CHAPTER 8
CAPITALIST MACHINES’ INTERVENTION IN THE ORIENT: A STUDY OF THE

IBIS TRILOGY

...a new kind of self emerged in the Renaissance, the expressive, oftentimes, violently willful bourgeois individual, who sought wealth and power in the evolving world of early market capitalism. This self finds expression in Shakespeare’s tragic character, from Hamlet to Lear (Rivkin: 239).

Shakespeare’s King Lear (1606) highlights the emergence of capitalist machines and their triumph in the Western society. Edmund represents a new class of merchants, small businesspersons, and industrialists who were struggling for power against the reigning nobility. The similar influence of capitalism resonates in the Orient.

The Ibis Trilogy by Amitav Ghosh located in the time period 1838-1841 with a gap of around two hundred and thirty years shows how capitalist machines have reached maturity and with the colonial expansion reached the Orient. The entry of capitalist institutions like the East India Company started changing the fabric of Indian society. The monarchs, who considered it their divine right to rule, were challenged and dispossessed of this right for instance Raja Neel Rattan loses his status as king, his caste and forced to work like any ordinary Indian, Bhyro Singh is killed by an untouchable who according to the so-called divine text cannot even raise his head before an upper caste.

On the other hand, the representative of Edmund in Indian context prohibited by so-called divine texts from moving upward achieves success because they have merit and ambition. For instance Mr. Burnham, Zachary Reid, Kalua, Bahram Moddie, Shireen and Deeti. Zachary Reid describes this transformative influence of capitalism in positive terms:
I have become what you wanted, Mrs Burnham,’ he said. ‘You wanted me to be a man of the times, did you not? And that is what I am now; I am a man who wants more and more and more; a man who does not know the meaning of “enough”. Anyone who tries to thwart my desires is the enemy of my liberty and must expect to be treated as such.’ (Ghosh, 215: 582).

The *Ibis Trilogy* throws light on the role of various capitalist machines like war machine, opium trade in the Orient and their conflict and association with feudal machines already present in the Orient and to some extent in the European society. Deleuze and Guattari throw light on the relationship between colonialism, war, military, trade and state apparatus when they say:

The constitution of a military institution or an army necessarily implies a territorialization of the war machine, in other words, the granting of land (“colonial” or domestic), which can take very diverse forms. But at the same time, fiscal regimes determine both the nature of the services and taxes owed by the beneficiary warriors, and especially the kind of civil tax to which all or part of society is subject for the maintenance of the army (Deleuze: 418).

However, Ghosh deals with the impact of capitalist machines only in the Orient and highlights it through Kesri Singh who “wondered what it was that enabled their NCOs to mould their men into machines” (Ghosh, 2015: 228). The biggest transformation of the Orient through colonial forces came in the form of establishment of modern army in the Orient. T. S. Eliot, the modernist poet depicts the participation of British Indian Army in
the British conquest in a very romantic manner in his poem “To the Indians Who Died in Africa” when he says:

A man’s destination is his own village,
His own fire, and his wife’s cooking,
To Sit in front of his own door at sunset
And see his grandson, and his neighbour’s grandson
Playing in the dust together.

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A man’s destination is not his destiny,
Every country is home to one man
And exile to another. Where a man dies bravely
At one with his destiny, that Soil is his.
Let his village remember.

(Eliot: 217)

Amitav Ghosh does not agree with T. S. Eliot and shows how the capitalist machines collaborated and sometimes challenged the feudal social order ridden with caste hierarchies to raise the army that helped them conquer a large part of the world. Initially the East India Company,

[T]ook into their armies any Indian who was willing to serve. At times their ranks included large numbers of tribals and untouchables. Only when the
The sepoy system was introduced in the eighteenth century, and there was any attempt to regulate the kinds of Indians taken into the military (Cohen: 454).

Gradually, they understood the Indian Caste system and found that there are castes in India who consider it their religious duty and social right to take part in the wars without any worry about family and national ties. The capitalist machine started collaborating with the Indian caste system and emerged as a powerful colonial machine. With this new development:

- the numbers of low castes and classes dropped, for several reasons. First, the benefits of associating with the British became more obvious to many high castes with military traditions, and they volunteered for service in increasing numbers. Also, it was easy to permit those men actually serving to recruit relatives and friends, making the units more homogeneous. Finally, the British themselves gradually adjusted to the caste system and identified more and more with the higher strata of Indian society (Cohen: 454).

Ghosh only blames the colonial forces for the violent use of Indian Army; he does not consider the Indian caste system and scriptures responsible for justification of violence by the members of some castes. It is evident from the childhood memories of Kesri Singh how some castes have a romantic idea of soldiering: “From his earliest childhood he had loved to listen to the tales of his uncles, his father, his gurujis, his grandfather and all the other men of the village who had gone a-soldiering when they were true jawans – fighters in the prime of their youth. He never had any ambition other than to do what they had done:
go off to serve as a sepoy in one part or another of Hindustan or the Deccan” (emphasis in the original) (Ghosh, 2015: 48).

Towards the end of the novel, Kesri Singh tries to justify his role in the violence perpetrated by colonial authorities in China. He takes the help of scriptures, “To combat the dread in his heart, he reminded himself of those heroes of the Mahabharata who had fought against their own inclination, on the side of evil, only because it was their duty: because not to fight would have brought dishonor (Ghosh, 2015: 505). The author highlights the relationship between caste-system and soldiering as a profession like any other profession in India when he says, “This stretch of the Gangetic plain had always provided the armies of northern India with the bulk of their soldiery. Since many of these jawans were from families like their own, they had relatives in at least a dozen armies (Ghosh, 2015: 52). As Deleuze and Guattari, propound “the war machine is realized more completely in the “barbarie” assemblages of nomadic warriors” so Ghosh indicates its presence in Indian society when he says:

What was the point of a soldiering life if it offered no pleasure or colour? Why would a man throw himself into a battle if he did not know that at the end of the fighting he would be able to take his ease amongst the camp-followers, seeking out his favourite girls, and being plied with rich food and heady drink (Ghosh, 2015: 53)?

