“I went to England on a year’s research grant, to collect material from the Indian Office Library, where all the old colonial records were kept, for a Ph.D. thesis on the textile trade between India and England in the nineteenth century.” (13)

These singers and artists by performing they represent their culture. The artists, singers in the orchestra belonged to different countries. There was a concert organized at the Royal Festival Hall. Tridib was attracted towards Miss May Price. She stayed in the big house of the narrator in Calcutta. Tridib got a scholarship and decided to go to England where, Tridib enjoyed the orchestra. After it they started their Journey to her house. Both, May and Tridib went to the room of May, which was very attractive, a fresh and good. There was correspondence of letters and communication between Tridib and May Price. They later on became pen friends, Tridib received May’s photograph the day he came to Gole Park. Ila is described in the novel as sixteen years old. The narrator has to leave her for his college in Delhi. At the same time Ila and her parents flown in from Indonesia. When they arrived in Calcutta, the grandmother was very critical in all matters to do with appearance. Particularly, she was very keen at Ila’s dressing and total behaviour. She with great happiness says about Ila, “Our Ila is growing into a real beauty - she has taken after May” (18).

There was very close relationship between Datta Chaudhary’s family and the Price family of England. Mrs. Price’s father, Lionel Tresawson had lived in India when the British were here. Both were friends as they worked in same court. Thus, the Indians, particularly the Dutta family, crossing the national border, were close friends.
Tridib called the Prices as his relatives. The Indian culture has crossed the borders and lived with the new culture of England. Ila belongs to the new generation who believes in internationalism. She represents the vast majority of Indian youth. As Murari Prasad rightly observes:

“Ila’s preference for Nick Price and her later disappointment expose her wobbly, transplantation stems from her penchant for illusion devoid of any real understanding of the cultural interface.” (1991:91)

Thus, Ila represents a girl of modern generation. The characters like Tridib, May Price and her parents, Ila’s grandmother move and travel all the time some from India to England and from England to India and India to Dhaka. They, thus represent their culture. The cultural encounter among India, Bangladesh and England carries in the transnational era:

“Ila’s family came to Calcutta for Durga Puja, that year, because after many years her grandparents were going to be there too, just in time for the festival. Ila’s father was on sabbatical leave from his job with the UN. at the time.” (32)

English people were interested in the Hindu festivals. It indicates that how people belonging to different religion, culture are closely related with each other, at the national as well as transnational level. There was great influence of British culture on grandmother; so she calls Mayadebi’s husband Saheb. As she says, “Calcutta zamindar, Indian diplomat, English gentleman, would be Nehru South Club Tennis player, Non-Aligned Statesman and so on” (34). It shows the influence of English life style on the living of Saheb. Ila’s is presented as a girl, who likes freedom, and escapes from traditional restriction. The narrator is dominated by Ila’s nature. She compels to play within the underground. Here the western culture is encountered with Indian traditional life represented by the narrator. She plays this game with Nick. She tries to force and says, “Come on, I’ll show you: it’s a game called Houses” (49).

Robi intended to leave Boston for London. They decided to visit the narrator. The characters in the novel travel from one nation to another very easily. The narrator wants to know more from the grandmother about England. He was influenced by the
Price family, particularly the young members of the both families. Saheb and his standard of life is described by the narrator. The communal riots between Hindu and Muslim took place, therefore, the atmosphere was not good. It was also war time, therefore Mr. Tresawsen informed to Mayadebi not to visit England, “Yes, that is the right word, said Mayadebi: exhilaration, I’ve been lucky, I have been able to watch England coming alive. I wouldn’t have seen that if I hadn’t been here now” (66). The novelist, thus compares these two characters. Ila is outsider to the Indian culture, as she comes from England. The narrator, regarding Ila, further says:

“Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother’s blood and their father’s blood and their son’s blood. They know they’re a nation because they have drawn their borders with blood. Hasn’t May told you how regimental flags hang is all their cathedrals and how all their churches are lined with memorials to men, who died in wars, all around the world? War is their religion, That’s what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget, they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is what you have to achieve for India, doesn’t you see?.” (78)

Tha’mma represents traditional Indian culture, who does not desire for becoming free from this Indian traditional life. Ila, on the other hand represents modern culture and believes in freedom for woman, as Tridib says about her, that she was only a modern middle class woman though not wholly, for she would not permit herself. The self deception that make up the fantasy world of that kind of person. Tridib, in this regard rightly says:

