CHAPTER-5

Amitav Ghosh in one of his essays says that “One of the paradoxes of history is that it is impossible to draw a chart of the past without imagining a map of the present and the future” (The Greatest Sorrow 317) and that seem to be a statement reflecting his philosophy behind writing history in his novels. The present study aimed at analyzing the nuances of history, historical and historiography as it has been presented in the novels of Amitav Ghosh and the focus has been to analyze specifically the elements of recreation and representation available in his novels. This thesis has its inception in the hypothesis that there is a strong anti-colonial stance in Amitav Ghosh’s novels and he has adopted a revisionist discourse and has imbibed history in his works. So the first thing that this study has targeted is to understand the basic nature of the two central issues involved in his novels: history and fiction. Ghosh is not the first writer to have brought these two elements together as the basic natures of both these elements have certain meeting points: both give almost an essential position to written text, both are dependent on narratives with a cause-effect plausibility and both use language for their ideas to foreground. This study, in its introduction, take special care to study these grounds of commonality and comes to conclude that there are sufficient grounds for history, historical events and historiography to coexist or even mush-up and mingle with fiction and novel, to a large extent, has been a document of social history. Right from its rise fiction has enjoyed a special relationship with history and there is nothing strange that novels have existed as chronologies, histories of their contemporary society and times. Writers like Sir Walter Scot erased the lines, if any existed, between history and fiction in their novels and in every age and language there have been writers following suit.

The second major area of analysis has been the contemporary scenario and the literary theory and praxis, as it provides the necessary philosophic urge and literary apparatus for the kind of novels that Ghosh has embarked upon. Historicity, the times and the critical framework available at the time when a writer writes, always plays a great role in shaping a writer and his work and any given literary work is the product of the times in which it is produced. On close reading it comes out that various theories, writers, contemporary issues, personal elements and literary scenario presses
upon a writer’s mental makeup and that, in its turn, forms the piece of work. A work of analysis should try to attempt to locate and understand those very elements and so did this study. Three major strains have been analyzed in this direction; the Postcolonial theory and praxis, which deals with the issues of Empire as tyrannical and coercive force, its meanderings, machine and manipulations. Secondly the Postmodern poetics that deals with the philosophy of age, post Second World War, and various literary trends and fashions that have been in currency. The third area of concern has been various theories related to History, such as Historicism, New Historicism, Cultural Materialism, History from Below, Alternative History and Subaltern Studies.

Thinkers and theoreticians have come out with their formulations and Postcolonialism has acquired so much weight now that it becomes almost impossible to define it or to restrict it to some functional introduction. The study permeates itself to the issues of Empire, colony, natives and uses and abuses of History in the processes and workings of the power structures of these elements. There was an occupation of foreigners, primarily European, on a large landmass, chiefly Asia and Africa, till mid Fifties of Twentieth century. Loot, plunder of natural and human resources in the colonies were matter of day to day functioning and the very life in those colonies were affected adversely and to an extent that most of the non settler colonies have gained sovereignty but they are still struggling hard for decolonization, removing the residues of the Empire from their lives and psyche. History is one of the major sources of identity and through large scale manipulations and cockeyed representations; Empire took total control over the colonies. Postcolonialism aims at and provides insights to the possible wrongs done to the representations of native identities by Empire. This study, after thorough analysis, comes to the conclusion that there were primarily three major distortions done to the history and related fields by the Empire. Those being, first that there has been a deliberate, partisan and manipulative writing. Two, there has been a wide spread occlusion, deliberate obliteration and silencing of events/incidents and sometimes even of a whole era, in order to keep it hidden/ obscure/ unknown/ non-existing/ unrepresented and thus coerce and manipulate. The third is a deliberate misconstruing/ false reporting/ wrong
ordering with a target of giving misrepresentation. The study correspondently looks at these three issues and finds that Ghosh has turned the tables and has attempted to correct the historical account by three ways; by rewriting, recreating and finally by giving a newer representation, each one is dealt in detail in one chapter each.