Along with the prestige related to caste and the pleasures of the body the soldiers enjoy after the conquest, money is also important as Ram Singh father of Kesri Singh enquires about “the salary that was being offered and how regularly it was paid; how booty was divided and what sorts of battas – or allowances – were provided. Was there a batta
for clothing? Was there a marching-batta? Or a bonus for campaigns away from the home station? Who provided the food when in camp? How large was the camp-followers’ bazar? What did it offer? Was accommodation provided in the home station” (emphasis in the original) (Ghosh, 2015: 54)?

In *The Glass Palace* (2000), Ghosh throws light on the economic aspect of the profession of soldiering especially in the other colonies. Saya John talks about his encounter with Indian soldiers in Burma that is also related to *Ibis Trilogy* (2009-2016) because Kesri Singh and Hukam Singh take part in this colonizing mission and Hukam Singh is badly injured in the war. They volunteer for this war because they want promotions, which will lead to economic benefits evident here, “It was Pagla-baba who told Kesri about a way to get ahead in the paltan without having to depend on Bhyro Singh and his clan: volunteering for overseas service. Officers always took special note of a sepoy who volunteered, he said, because balamteers who were willing to travel on ships were hard to find in the Bengal Native Infantry” (Ghosh, 2015: 123).

In *The Glass Palace*, also Ghosh highlights the same aspect when Saya John says, “They were peasants, those men, from small countryside villages: their clothes and turbans still smelt of wood-smoke and dung fires. ‘What makes you fight,’ I would ask them, ‘when you should be planting your fields at home?’ ‘Money,’ they’d say, and yet all they earned was a few annas a day, not much more than a dockyard coolie. For a few coins they would allow their masters to use them as they wished, to destroy every trace of resistance to the power of the English… I had something to defend—a home, a country, a family—and I found myself attacked by these ghostly men, these trusting boys? How do you fight an
enemy who fights from neither enmity nor anger but in submission to orders from superiors, without protest and without conscience (Ghosh, 2000: 29)?

Bhyro Singh, who wants to recruit Kesri Singh for the East India Company army explains all benefits: economic, religious and existentialist of joining this army as compared to others. Ghosh in the Trilogy highlights the role of British colonialism in India however he does not criticize the internal colonization that is often projected as Indian culture and religion by various thinkers. Sydney Smith points out how this internal colonization helps the colonizers coming from outside. He says:

If it were possible to invent a method by which a few men sent from a distant country could hold such masses of people as the Hindoos in subjection, that method would be the institution of castes. There is no institution which can so effectually curb the ambition of genius, reconcile the individual more completely to his stations, and reduce the varieties of human character to such a state of insipid and monotonous tameness (Fisch: 51-52).

Ghosh also highlights the close relationship between British colonialism and caste system when Bhyro Singh tells them that the British preserve the caste purity of Indians. He tells:

the English care more about the dharma of caste than any of our nawabs and rajas ever did. There is not a sepoy in the Bengal Native Infantry who is not a Brahmin or a Rajput. And these are not impostors, trying to pass themselves off as twiceborn: every sepoy’s caste is carefully checked, as is his body. As you know, in the old days the armies of Hindustan were like jungles – men went into them to hide, so that they could change their
origins. After a few years of fighting ordinary julaha Muslims would pass themselves off as high-class Afghans, and half the men who called themselves Rajputs were just junglees and hill-people. Our badshahs and maharajahs put up with it because they were desperate for recruits. That is how it has been in Hindustan for hundreds of years: everything has become degenerate, people have forgotten the true dharma of caste and they do whatever they find convenient. But now at last things are being put right by the Angrezi Company. The sahibs are stricter about these matters than our rajas and nawabs ever were. They have brought learned men from their country to study our old books. These white pundits know more about our scriptures than we do ourselves. They are making everything pure again, just like it was in the days of the earliest sages and rishis. Under the sahibs’ guidance every caste will once again become like an iron cage – no one will be allowed to move one finger’s breadth, this way or that. Already the sahibs have done more to keep the lower castes in their places than our Hindu kings did over hundreds of years. In the gora paltan no one can join unless he is known to be of high caste, and no person of doubtful origin will last more than a couple of days (Ghosh, 2015: 69).

This statement hints at the existence of caste system prior to British; however, it was the British who consolidated it through the translation and canonization of various Brahmanical texts that justify discrimination based on caste, creed and gender. For instance, Manusmriti was translated by Sir William Jones and canonized by the East India
Company government through its uses as a document of Hindu Law. Similarly, Max Muller in a letter to his wife talks about the impact of Orientalist project on the Indians:

…that this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India, and on the growth of millions of souls in that country. It is the root of their religion, and to show them what that root is, is, I feel sure, the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it during the last 3,000 years (Muller: 328).

In another letter written to the Duke of Argyll he hints at the close relationship between the Orientalist project that consolidated the Empire by canonizing the texts which earlier belonged to particular castes only. He says, “India has been conquered once, but India must be conquered again, and that second conquest should be a conquest by education…By encouraging a study of their own ancient literature, as part of their education.” (Muller: 357). Bhyro Singh’s statement that “They are making everything pure again, just like it was in the days of the earliest sages and rishis” (Ghosh, 2015: 69) is derived from the discourse of Orientalism and formed a significant part of British colonial project. According to James P. Rice, “The “discovery” by the West of Sanskrit extended over several centuries and involvedprimarily missionary scholars from all over Europe. For many years, the principal Vedic texts - the four Vedas and the Vedanta, the “end of the Vedas,” which includes the Upanishads, trickled into European centers of learning” (Rice: 225). This scholarship was not used just for academic purpose but for administrative purpose as well. Schwab, a renowned Orientalist scholar discusses this relationship between academics and administration when he says:
The decisive period of Indic studies began with the arrival of English civil servants in Calcutta around 1780, who, supported by the governor, Warren Hastings, began an extraordinary undertaking. Learning does not determine its own course alone, and the initial intention, conversion, yielded to or was intermingled with another intention, conquest. The aim at this period was no longer to clear a path for knowledge but for administration (Schwab: 32).