“All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing in the unity of nationhood and territory of self respect and national power: that was all she wanted-a modern middle class life, a small thing that history had denied her in its fullness and for which she could never forgive it.” (78)
The novelist, thus says that there is difference between Indian culture, represented by Tha’mma and the culture of England represented by Ila. Ila wants to behave in India freely as she was in England. Ila calls Robi, a hypocrite. The colleges are strict regarding the girls for tea to his room. Some students were expelled from the college. Against it the students unions called strife. Robi disliked it supporting it he rightly says, “Because a rule is rule; if you break one you have to be willing to pay the price” (83). Ila behaves in very bad way. She wanted to dance and drink in the hotel. Robi has to remind Ila that she can not do the things, what she did in England. Ila cannot dance and drink in India, because in Indian culture generally girls do not get much freedom. Robi has reminded Ila, that she was in India and not in England. In Indian culture in India generally, the girls don’t behave like that. To answer Ila’s question. Robi further says: “You can do what you like in England, he said. But here there are certain things you cannot do. That’s our culture; that’s how we live” (88).

The novelist presents the trading of readymade dresses. The trading of Indian garments in the place called Brick Lane. Nick has decided to start a shop in the place called Brick Lane. The trading of Indian dresses represent Indian culture. The young character Nick, in a way enters in the field of trades and business. Nick pointed at a large chapel like building with a sign that said: London Jamme Masjid:

“Do you see that Mosque? He said. That used to be a synagogue when this place was a Jewish area-up until the war and after. ..” Most of the shops that were still in business were selling Indian-made leather clothes, of the kind that are hawked to tourists at Janpath in Delhi – black leather jackets and suede handbags and belts.” (101)
In the first section of the novel, Ghosh examines mainly the process of ‘going away’, of the dispersal of his characters across continents and how inter-personal bonds across cultural boundaries can not be sustained. In this section, Ila finds this world constrictive she wants freedom from its middle class orthodoxy. She, therefore, decides to move at in search of a free world, which she finds in London. She is fascinated by the romance of free life in London.

Amitav Ghosh describes the culture of Robi and Tha’mma is the same in which girls don’t behave like Ila does. The narrator understands the paradox inherent in the experience of cross cultural transplantation and interaction. In the first section ‘going away’ Amitav Ghosh presents the Indian culture and English culture living together hand in hand at the transnational level.

The narrator, in the beginning of this section, says that his grandmother retired from her service in 1962. She had taught in the girl’s high school, since 1936. There was a farewell ceremony on her last day at school. Her close relatives and friends were invited, the girls felicitated the grandmother, subscription, a large marble model of Taj Mahal. Tha’mma became emotional as she delivered her speech. The headmistress of the school, the grandmother decided to teach a separate dish to the students of Home science. After her retirement, the grandmother started taking interest in the household activities, the customs and traditions of her family. She told to the narrator about their old house in Dhaka. In which she had grown up. She represents the old generation, who consider themselves as the advent garde of traditional cultural, religious and social life of the people. The novelist describes the importance of joint family in the traditional life of Indians. This big joint family included her grandparents, her parents, she and Mayadebi, Jethamoshai-her father’s elder brother and his family. It was Indian traditional joint family in which all the members come together for dinner, when the house was divided. At the age of thirty two, the grandmother became sad as her husband died, who left nothing for her, therefore, she started working as a teacher. The partition of 1947, divided East Bengal and Dhaka became capital of East Pakistan. Jethamoshai and her aunt lived in the old house in Dhaka. The grandmother started living in Calcutta in one room in Bhavnipure. She, all the time remembers her old house in Dhaka. The family of
Tha’mma arrived in Calcutta long before the partition, she, in this regard, says, “We’re not refugees, snapped my grandmother, on cue. We came long before Partition” (131).