The second closely analyzed framework has been the one provided by the philosophy prevailing upon the age, broadly called Postmodern. There is almost a unanimity that Postmodernism, the age after the Second World War, saw the loss of centre and celebration of margin. Through the geometric expression of centre and margin it was conveyed that earlier the issues holding the centre stage like European Empire, White, Male lost out and the central position was acquired by erstwhile so-called marginal, for example by Colonized, Blacks, Women and the downtrodden in terms of race, class, caste and gender. Literature, too, saw this shift and it became the expression of the tale of aspirations, the agony and perspectives of those groups. So, in a way, Postcolonialism is a subset of Postmodernism, considered from the view of the centre - margin matrix. Parody and metafiction are the elements that are most commonly seen in the literature of the age. Linda Hutcheon, one of the most celebrated critics of the age, coins the term ‘Historiographic metafiction’ for the novels of the age which refer to already written texts of Literature and History and can be termed as ‘rewriting’. This revisionist stance and the centre-margin exchange of position both help us in understanding the framework of Ghosh’s novels and in a way validate Ghosh’s stance of rewriting.

Historicisms, New Historicism and Cultural Materialism are the developments in the field of history and historiography. The basic idea behind the most of these developments is the acceptance of the fact that there is an element of subjectivity in the recording of history. These developments validate elements of history which were earlier not considered as valid sources of history. Historicism looks at all objects as the product of their age and should be essentially read along with the prevailing society. As a tool of literary analysis, Historicism is an evaluation of a literary artifact as a product of its age. To put it inversely it is a standpoint that considers literature as a mode of literary production, controlled by the elements of capital and resources. It’s a very serious point of entry in the study of history as empire’s tool of manipulation.
New Historicism takes non literary elements in its ambit for evaluation of history, while Cultural Materialism considers all texts, of whatever nature those may be, ranging from cookery books to medical prescriptions, to be elements converging into contemporary culture and thus treat them as means of recovery for history and culture of the time. These are particularly important in projects like the present one as there are no archives or other traditional forms of resources available for excavation and recovery of occluded past, so cultural material becomes the entry point of recovery, as evident in the case of *The Shadow Lines* and *The Glass Palace* and dealt in detail in the relevant sections. History from Below, Alternative History and Subaltern Studies are basically projects taken up at different locations and with minor differences. All these look at providing History from the new perspectives and place the marginal, downtrodden, defeated and people of no importance in power circle, at the centre of it and narrate accounts of historical incidents from their angle. In Ghosh this is a very serious issue as he seems to have very close affiliations to Subaltern Studies, a group of historian led by Ranajit Guha, who revisits Indian history from the viewpoint of tribal’s and marginalized groups. Ghosh’s own stance, in recovery and reconstruction of history, is akin to that of Subaltern Studies as his mode of rewriting and recreation are through the people placed on the lowest strata and there is no space for elites in his fictional world. Having probed and placed the existing framework of theory and praxis, of the novel and history, the study analyzes the three major forms that history has taken into Ghosh’s fiction.

Recast, re-view, re-cording and revision of history is the foremost concern of this study and Ghosh’s novels do this in two significantly different ways and thus the analysis of those is divided on their respective planks into two parts- rewriting and recreation. Second chapter, Rewriting, is about the areas and instances in Ghosh’s fiction where he has written contrastive narratives, in pieces and incidents, neutralizing the excesses and biases of Colonial narrative. This chapter tries to formulate and explain elements that create the basis of the postcolonial historiography, which, in turn, validates this type of rewriting. Rewriting is a way of recreating this fresh narrative which can be juxtaposed to colonial stance and the contrast speaks volumes about colonial manipulations. For example in *The Glass
Palace, there is a detailed and live commentary like rewriting of the British invasion of Mandalay Palace in November 1885. History of cotton and weaving are rewritten in The Circle of Reason and Ronald Ross and his malaria research are rewritten in The Calcutta Chromosome. Riots of January 1964, Mu-I-Mubarak theft and two nation theory is rewritten in The Shadow Lines, while Morchjhapi and corruption under the garb of rehabilitation and ecology conservation are rewritten in The Hungry Tide. The opium cultivation, processing and trade are rewritten in The Sea of Poppies and how opium led to Opium wars between China and Imperial forces led by Britain is rewritten in The River of Smoke. Going by the testimony of his works, it is imperative that, whatever Ghosh writes even in the future, it will contain a lot of rewriting of history of Indian Sub-Continent. It appears that the third volume of promised trilogy will be out in the first half of 2014 and Ghosh will take us further deep into the Opium Wars and maybe the story can lead us to 1857, which is another couple of decades away from the point where it stops at the end of The River of Smoke.