Amitav Ghosh neglects this very important dimension of colonizing India by Orientalizing India through translation and canonization of Brahmanical texts and using them for legal purpose. The caste hierarchies that slightly weakened during the Mughal rule could unite the Indian masses against the British colonial authorities. This discourse once made part of the legal system only increased the hatred and conflict between different layers of Indian society.

The biggest fear in the mind of people was the fear of losing caste. There are instances when violence was unleashed in the name of caste. When the news of Kesri Singh’s sister Deeti’s elopement with a lower caste reaches the Regiment the entire Regiment starts treating him like an untouchable:

not the afsars and nor the jawans – will eat with you or accept water from you, or even exchange words with you. From now on you have no place in this paltan – if you choose to remain here it will be as a ghost. I will explain all this to the English officers in the morning; as you know, in matters of family and caste, they always respect our decisions. I will tell them that as far as we are concerned you are now a pariah, an outcast. In our eyes you are no better than a stray dog; you are worse than filth. For you to remain in
this tent for another moment is intolerable: it is an insult to our biraderi. You will never set foot in any of our tents ever again (Ghosh, 2015: 174).

This sudden caste-based discrimination forces Kesri Singh to sign a contract to go abroad and fight against China. Instead of questioning caste-hierarchies as a reason behind colonization of India, Ghosh highlights caste-based discrimination even among British. Captain Mee does not belong to the warrior class of Britain “his father, now dead, had been a shopkeeper – ‘a banyan’” (Ghosh, 2015:199) at this point Kesri Singh comments, “the English officers, no less than the sepoys, were very particular about the castes of the men they admitted to their ranks. Most of the officers were from professional, landed or military backgrounds and it was through their family connections” (Ghosh, 2015: 199) the British also practise some kind of untouchability among themselves as “all the other ensigns and second lieutenants had been admitted; he alone had been blackballed. That was when Kesri had understood that there was something about his butcha – perhaps to do with his parentage or caste – that set him apart from the other officers” (Ghosh, 2015: 199).

The caste-based discrimination in the British society is far less than Indian society and despite discrimination, there is a space for people to move up the social hierarchies, which is not available in India. However, in the Indian society the hate for people of lower castes is apparent in the behaviour of upper castes for instance Raja Neel Rattan’s mother’s “most potent fears centred upon the men and women who emptied the palace’s outhouses and disposed of its sewage: these sweepers and cleaners of night-soil she regarded with such loathing that staying out of their way became one of her besetting preoccupations” (Ghosh, 2008: 199). Similarly, when Kalua saves Deeti all Rajputs become bloodthirsty and their only aim is to get him killed.
When the upper caste people saw that association with the company was uplifting the status of lower caste people they sensed that if it continued the economic relationship between upper caste and lower-caste would be reversed. Out of this fear, they started joining the Company Army. The other reasons behind upper castes joining any army in general and British Indian Army in particular were caste pride, and economic benefits. However, the British Indian Army as a part of East India Company was plugged in the capitalist machine that was meant to expend the international trade by removing all resistances and obstacles. Ghosh throws light on this aspect without revealing the role played by British Indian Army in the colonization of India. Unlike the feudal rulers of various princely states in India the East India Company was not, interested in establishing monarchial state rather their major interest was in trade and business.

At international level, Europe and America were suffering losses due to more imports than exports from China that led them to find out new items that can be transported to China and the outflow of money could be controlled while searching for such item they found Opium the most potent drug for international trade as Ghosh tells:

Since the middle years of the last century, the demand for Chinese tea has grown at such a pace in Britain and America that it is now the principal source of profit for the East India Company. The taxes on it account for fully one-tenth of Britain’s revenues. If one adds to this such goods as silk, porcelain and lacquerware it becomes clear that the European demand for Chinese products is insatiable. In China, on the other hand, there is little interest in European exports – the Chinese are a people who believe that their own products, like their food and their own customs, are superior
to all others. In years past this presented a great problem for the British, for
the flow of trade was so unequal that there was an immense outpouring of
silver from Britain. This indeed was why they started to export Indian opium
to China.

...the trade was a mere trickle until about sixty years ago, when the
East India Company adopted it as a means of rectifying the outflow of
bullion. They succeeded so well that now the supply can barely keep pace
with the demand. The flow of silver is now completely reversed, and it pours
away from China to Britain, America and Europe (Ghosh, 2011: 173).

While describing the role of Opium in Empire building Ghosh seems to agree with
Carl Trocki, an eminent economist who says, “Without the drug, there probably would
have been no British Empire” since “the economic foundation of the imperial economy lay
on opium” (Trocki: xiii). Opium is an agricultural product and it was necessary for the
company to force the farmers to plant poppy in their field without the backing of armed
forces it was impossible for the company to force farmers to grow it as Deeti comments:

English sahibs would allow little else to be planted; their agents would go
from home to home, forcing cash advances on the farmers, making them
sign asámi contracts. It was impossible to say no to them: if you refused
they would leave their silver hidden in your house, or throw it through a
window. It was no use telling the white magistrate that you hadn't accepted
the money and your thumbprint was forged: he earned commissions on the
opium and would never let you off. And, at the end of it, your earnings
would come to no more than three-and-a-half sicca rupees, just about
enough to pay off your advance (emphasis in the original) (Ghosh, 2008: 29).

The opium business brings huge profits to all people involved in it except the farmers who are becoming poor day by day. Ram Singh father of Kesri Singh also expresses similar views with more clarity when he says:

the Company had begun to interfere in matters that previous rulers had never meddled with – like crops and harvests for example. In recent years the Company’s opium factory in Ghazipur had started to send out hundreds of agents – arkatis and sadar mattus – to press loans on farmers, so that they would plant poppies in the autumn. They said these loans were meant to cover the costs of the crop and they always promised that there would be handsome profits after the harvest. But when the time came the opium factory often changed its prices, depending on how good the crop had been that year. Since growers were not allowed to sell to anyone but the factory, they often ended up making a loss and getting deeper into debt. Ram Singh knew of several men who had been ruined in this way (Ghosh, 2015: 52).