Amitav Ghosh thus describes the partition and the people who came from the other country, the refugees. The grandmother and other members in the family, they, later on decided to bring the old man to India. Thus, in this partition story, Amitav Ghosh presents the border crossing of the people for going to their ancestral houses in Dhaka. The novelist, later on describes the character of May and her correspondence with Tridib. The narrator again describes Nick and his stay in the block, “It was the block of flats on the corner of Lymington Road and West End Lane; a building called Lymington Mansions” (138). The Indians thus were living in the other countries easily, among the native people and their life. This seems to be a cultural confrontation of these two nations Amitav Ghosh thus, implements both the culture of India and England as May and Nick are living together. The novelist presents a group of people appear different from the natives, who are also called strangers. According to Nick, these strangers belonged to other countries, who knew each other. It is a kind of encounter between Indian culture as well as the culture of the native people. The novelist, in a way describes it:

“He wanted them to meet as the completest of strangers-strangers-across-the sea—all the more strangers because they knew each other already. He wanted to them to meet far from their friends and relatives—in a place without a past, without history, free, really free, two people coming together with the utter freedom of strangers.” (144)

When the grandmother and other members gathered together for dinner, the narrator’s father conveyed a news to her about the promotion of Saheb. Tridib wrote letters to May, in which he invited her to India. Mrs. Price and May talk about the promotion of Saheb. The narrator says that his father was worried about it. As Saheb got promotion, therefore he left Dhaka. He therefore wrote a letter to take his father from Dhaka to Calcutta. He says, “He is going to Dhaka, My father announced triumphantly. He has been made Councillor in the deputy high commission there” (148).
Mayadebi, who was in Dhaka, invited Tha’mma to visit her. Grandmother was in confusion whether she should go to Dhaka, or not. But later on grandmother decided to go to Dhaka, finally she took the decision. The Journey of the grandmother was fixed and her plane ticket was also got for Dhaka on third of January, 1964. The grandmother wanted to know whether she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane. Tha’mma had imagined the border line as a long black line, with green as one side and scarlet on the other. The narrator says that his father being an expert traveller says regarding it, “No, you won’t be able to see anything except clouds and perhaps, if you’re lucky, some green fields” (151). In the journey from Calcutta to Dhaka, grandmother tried to find out the border lines between two nations. The grandmother came to know that the border line has become shadowy. She had a experience of travelling, when she went for trips in and out of Burma. The grandmother says about her last visits to Dhaka. To her there is no need of any formality of documents. The narrator explains her about her idea of coming and going, he says, “Tha’mma, Tha’mma! I cried. How could you have ‘come’ home to Dhaka? You don’t know the difference between coming and going” (152).

Grandmother got a letter from Mayadebi saying that May, her friend Elizabeth’s daughter was coming to India in December holiday. Another newly married couple is visiting India. Nick and Ila represent English culture. As they visit to India, it was a kind of confrontation between the culture of India and England. May and the narrator represent two cultures, the narrator represents Indian culture while May an English. The conversation between May and Tridib takes place about May’s visit to India in order to see Agra. The story of May and Tridib shows their relationship, the relations between two countries, two cultures, the story of Ila and Nick and their relationship, who travelled from India to abroad and back. The narrator expresses it as, “Yes, I said. I added something about ‘coming’ and ‘going’”’ (178). All the young characters, Ila-Nick, Tridib-May have planned to go to India. Mrs. Price also helped them in planning their Journey. It therefore indicates that how travelling between India and England as well as from India to Dhaka become regular and easy, that resulted a kind of cultural confrontation and therefore transnationality. The plan is as, “And also it was arranged that on my last Saturday in England, three days before I caught the Thai Airways flight back to Delhi” (179).
The Grandmother received a letter from Mayadebi before they left for Dhaka. The grandmother decided to go Dhaka. Along with other members of the house they also prepared themselves for their journey to Dhaka. Robi now remembers what his grandmother said to Mayadebi when they met at the airport was, “Where’s Dhaka? I can’t see Dhaka” (193). The Grandmother saw great change in the city. There were new shops, market lane, and many other things. All the old things were changed. She felt herself a foreigner in her own birthplace. Tridib couldn’t resist the malicious pleasure of pointing out she said. But you are a foreigner now, you are as foreign here as May—much more than May, for look at her, she doesn’t even need a visa to come here. At that time, My Grandmother gave May, a long wondering look and said, “Yes, I really am foreigner here— as foreign as May in India or Tagore in Argentina. Then she caught another glimpse of the house and shook her head and said: “But whatever you may say, this isn’t Dhaka?” (195).