The third chapter, Recreation, is about the areas and instances in Ghosh’s novels that create the absent events, incidents and narratives from the historical narratives. The absence may have been because of silence, occlusion, omission, exclusion, decimation or obliteration. The stance taken by Ghosh in this recreation is very close to that of ‘Subaltern historiography’, where ‘micro-history’ and ‘history from below’ seem to be merging. Individual memory, family traditions and collective consciousness of migrants have been used for recreating the historical narrative. ‘Rewriting’ answers the ‘what’ of recreation and the third chapter, Recreation, answers the ‘how’. Silence, whether forced by the coercive tools of colonial powers or found as a detour, recourse of survival by the native, becomes a site of retrieval and recreation in the novels of Ghosh. He has given words and expression to those silences and the study enumerates and elaborate such instances from his novels.

Ghosh, time and again, reiterates that silence is a very significant wrapping around the events of Indian history. In all shades of it ranging from silence resulting from force of the Empire to the silence as a mode of survival as put forth by Ashish Nandy’s ‘need to forget’, in all forms have been handled by Ghosh. Practically all his novels voice some incident, event or account that lay silent till Ghosh voiced it. At the centre
of this recreation has been the subaltern. The common man, the poor powerless figure
who has lost his battle, but was maker of his own destiny and his predicament, holds
the central position in Ghosh’s novels. Almost all his central figures are subalterns
and the people on the margin. The study looks at the strain closely and reads Ranajit
Guha’s ‘Subaltern Studies’ as a major influencing force behind it. Another inversion
that is studied with this is that how Ghosh writes history from the perspective of the
losers and thus causing causality to another Western ideology that ‘history is written
by the winner’. The role of research, archival study and excavation has also been
analysed to the core. The analysis results in presenting the role of imagination,
intuition and intelligent guessing in recreating some historical past into fictional
rubrics of Ghosh’s novels.

The fourth chapter, ‘Representation’, brings about the political meanings of
the rewriting and recreation. It enumerates and exposes the strategies and systems of
Colonial plunder and dominance. This chapter is about ‘why’ of rewriting and
recreation and tells us how reading and understanding of history is not only about the
past but is also about the present as well. It raises our consciousness about the present
day world scenario and keeps us vary of contemporary issues like free trade and
globalization. There are numerous instances presented in this chapter which indicate
towards re-emergence of Colonialism in newer guises of Neocolonialism and Neo-
liberalism. The land usurping nation state in The Hungry Tide, is in line with
Mahashaweta Devi and Arundhati Roy’s writings on naxalism and exploitation of
tribals by the neo-colonial powers. The idea of Vrihtbharat, the Indian subcontinent
as one nation, is one such forceful idea that one comes to understand out of Ghosh’s
fictional forages. Ghosh refuses to accept the ‘nation as narration’ formula and his
resistance to the writer of ‘nation’ has been analyzed in the thesis and so is his
resistance to the idea of ‘commonwealth’ and ‘post-colonial’. Two major areas of
British manipulation, as come out of this study, are the exploits controlled by Empire
by handling Indian soldiers and Indian work force as labour. The threads of both these
are present in almost all novels of Ghosh though their degree and involvement varies.
From a macro view, it was the Indian soldier who was the backbone of the ever
increasing British Empire and it was the Indian worker who was cultivating British
colonies and the fruits were reaped by the Empire. Primarily it was the veiled representation of Indian soldiers that the Empire could use them as a pawn. The world looked at them as mercenary and they thought themselves as emancipators, fighting for the welfare of the world. Empire ensured that they did not come in contact with the outer world and the false representation should never get exposed. Despite their laying their lives for the Empire, they found in Burma and in the accession of Imphal, that they were treated racially and as second rate. This woke them up to the reality and once they were woken up, they were a great threat and danger as they had already proved in 1857. Ghosh’s fiction provides us glimpse into the reality. Till now we have been made to think that it was fighting against their brethren in INA that gave birth to nationalism in them but Ghosh brings in newer insights. Thus the chapter brings to us to the conclusion that how the novels of Ghosh, by giving a true representation to the historical accounts, removes the veils of wrong representations.