The impact of Company rule on farmers and other classes can be gauged from the fact that in 1764 and 1765, “the last year of Indian Administration in Bengal, the land revenue totaled £ 817,000. The company administration realized £ 1,470,000 from 1765 to 1766; the permanent settlement was fixed in at £ 3,400,000. In many Bengal provinces, one-third of the inhabitants died in the terrible famine of 1770. With surplus siphoned off systematically, the peasant cultivators had no reserves to fall back on when the crops failed. Thousands of people were also affected by the deindustrialization, most so, perhaps by the
collapse of the textile industry, but also of iron, glass, paper, pottery, and jewellery” (Tharu: 145). This loss to farmers is a manifold gain for the Company: it gets cheap poppy for international trade, the farmers who are in debt force their sons to join the East India Company’s army and help remove all the obstacles in the opium trade at international level and within India from farmer’s side. The loss in agriculture renders the lower-caste agriculture labor jobless who are forced to join indentured labor that serves the British colonial forces in other parts of the world.

The Chinese rulers who want to ban sale of opium of in China have challenged this huge capitalist machine. This stand of China is like death sentence to all people involved in opium trade from big dealers to the farmers that is why the entire machine fights against China and destroys the Chinese defence, as Zachary describes, “Never had he seen such a spectacle, such a marvel of planning and such a miracle of precision. It seemed to him a triumph of modern civilization; a perfect example of the ways in which discipline and reason could conquer continents of darkness filled with gratitude that destiny had afforded him a place in this magnificent machine” (Ghosh, 2015: 503). The narrative of this kind “played a crucial role in the reproduction of imperial ideologies” and enlisted “ideological support for the British Empire in Asia by disavowing its origins in war and plunder” (Marez: 42).

The question remains how a civilization can fight against addiction, is it possible to fight it at the level of government, even people in the European countries are addicted to Opium and government can do nothing. Ghosh highlights this problem when he says:

“Already, we are told, the use of the drug is insinuating itself into the habits of a morbid portion of Western society. (The consumption of Great Britain
for 1831-32 was over 28,000 lbs per annum.) Such a taste once spread and fixed, by transmission through one or two generations, how shall it be eradicated” (Ghosh, 2011: 539)?

In a way opium emerged as a kind of drug to colonize, a large part of people around the world so that the big capitalists can replace the monarchs of old times and there could be no revolt against them. In the Trilogy, Deeti expresses this concern when she says, “for if a little bit of this gum could give her such power over the life, the character, the very soul of this elderly woman, then with more of it at her disposal, why should she not be able to seize kingdoms and control multitudes? And surely this could not be the only such substance upon the earth” (Ghosh, 2008: 38)? Aldoux Huxley also expressed this fear in his novel Brave New World when he shows how people are controlled with the help of intoxicating drugs “The policemen pushed him out of the way and got on with their work. Three men with spraying machines buckled to their shoulders pumped thick clouds of soma vapour into the air… Two minutes later the Voice and the soma vapour had produced their effect. In tears, the Deltas were kissing and hugging one another—half a dozen twins at a time in a comprehensive embrace” (emphasis in the original) (Huxley: 188). In this way opium becomes one substance that connects colonizer with colonized, farmers, army and traders, land and sea. Opium is grown on land but transported through sea, grown by colonized sold by colonizer therefore it become a substance that makes the people associated with it transnational subjects. The opium trade reveals a close relationship between “history, politics, and bodies of water” (Vergès: 247) through its transport through the Indian Ocean.
Ballantyne locates capitalist machines in India and India in the capitalist machines as a part of global networks and reveals the intricate nature of Empire in the following statement:

“I believe it is productive to conceive of the empire not in terms of a spoked wheel with London as the ‘hub,’ where the various spokes (whether flows of finance, lines of communication, or the movement of people and objects) from the periphery meet, but rather in terms of a complex web consisting of horizontal filaments that run among various colonies in addition to ‘vertical’ connections between the metropole and individual colonies.” Ballantyne goes on to acknowledge that India was a “subimperial center in its own right.” While accepting the utility of the web metaphor as a way of providing a structural coherence for the empire—as a “complex system of overlapping and interwoven institutions, organizations, ideologies, and discourses,” in Ballantyne’s words— I emphasize the subimperial role of India within it. If not quite a “spider” sitting at the heart of the web, India is, I argue, more than just one of the many colonial “knots” that may be said to constitute that web (Metcalf: 7).

Amitav Ghosh in the Trilogy proves this observation by highlighting the role played by Indians in various capacities in expending the British Empire to eighty five percent of the Earth. He also highlights not just the Indians even the British were equally exploited by the capitalist machines that have only aim to earn maximum profit.

The business persons who supply food and equipment to the Army that is there to protect their business interest are so blinded by their greed that they supply faulty
equipment and rotten food items to the Army. For instance, the East India Company sends its Army to China to force China to allow the opium trade but very ironically, the ships they hire for taking army there are “barely seaworthy, not fit to weather even a mild storm – and as luck would have it, they had run into a monstrous typhoon in the South China Sea; all four vessels in the convoy had been badly damaged and blown afield….Another ship had vanished after the typhoon. The name of this vessel was Golconda: she was the ‘headquarters ship’ of the 37th Madras and was carrying the regimental daftar, three hundred sepoys, and most of the officers too, including the CO…the ship was not seaworthy and should never have been hired as a transport vessel (emphasis in the original) (Ghosh, 2015: 406). This incident shows that human life has no value in the world of capitalism until unless it can bring profit.