There were Hindu-Muslim riots in the city. Therefore, it was right time to take an old man from their old house; the Saheb gave instructions to the sisters, Mayadebi and Tha’mma: Thus, the novelist has presented the Hindus in heart of Muslim country after partition. They decided to take an old Jethamoshai. They decided to give this job to Saifuddin, he welcomed the Indians to Dhaka. Khalil, came from India Murshidabad in Bengal. The old man was very orthodox, that he wouldn’t let a Muslim’s shadow passing within ten feet of his food. Saifuddin tells out the Indians to Khalil. He says:

“These are Ukil Babu’s relatives Khalil, Saifuddin said. I told you about them. They’ve come all the way from India to take him back. You must do what you can to help them persuade the Ukil-babu to leave.” (211)

Saheb tells to take care of the old man. The old man, Jethamoshai was not ready to leave his old house in Dhaka for Calcutta. According to the instructions to Jethamoshai, from Saheb, it was not good time for living in Dhaka as religious riots took place. The Hindus lived in the house of a Muslim. Even during the war period both the Hindus and Muslims lived hand in hand. Regarding this he said:
“I understand very well, the old man muttered. I know everything I understand everything. Once you start moving you never stop. That’s what I told my sons when they took the trains. I said: I don’t believe in this ‘India-Shindia’. It is all very well, you are going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? “What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I’ll die here.” (215)

The narrator, as a growing child, like other, believes in certain things. Which are around them? “I believe in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality.” (219) All the people belonging to different religions and communities. Started their journey into the valley of Kashmir people welcomed the relic people said:

“To have marched in their thousands from every part of Kashmir-even from such distant and remote eyries as the Banihal Pass-in order to get a glimpse of the relic. Later, the relic was installed at the picturesque Hazratbal mosque near Srinagar. This mosque became a great centre of pilgrimage and every year multitudes of people, Kashmiries of every kind, Muslims, Hindu’s, Sikhs and Buddhists, would flock to Hazratbal, on those occasions when the relic was displayed to the public.” (224)

The riots became dangerous and serious and spread all over the surrounding of Dhaka. There are many incidents and events in which Muslims gave shelter to the Hindus at the cost of their lives and equally in India of Hindu’s sheltering Muslims. Tridib died in the riots. Everybody went to their places of resistance the narrator says:

“I was sent to stay with my mother’s brother in Durgapur, when his body was brought back from Dhaka. He was cremated while I was away, May left for London the same day, and immediately afterwards, Mayadebi and her family went back to Dhaka.” (238)

_The Shadow Lines_, the novel expresses the post-modern, post partition Indian society, in which the people, Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs lived together. Tha’mma,
represents traditional and old cultural, social, political and religious life of the people. The new generation May, Trideb, Robi, and others have their culture, not only at the national level but also at the transnational level. The characters, old, young can easily do their journey from one country to another. They cross cultural as well as national borders and entered into the vast transnational era, where people belonging from different cultural, social and religious background.

After the analysis of the selected novels by Amitav Ghosh, *The Circle of Reason, In an Antique Land*, and *The Shadow Lines*, it becomes clear that the culture and cultural elements are reflected in them. The protagonists of these novels, along with other characters undertook journey across the nation, into the international as well as transnational world. These people carry with them their own culture, traditions, their way of living into the foreign countries.

In *The Circle of Reason*, Alu, the main character travels into the Arab countries for a job, work of weaving, cotton business. In al-Ghazira number of Indian immigrants gathered together, at Zindi’s Tea house. These people live there according to their religious, cultural, and traditional life. The characters like Balaram are influenced by the Western ideas, thoughts of science and technology. Similarly, in his other novel, *In an Antique Land*, Amitav Ghosh travels to Egypt for his research work in social anthropology, represents Indian culture in the village of Egypt. The Indian culture encounters to the culture of Egypt, transnationality is reflected. The novelist presents some differences and similarities between the culture of India and Egypt. Through the conversation between the researcher, Amitav Ghosh and the native people, the novelist explores the presence of culture in the novel. The third novel, *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh also uses and implements cultural aspects in different events, incidents and occasions in the novel. The narrator, in the very beginning of the novel says about the border crossing. “In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my Father’s aunt, Mayadebi, went to England with her husband and son, Tridib. The grandmother of the narrator, Tha’mma was born in Dhaka, but after the partition she lived in India. Tha’mma undertakes a journey to her birth place, now it is in other country, Bangladesh. Her search for border lines, that makes her birthplace separate from her.” These two journeys are the central events in the theme of the novel.
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Website: www.amitavghosh.com