There are some more conclusions that this study reaches at. These may be launch pads of more studies or at least they provide a better understanding of Ghosh’s novels. In hindsight it looks like that couple of things in Ghosh’s personal life have had a lasting impression and they formulate his consciousness, or maybe even subconsciously, and knowing and understanding them is of great help in scrutinizing various aspects in his writings. One of the foremost of these is the location of Ghosh’s childhood. He spent a number of years in Dhaka and Colombo along with his father who had his official postings in Indian Embassies during those days. This empowered Ghosh in looking at life in those locations and gave him a vision to analyze what remains an abstract value for most of us: the Indian Sub-Continent. In an Interview recently Ghosh accepted it to be an important factor:

I never lived in Burma as a child, even though my family has had longstanding connections with the region. However, these “transnational journeys” certainly influenced me a lot. My father was in the military, after which he transferred to government service and spent several years in Indian embassies abroad. We travelled along with his appointments. As a little boy I studied in Bangladesh, which was still called East Pakistan; then in Sri Lanka; and then I went to a boarding school in North India. You know, I was born well after
Independence, and if I had grown up only in India the subcontinent as such would have seemed notional. But being a Bengali from an East Bengal family, the subcontinent is very real for me. I feel it is not just India that is my home, but also Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. (Between the Walls 8)

Once a writer is imbued in the idea of Sub-continent at such an early stage and with so personal an experience it is quite normal for him to be able to see life in cultural contexts as ‘extended home’ as in Ghosh’s case. It may look to be apparently a case of childhood understanding of the world but it would be terribly wrong to read it at the level of the surface. The Indian subcontinent for Ghosh is the cultural construct, an undivided India, with relations, connections and networks of human bonding existing in a way they exist in the construct of a nation. This precipitates in looking at the making of present day nation states of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (and to a large extent Burma, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan as well) as an act of violence. Ghosh’s novels try to go back to the time when there were no such borders and give us glimpses of those times. Furthermore this hiatus, violent rupturing of Indian sub-continent, leads to a literary and political stance in Ghosh as he does not find the novel as an expression of the nation. Because in case of India, a nation, an artificial hiatus was created by the Empire by imposing partition and such divisive manipulations. As a result, Ghosh thinks, the nation becomes a shorter unit of collectivity than family, which encompasses larger collectivity because it may be spread in more than one nation, as beautifully exemplified in The Circle of Reason, The Shadow Lines, The Glass Palace and The Ibis Trilogy. In conversation with Dipesh, Ghosh asserts it and explains this complex idea, for our benefit:

Novels almost always implicitly assume a collective subject: this is what usually provides the background, milieu, setting, dialect etc. Sometimes this collective subject is the nation itself (one sees this most clearly in the work of the magical-realists). Sometimes it is a culture or a class (very common among Brits and Europeans) or (as in modern US writing) ‘a generation’. All of these are clearly sub-sets of the nation—since the boundaries of the culture, class or generation are usually assumed to coincide with the boundaries of whatever
country the writer happens to be from. In India, collectivities such as nation, class, generation, culture etc. do not have the same imaginary concreteness that they do elsewhere (even today, I think). This is one of the reasons why Indian (and African) writers so often look for a different kind of collectivity, the family. In my case, the family narrative has been one way of stepping away from the limitations of ‘nation’ etc— I think this is true also of many others. (Ghosh Dipesh Correspondence 165)