The capitalist machines use people for earning maximum profit however simultaneously they free some of them from the clutches of feudalism, racialism etc. and help them grow. For instance the author links the marine worlds of the Atlantic and Indian Ocean by putting an African-American freedman in the Indian Ocean and Indian indentured labor in the holds of Ibis, an ex-slaver which will ultimately carry opium, and shows how the “forces from the Atlantic . . . affected the Indian Ocean World” (Ewald: 71).

Zachary is both a victim and beneficiary of colonialism he was born of a slave women and a white father Mr. Reid who grants “his mother her freedom so that he, Zachary, would not be born a slave” (Ghosh, 2008: 304-305)? As his mother is not white, therefore he has to face discrimination and always considered “black”. He gets employment at Gardiner’s shipyard in Baltimore. He had to leave this job due to discrimination he faces
there. While on the Ibis once, he closes his eyes and experience the discrimination and violence perpetrated on the Blacks. Ghosh describes this experience very realistically and reveal racialism inherent in the colonialism:

He saw again a face with a burst eyeball, the scalp torn open where a handspike had landed, the dark skin slick with blood. He remembered, as if it were happening again, the encirclement of Freddy Douglass, set upon by four white carpenters; he remembered the howls, ‘Kill him, kill the damned nigger, knock his brains out’; he remembered how he and the other men of colour, all free, unlike Freddy, had held back, their hands stayed by fear. And he remembered, too, Freddy’s voice afterwards, not reproaching them for their failure to come to his defence, but urging them to leave, scatter: ‘It’s about jobs; the whites won’t work with you, freeman or slave: keeping you out is their way of saving their bread.’ That was when Zachary had decided to quit the shipyard and seek a berth on a ship’s crew (Ghosh, 2008: 51-52.)

He leaves this job and runs away to join the crew of Ibis. Many critics think that ocean provides a space where the distinctions of caste, class and creed faints as Anupama Arora says, “Cross- cultural, caste, class, gender, and national collaborations blur all sorts of boundaries and enable the formation of new alliances (both oppressive and liberating) and emergence of reconstituted families within contexts of domination and resistance” (Arora: 22). However, this assumption is problematic because his blackness haunts him everywhere he goes when he joins the crew he is listed as black in the record of the ship, which is removed by Baboo Nob Kissin. The captain of the ship does not allow him in the
upper part of the ship because he hates the blacks. However, the sea plays its own part in
the upward movement of Zachary. Ibis is not in good condition and running short of food
and water therefore all white crew members leave it when they get an opportunity. Once
the captain is left with no option, he allows Zachary to come and take the role of first mate.
This change in the position and loneliness and dwindling health of the captain forces him
to do away with his prejudices as Ghosh describes:

Before this, the skipper had instructed Zachary to eat his meals below – ‘not
going to spill no colour on my table, even if it’s just a pale shade of yaller.’

But now, rather than dine alone, he insisted on having Zachary share the
table in the cuddy, where they were waited on by a sizeable contingent of
lascar ship’s-boys – a scuttling company of launders and chuckeroos
(Ghosh, 2008: 15).

The status of Zachary is transformed from black to white by the destructive
influence of the sea, not by the benevolent aspect of the ocean. The captain falls seriously
ill and is unable to leave the ship therefore, he asks Zachary to take up official responsibility
delegated by the owner of the ship to the captain. This task is to deliver a letter to the owner
of a plantation, some six miles from Port Louis. Zachary is happy with this responsibility
entrusted to him and is getting ready to go ashore. He is completely unaware of the ground
reality how his blackness will be perceived by the colonizers in the colonies. Serang Ali an
experienced traveler knows the social hierarchies in different parts of the world also know
that:

In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the
development of his bodily schema ... I was battered down by tom-toms,
cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects... I took myself far off from my own presence... What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood (Bhabha: xxv)?

Zachary who is unaware of this situation is planning to go ashore in his ordinary clothes, canvas trousers and the usual sailor’s banyan – a loose-fitting tunic made, in this instance, of rough and faded ordinary cloth. Serang Ali tells Zachary all the dangers involved in going ashore in a colony where blacks are either slaves or absconders and it is the duty of every White either to capture or shoot if they find a black who looks like an absconder. He warns him:

‘Malum Zikri go so-fashion to Por’Lwee, no come back,’ said Serang Ali.
‘Too muchi press gang in Por’Lwee. Plenty blackbirder wanchi catch one piece slave. Malum go be shanghaied, made slave; allo time floggin, beatin.

No good (Ghosh, 2008: 18).

Zachary understands Serang Ali’s apprehension and allows him to get him ready for the job. Serang Ali works on two aspects of Zachary - first is to remove all the traces of blackness accumulated on the body of Zachary, due to travel and neglect who is otherwise fair. Second task is to arrange clothes suitable for a white officer. As far as clothes are concerned after, the death of one and desertion of another shipmate Zachary has no need to worry there were so many clothes in their trunks. However, they required some tailoring to fit Zachary. In this matter, also Serang Ali helped him. “Among the lascars there were many who boasted of skills apart from sailoring – among them a kussab who had once worked as a ‘dress-boy’ for a shipowner; a steward who was also a darzee and earned extra
money by sewing and mending clothes; and a topas who had learnt barbering and served as the crew’s balwar. Under Serang Ali’s direction, the team went to work, rifling through Zachary’s bags and trunks, picking out clothes, measuring, folding, snipping, cutting. While the tailor-steward and his chuckeroos busied themselves with inseams and cuffs, the barber-topas led Zachary to the lee scuppers and, with the aid of a couple of launders, subjected him to as thorough a scrubbing as he had ever had” (Ghosh, 2008: 18-19). After the tailoring job is done, the next thing was to make him look like a British officer. They applied various creams and shampoos and,

In a couple of hours Zachary was looking at an almost unrecognizable image of himself in the mirror, clothed in a white linen shirt, riding breeches and a double-breasted summer paletot, with a white cravat knotted neatly around his neck. On his hair, trimmed, brushed and tied with a blue ribbon at the nape of his neck, sat a glossy black hat. There was nothing missing, so far as Zachary could see, but Serang Ali was still not satisfied: 'Sing-song no hab got' (Ghosh, 2008: 19)?

Serang Ali and his team transform him completely, no one is able to see the presence of “black blood” (Fields 1982: 146) and black skin, and he does not feel amputated in any sense. This transformation makes him too confident that Mr. Burnham does not doubt his whiteness and boasts of Whiteman’s civilizing mission “Freedom, yes, exactly,” said Mr Burnham. ‘Isn’t that what the mastery of the white man means for the lesser races? As I see it, Reid, the Africa trade was the greatest exercise in freedom since God led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Consider, Reid, the situation of a so-called
slave in the Carolinas – is he not more free than his brethren in Africa, groaning under the rule of some dark tyrant” (Ghosh, 2008: 79)?

However, he is never free of the burden of blackness because when Baboo Nob Kissin reveals the secret of his blackness to Paulette, so that she can enlist his support for arranging freedom for Neel, Kalua, Jodu, Ah Fatt and Serang Ali. When she reveals her presence on the ship and Zachary calls he an imposter she counter blames him, “Oh, Mr Reid! You allow me more credit than is my due. If I have any equal in impersonation, surely it is none other than yourself?” (Ghosh, 2008: 501) and threatens him “If his imposture had been announced from the truck of the mainmast, he could not have felt more exposed, more completely a charlatan than he did then” (Ghosh, 2008: 501).

Zachary is frightened to the core because legally he cannot occupy this position and this discovery will lead to his imprisonment and even worse because the “status of the Black is decreed by “eternal Act of Parliament,” so there is no real opportunity for self-help, upward mobility, or even something better than outright slavery” (Said, 1994: 122). However, Paulette’s aim was not to humiliate or blackmail Zachary, she only wants to enlist his support to save the lives of innocent people like Kalua and Jodu who will be executed otherwise. Her approach to this act of impersonation is more philosophic as she says, “Are not all appearances deceptive, in the end? Whatever there is within us – whether good, or bad, or neither – its existence will continue uninterrupted, will it not, no matter what the drape of our clothes, or the colour of our skin? What if it is the world that is a duperie, Mr Reid, and we the exceptions to its lies” (Ghosh, 2008: 501)?

Zachary confronts the question of identity once again when Mr. Crowle somehow gets the letter or is provided the letter as a part of some scheme by Paulette, Nob Kissin
and party. The ruthless and racist British first mate, Crowle, when discovers that Zachary has that incriminating drop of Negro blood, he threatens him of dire consequences if he does not follow him. Mr. Crowle believes in the militant racialism rampant in the Europe and America of Nineteenth Century. The spatial and temporal location of this novel highlights brings in the history of racialism in Europe and America many thinkers of that time advocated for complete ban on any kind of relationship between Whites and Blacks. For instance, Lawrence quotes Edward Lang who wanted the Government to prohibit sexual relationship between black and white races especially between White women and Black men because according to him:

The lower class of women in England are remarkably fond of the blacks, for reasons too brutal to mention; they would connect themselves with horses and asses if the laws permitted them. By these ladies they generally have numerous brood. Thus, in the course of a few generations more, the English blood will become so contaminated with this mixture...as even to reach the middle, and then the higher orders of people (Walvin, 1973: 52).

The relationship between blood and racial identity can be dealt with in two ways as described by Fields “How do you define black in your country?” Receiving the explanation that in the United States anyone with black blood was considered black, Duvalier nodded and said, ‘Well, that’s the way we define white in my country” (Fields 1982: 146). Mr. Crowle believes in the first explanation and Zachary seems to believe in the second one to some extent. Contrary to his earlier response before Paulette this time Zachary “was amazed to think that something so slight, so innocuous, could be invested with so much
authority: that it should be able to melt away the fear, the apparent invulnerability that he, Zachary, had possessed in his guise as a ‘gentleman’” (Ghosh, 2008: 465).

He forwards an explanation “I’m not a mulatto, Mr Crowle. My mother was a quadroon and my father white. That makes me a metif”. This explanation corresponds to Table from W. B. Stevenson’s *Narrative of Twenty Years Residence in South America* (1825) depicting “the mixture of the different castes, under their common or distinguishing names” (Pratt: 152). In his defense, he becomes a racialized subject because he is using the argument originally propounded to validate racial discrimination. The table reads as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FATHER</th>
<th>MOTHER</th>
<th>CHILDREN</th>
<th>COLOUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European….</td>
<td>European….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Indian….</td>
<td>Mestico….</td>
<td>6/8 White, 2/8 Indian- Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian….</td>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Mestico….</td>
<td>4/8White, 4/8 Indian.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Mestico….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>White- often very Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mestico….</td>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>White- but rather Sallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mestico….</td>
<td>Mestico….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>Sallow- often light Hair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Negro….</td>
<td>Mulatto….</td>
<td>7/8 White, 1/8 Negro- often Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro….</td>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Zambo….</td>
<td>4/8 White, 4/8 Negro- dark copper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Mulatto….</td>
<td>Quarteron….</td>
<td>6/8 White, 2/3 Negro- Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulatto….</td>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Mulatto….</td>
<td>5/8 White, 3/8 Negro- Tawny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Quarteron….</td>
<td>Quinteron….</td>
<td>7/8 White, 1/8 Negro- very Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarteron….</td>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Quarteron….</td>
<td>6/8 White, 2/8 Negro- Tawny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White….</td>
<td>Quinteron….</td>
<td>Creole….</td>
<td>White- light Eyes, fair Hair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Despite a threat to expose, his Blackness Zachary is not afraid of Crowle and he challenges him to “Go ahead” because he feels that he is a free man that is why he says, “Whatever that paper is, it’s not a letter of indenture. Take it to the Captain – believe me, I’d be glad of it” (Ghosh, 2009: 509). This casual reference to coolies by Zachary brings in the relationship between the Empire and the indenture labor as Benjamin Burnham says “Why no, Reid. Not slaves – coolies. Have you not heard it said that when God closes one door he opens another? When the doors of freedom were closed to the African, the Lord opened them to a tribe that was yet more needful of it – the Asiatick” (Ghosh, 2008: 79).