There is an evident love for borders in the Western world and this Eurocentric love for water tight compartments has a reflection on academia as well, where there is a tendency for marking borders, frontiers and fences. For Ghosh all such lines are shadow lines as life flows unrestrained from any such demarcations and hence he shows no respect towards such divisions. Ghosh’s literary oeuvre is a journey across borders and taxonomical stratifications that have been applied in fields of studies. He refuses to accept the hermetic segregation of academic classification and borders forced on academia. He denounces this kind of division as purely Western. He says:

Because disciplinary boundaries never had for us the kind of absoluteness they have in the West. So I think you’ll see it’s not just me; many Indians who’ve done really interesting work over the last fifteen or twenty years have similarly combined completely different things. Like Subaltern Studies, which is partly anthropology, partly history, and out of that you get something really rich and interesting. I mean I don’t always understand what Gayatri or Homi Bhabha are saying [laughs], but you get the sense that they’re coming out of that same tradition. A lot of these people are people of my generation: we belong to a moment when those disciplinary boundaries weren’t really set. We were just trying to talk about the world as we saw it. Some people did this through history, some through criticism, and for me it was through the novel, because for me there’s nothing so interesting as the novel. In my view the novel is the most interesting form because nowhere else, not in history, not in anthropology, are people at the centre, individual people. (The Absolute Essentials interview 36)
His life, career and works have been oscillating from one zone of activity to another. History, Ethnography, Anthropology, Literature, Journalism and Political Commentary, all have been his fields at some point of time and in some cases they ran concurrently. The strain of ‘trans borders’ seems to be the metaphor of his life. Lately he has settled around writing novels, perhaps because novel gives him a chance to indulge all his probing in so many fields. On being asked about his constant shifts in the fields he confesses that writing novels satisfies him most:

I know that they must seem like disciplinary shifts and all that, but to me they were not, because I was interested in writing. I wanted to write novels. At the same time, I was interested in history and in a number of other things. So they all came together. It was all part of my education and my processes of thought. In the first instance I think of myself as a novelist. I don’t think of myself as an academician at all. (Between the Walls 3)

Actually Ghosh’s novels are not only works of literature that one reads for sheer pleasure or for academic pursuits, but they also provide a kind of rejoinder to one’s quest for his own roots, at least to readers situated in the subcontinent. The narratives are so engrossing and can easily be read as a text book of history and culture. The Shadow Lines can make you aware of the post partition scenario in East and West Bengal which perhaps no book of History can dream of. The Hungry Tide can very easily pass as a documentary on the Sunderban delta. The Glass Palace is treated in Myanmar, formerly Burma, with so much respect and credit, that one reserves for an official history. The Ibis Trilogy has helped Indian and Chinese people understand their historical past to such an extent that it won’t be a surprise that the books may provide impetus to otherwise cold Sino-India relationship. In a way Ghosh’s fiction is a serious contribution to History. Having read a particular event, a historical account, in his novel one feels like reading more about it, exploring the area and drench oneself in history. So his novels initiate the reader towards history. The relationship between his novels and History is mutual and both give and take so much for each other. Ghosh tells us that “a lot of historians whose work I have used said to me that it lends colour to their work- it gives them meaning and context” (Between the Walls 7).
Ghosh has brought many insights into Indian and Subcontinent history and his novels are going to make a huge impact on the region. So his fiction can claim to be moving beyond the boundaries of literature, like a reflection of his tendency to go beyond boundaries in all his enterprises.