Between people like Zachary and indentured labor stands one more group known as lascars like Serang Ali. In this regard David Chappell points out the valuable role of non-European seamen like lascars on European ships, and acknowledges that their
presence “challenges the triumphant tale of European seafarers heroically globalizing the world and offers us instead an image of interdependency with alien ‘others,’ whose skills made voyaging so far from home possible” (Chappell: 75–76). For Chappell, as well as Ghosh the lascars constitute the unrecognized working class of Western trading ships. Ghosh through Zachary who comes to learn that “Serang Ali had been steering his own course all along, using a method of navigation that combined dead reckoning – or ‘tup ka shoomar’ as he called it – with frequent readings of the stars” (Ghosh, 2008: 18). Ghosh in this novel foregrounds the worst aspect of capitalism that considers everything including Lascars, opium, indentured Indian laborers, African slaves, convicts and many others just commodities. Linebaugh and Rediker locate this mechanical use of everything living and non-living as a part of capitalist machine when they call them the “engine[s] of commerce, the machine[s] of empire” (Linebaugh: 150). In his article entitled “Of Fanas and Forecasts: The Indian Ocean and Some Lost Languages of the Age of Sail” Ghosh comments on the contemporary significance of lascars whom he sees as the first among the Asians who collaborated with the capitalist project of globalization as he says, “the lives of the lascars should be of more interest today than before because they were the first Asians and Africans to participate freely and in substantial numbers in a globalised workspace” (emphasis in the original) (Ghosh, 2008: 56).

Ghosh in his earlier novel The Glass Palace (2000) also deals with the problem transportation of indentured labors to other British colonies. In this novel two characters, Baburao and Rajkumar make their fortune by recruiting Indians as indentured labor. Similarly, in the Ibis Trilogy Mr. Burnham plunges in the world of business as a transporter of convicts and indentured labor to the British Empire’s network of island these people are
only nominally free and their status of indentured laborers highlights the intimate “relationship between the political economy of convictism and indenture” (Anderson: 95). Burnham, like Baburao and Rajkumar of *The Glass Palace* treats coolies and convicts as commodities to fill his coffers by meeting the demand for labor to develop the newly acquired British Mauritius. Ghosh reveals that the human beings can be enslaved but not fully, the desire to live or the life itself asserts its power and responds to colonialism’s reduction of colonial subjects to capital, “a variety of moving subjects utilized a wide range of intimate opportunities and practices to negotiate, contest, and reconfirm the boundaries of rule” (Ballantyne: 2).

In this *Trilogy* through the movement of various characters, Ghosh foregrounds the impact of colonialism and capitalism on the lives of different characters and the entire world simultaneously. In a way, he confirms that:

> These flows of profits and people involved settlement and plantations as in the Americas, ‘trade’ as in India, and enormous global shifts of populations. Both the colonised and the colonisers moved: the former not only as slaves but also as indentured labourers, domestic servants, travellers and traders, and the colonial masters as administrators, soldiers, merchants, settlers, travellers, writers, domestic staff, missionaries, teachers and scientists (Loomba: 4)

Everybody in this novel is moving for different purposes we have indentured labourers, domestic servants, travelers and traders like Kalua, Deeti, Serang, Zachary, Bahram, Kesri Singh etc. from amongst the colonized and administrators, soldiers, merchants, settlers, travelers, writers, domestic staff, missionaries, teachers and scientists...
like Mr. Burnham, Captain Mee, Lambert, Paulette and many others. Burnham’s own territory of business including far off places like Liverpool, Andaman Islands, Canton; Calcutta, Mauritius reveals the networks of imperial commerce and society. Burnham’s life can be seen as a microcosm of the network of different phases of the Euro-American Empire as he moves from the Atlantic slave trader to accomplish of missionaries to opium trader in China and becomes a successful merchant. He buys Ibis an American ex-slaver for the transport of indentured laborers, opium, and convicts. He represents one version of Empire as it is seen through the eyes of colonizer.

As evident from the earlier mentioned statement of Zachary that his position as a free man is better than indentured labor, the colonial powers at least discursively present these indentured laborers as “‘free labour’ and the abolition of slavery (‘primitive labour’)” as an “enlightened” move” (Lowe: 194). This movement of labor from one part to another part at such as large-scale leads to the emergence of “a modern racialized division of labor” (Lowe: 192). Though apparently free the indentured laborers “were used instrumentally in this political discourse as a collective figure, a fantasy of ‘free’ yet racialized and indentured labour, at a time when the possession of body, work, life, and death was foreclosed to the enslaved and the indentured alike” (Lowe: 194). This group of thinkers in contrast to colonial scholarship sees the indentured labor as a tool in the hand of Empire to realize its capitalist dreams. According to Anderson “The practices and experiences of indenture are best understood primarily in relation to the institutions and imaginative discourses that framed the well-established contemporary colonial practice of penal transportation as a process of social dislocation and rupture” (Anderson: 94).
Undoubtedly, the Empire was not a reformative project however, its dislocation of people from one place to another place and from one type of economy to another type of economy helped in bringing out radical transformation at least for some of them. For instance Mr. Burnham had no prospectus of growth without his movement to colonies, Zachary if he had not ran away from his job could not have grown, Bahram Moddie grows only because first he leaves is paternal house and then goes to China for opium trade, similarly Paulette can realize her dream of becoming a Botanist only after running away from India otherwise her would have been a tale of exploitation and then marriage to some middle aged man.

As far as Indian poor people who opt for moving out are concerned, the life for them in their own villages and their own country with their own families is bleak and hopeless. The proposal to go abroad as an indentured labor is not a bane but a boon for them. Ghosh highlights this aspect of colonialism in his portrayal of various characters for instance Deeti and Kalua would be killed if they did not sign as indentured labor. Other indentured labor also has similar tales to share.