Another idea that one gains having read all his fictional oeuvre, is the kind of direction that his works are taking. This study, if read in isolation and without going through the novels beforehand, may give a false impression that his works are out and out indictments on empire but that won’t be a true evaluation. Ghosh is against the exploitation of one by another, and the empire has only been one such exponent. He is against tyrannical power structures that created the leverage of the master-slave kind of situation rather than becoming the apparatus of governance. He is against a power system which is not truly democratic in spirit and becomes a tool in the hands of some for controlling the others. To put it in relevant political terms he is against the Empire and he is against the nation state, if it behaves like an extension of the empire, as the Governments of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka have been behaving since the so called self rule. The common man, the real sufferer at the hands of Empire, is still reeling the tentacles of political gimmicks. Some of the novels deal with the times and conditions beyond 1947 and Ghosh’s stance is equally sarcastic and of contempt towards the contemporary corridors of power as he has towards the empire. Especially in The Hungry Tide, he has written a complete novel presenting the apathy and callousness of successive governments in their failure to even consider it a problem. The nation states have acquired the role of colonizers and have become the tools of capitalists. The recent hullabaloo about land acquisition and government’s insensitivity is not beyond Ghosh’s compass and he has been voicing his concern about rising naxalism as the immediate result of ill treatment meted out to tribes and downtrodden and people living on the margins. Along with Mahasweta Devi and Arundhati Roy, Ghosh has a stance which can easily be termed as pro Naxalites. And in recent days a lot of writers, social activists and thinkers have been charged with sedition by Government of India. It won’t be a far fetched prophecy if we see some novel about naxalism coming out of Ghosh’s pen any day. Though that should take at least some time till he finishes the present trilogy at hand, which threatens to go to possible fourth or fifth
volume, looking at the sheer size of characters and stories that the first two books have introduced and like a great writer he would like to take them to a logical conclusion.

He started with mild attacks on the residue of colonialism in *The Circle of Reason* and it was when he was towards the middle of writing that novel that he witnessed the Sikh genocide in Delhi that took place after the assassination of India’s Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s death on 31st October, 1984. The reality of communal riots and the silence of India History about the narratives of riot troubled the writer in him and the idea of *The Shadow Lines* was born. The Shadow Lines brought him into the limelight and he never looked back. The success of this book gave a kind of freedom that writers always crave for. Perhaps what place Ghosh has carved for himself in the popular literary scenario should be credited to his initial success in *The Shadow Lines*. His anthropology cum ethnography cum historian's approach became apparent in his most enigmatic work till date, *In An Antique Land*. It is a piece of work that is beyond any description as there is a huge controversy to count it as a travelogue, or an Anthropology research written in prose, or a non-fiction novel or a piece of academic History. From here onwards the mild sarcasm became more cutting and in *The Calcutta Chromosome* he went back to science and empire’s ill treatment towards colony’s knowledge of science. Again the novel is hard to demarcate as it is a suspense thriller and written in the form of a detective crime fiction but it is essentially neither about crime nor a murder mystery. It is still a subtle innuendo on the colonial practices of taking credit about matters of science. But with *The Glass Palace* Ghosh left the tongue in cheek subtlety and lodged a very powerful barrage on the ‘dome of Empire’. The novel left behind the initial veiling and controlled language of attack and as a result *The Glass Palace* became so politically vibrant that in discussions of Postcolonial circles it became a buzz word. The voluminous novel and its encompassing story that travels from the West coast in India to Mandalay in East involved the readers with such a grip that Ghosh immediately became the beloved writer of reading public in India and Burma. *The Hungry Tide* was a little different book in the sense that it was more about ecology and environment conservation. But the concerns about the subaltern lives and the
depiction of the plight of people in Sunderbans involved environmentalists and ecocritics, and added them among the fans of Ghosh. The most powerful and outrageous attack came in the Ibis trilogy and the energy and anguish of both the books is so strong and deep rooted that at times it goes beyond anguish. The trilogy is so subtle and camouflaged that an initiated reader may miss the whole point. Ghosh tells us one such incident with a journalist:

At a certain point my outrage was such that it passed beyond outrage—it was almost uncontainable really. So it amazed me when, the other day, this British journalist interviewing me in Beijing said, ‘Well, Sea of Poppies is so different from your other work because you seem to show empire in such a good light.’

(Network and Traces 35)

Hence the journey of a quarter of the century, from *The Circle of Reason* to *The River of Smoke*, is a journey that has gained momentum in terms of wrath towards the empire and empirical practices involving manipulations and meandering. With every work Ghosh has matured as a writer and his pointed approach has gone sharper and sharper with every book.

If Ghosh has become a successful writer, the credit goes to his writing which beautifully bridge the past with the present. History and representations of history, in Ghosh’s novels somehow take up the contemporary relevant issues. There is a river like flow of life and present is tomorrow’s past but his novels take this flow to a higher stage. Ghosh weaves his stories in such intricate webs that everything seems to be so very much connected with everything else. There is so much that we take from our own past and we sometimes are not even aware of it; Ghosh’s novels make us aware of such connections. On the very face of it America and its policies in Iraq, Afghanistan and even Iran look like something which is purely contemporary and something that is unique and fresh for humanity but once Ghosh starts coming out with parallels between the strategies of British accession of colonies in Eighteenth and Nineteenth century, it appears that the contemporary scenario is nothing but a déjà vu of what the world has already seen. Spices and other natural resources enticed the West to India, and the loot and plunder left India a poor country with two third of its
population living below the poverty line. Tea, Silk and Porcelain proved the same for China. On the pretext of free trade, the culture and sovereignty of a nation were not only violated but decimated. Opium, as Ghosh asserts in *The River of Smoke*, was the first testing ground of the discourse of free trade. Just by representing through the lofty words of liberty, freedom, equality, fraternity, welfare, enlightenment, illumination and social reform, the empire has fulfilled its imperial dreams. It has been the history but painful reality is that it is prevalent in contemporary life in equal measures if not. America barged into Iraq and the allegation was that Saddam Hussain possessed ‘weapons of mass destruction’ that could have proved to be disastrous for the peace of the world. In a short span, Saddam Hussain was laid to rest, Iraq was practically captured and nobody ever came forward with what ‘weapons of mass destruction’ were recovered. There is nobody to raise the question and there is nothing new about this silence. Petrol is what Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE possess and the Petrol is what America, the New England wants, so either they let it use their oil wells as is the case of UAE, Saudi Arab, Kuwait do, or should be ready to face the consequences as Iraq and Afghanistan has already done and Iran is expecting these days. There was a blanket ban on cultivation, processing and trade of Opium in England from as early as 1813 and till 1920s, Opium was the biggest source of Income of British revenue: how do you understand this paradox? It sounds too outrageous to believe but that’s as true as it can be. We may easily conclude that it was possible only in those times. In today’s world where media and press is so alert, it is not possible. But how about the fact that America is freely playing havoc with oil resources of the Middle-East and there is a ban on oil exploration within sovereign boundaries of the USA. They will wait for the exhaustion of the oil wells of other’s and then enjoy the monopoly.

Almost similar are the concerns of conservation of ecology and the domain of free trade. The so called developed nations, under the leadership of America, are perhaps more than what the Empire was, in their manipulation and practices. Year after year there is a constant pressure on developing nations to curtail carbon emission and bring down pollution but nobody is ready to question: where the polluting enterprises started? Ethnic practices in Asia and Africa were far from exploitation of
nature. In cultures like India and many tribal societies of Africa, trees and vegetation are treated as deities and Gods; and the deforestation and mindless exploitation of natural resources is a direct gift of colonization. But who would recall history to the holier-than-thou imperial nations? Almost the same is the line on free trade that these nations tow in the name of globalization, liberalization and privatization. These are the manipulations of usurping the untapped market located in the third world. The technology is same only the products have changed. In the Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries it was opium that gave the classic case of conspicuous consumption and in Twenty First century cola drinks are less dangerous but more penetrative tools. Internet, fast communication and evaporating distances are a threat to marginal countries, cultures and even languages. The world is shrinking into a global village but it will only be a new avatar of a traditional Indian village with a tyrannical zamindar (a la America), who will control all the natural and human resources in it. Recently there has been a serious indicator in the form of reports of cyber spying of the whole world, irrespective of where you are situated, the entire cyber activity is somehow routed through the servers located in USA and it is an undeclared smothering control over the traffic on the internet, so the future is visible. Ghosh and the writers of his ideology are constantly sending us wake up calls and showing us that how Empire is far from dead and just contrary to it, has become more powerful and more coercive. The Empire, version 2, to apply the software analogy to the empire, is not only updated but is also more penetrative and its reach is up to the tail end of the smallest piece of land and even space. Internet and communication technology, in the hands of this new Empire can cause subjugation that is hitherto unimaginable. Ghosh and his novels are not bringing out history but they are telling us how Empire exists even today and to survive in today’s scenario we have to be cautious of the old methods in new forms.
WORKS CITED