Sarju is from a village, near Ara, she had been a dāi, a midwife, but a mistake in the delivery of a thakur's son had caused her to be driven from her home. Heeru’s husband abandoned her in a fair and remarries she has nowhere to go so she signs as indentured labor. A rich man sexually exploits Munia when her family goes to him with his son by Munia he put their house on fire only Munia escapes because she is sleeping in another hut. Two sisters Ratna and Champa married in a family whose lands were contracted to the opium factory and could no longer support them; rather than starve, they had decided to indenture themselves together. This reference to Ratna and Champa’s life hints at a bigger
colonial game that destroyed the means of sustenance available to people and hence compel them to sign as indentured labors. The obliteration of resources at local level, which consequently launched a series of cases leading to the migration of laborers from India to Britain’s overseas colonies. Ranajit Das Gupta throws light on the economic aspect of indentured labor when he points out, “The question of survival or death was a stark reality facing them. The erosion of non-agricultural sources of livelihood, that is, the process of deindustrialisation which had begun in the early decades of the nineteenth century intensified the pressure on agriculture (Gupta: 1797). Similarly, Lomarsh Roopnarine also establishes a relationship between colonial exploitation and migration of Indians when he says, “India as a dispatching colony experienced uneven development because of British colonialism. Foreign penetration and imperialism disintegrated and dissolved the traditional economic and social structure in the countryside, rendering massive population available for recruitment (Roopnarine: 103).

Though the colonial authorities claim of providing the first legal system to India that does justice to each and every one without discrimination, Deeti’s comments on how the Company officers compel the farmers to grow poppy and ruin them economically and the untouchability practised with Blacks in general and Zachary in particular shows that European culture is only an international version of Brahmanism. Later on Raja Neel Rattan whose family practised untouchability and who were next only to Brahmins in caste hierarchies says that Mr. Burnham and his group like the Brahmins of India cannot be punished for their crimes that is why they have “become the world’s new Brahmins” (Ghosh, 2008: 239). Along with other reasons, Brahmanism is the major reason behind colonization of India. Ronald B. Inden considers this close relationship between religion
and statecraft a major reason behind backwardness when he says, “India is still regarded as a civilization in which a distorted form of civil society long ago engulfed the economy and state” (Inden: 76). Similarly Barrington Moor, Jr. comments on the relationship between religion, caste and economy when he says:

In pre-British Indian society, and still today in much of the countryside, the fact of being born in a particular caste determined for the individual the entire span of existence, quite literally from before conception until after death. It gave the range of choice for a marital partner in the case of parents, the type of upbringing the offspring would have and their choice of mate in marriage, the work he or she could legitimately undertake, the appropriate religious ceremonies, food, dress, rules of evacuation (which are very important), down to most details of daily living, all organized around a conception of disgust. (Moore, 1967: 337-8).

This relationship between religion and statecraft validates caste hierarchies and ill-treats its own citizens. The issue of caste is dealt with in all novels of Ghosh and a few untouchable characters grow rich and powerful when they move out of India. In the Ibis Trilogy Kalua is ill-treated by the upper caste people, he is not even allowed to look at the face of upper caste people. Deeti’s in laws decide to burn her alive with the dead body of her husband, for economic reasons, and the moment he saves her, he becomes a criminal in the eyes of upper caste people, though according to the British Law he only helped the law in preventing widow immolation which is an illegal activity in 1838. The upper caste people uphold the laws prescribed in Manusmriti, which very ironically is canonized by the British themselves. When the upper caste people want to kill Kalua for being in love
with Deeti, an upper caste woman they are doing nothing wrong because their Dharma prescribes:

A (man of) low (caste) who makes love to a maiden (of) the highest (caste) shall suffer corporal punishment (Buhler: 318).

If a lower caste man has, sex with an upper caste woman should be killed as per Dharma:

A sudra who has intercourse with a woman of a twice-born caste (varna), guarded or unguarded, (shall be punished in the following manner): if she was unguarded, he loses the part (offending) and all his property; if she was guarded, everything (even his life) (Buhler: 319).

When Dharma, which can be seen as synonym of legal system prescribes such punishments for saving the life of an innocent person than only option left before people is to move out of that place. This Dharma is so deeply ingrained the psyche of Indians that they cannot get rid of it permanently. For instance Deeti who feels attracted to Kalua from the beginning and saved by him from the deathbed, marries him and is still dogged by Brahmanism housed deep in her psyche:

hearing voices in the recesses of her head, condemning her for running away with Kalua? Why should she know that no matter how hard she tried, she would never be able to silence the whispers that told her she would suffer for what she had done – not just today or tomorrow, but for kalpas and yugas, through lifetime after lifetime, into eternity (Ghosh, 2008: 431).

When Neel Rattan uses the phrase “world’s new Brahmins” it connects the Indian Brahmanism and European Brahmanism as is evident from following shloka from Manusmriti:
The son of a Brahmana, a Kshatriya, and a Vaisya by a Sudra (wife) receives no share of the inheritance; whatever his father may give to him, that shall be his property (Buhler: 358).

The life of Zachary in his first phase confirms to this formula, as his father is a White man and his mother a black woman therefore he gets nothing except freedom and the surname of his father. However, in India the situation is even worse Raja Neel Rattan’s father just gives hundred rupees to the women when they become pregnant and dispatch them to their villages. Along with the plight of lower caste people Ghosh highlights the fear in the heart of upper caste people of losing caste. One can lose caste in many ways and one way is travel by sea. Two major characters Kesri Singh and Neel Rattan lose their caste in the novel. Kesri Singh loses his caste because his sister runs away with an untouchable and Neel Rattan is forced to lose his caste by the British. He is Imprisoned and compelled to do menial jobs meant for scavengers.

In the above mentioned instances Ghosh sometimes conforms to the Orientalist idea of the Orient, sometimes challenges the Orientalist idea of the Orient, and sometimes challenges the internal colonization within the Orient in general and India in particular. However when it comes to delineating superstitious nature of Indians as in other novels so in this novel he conforms to the Orientalist idea of superstitious Orient and supports it in the name of uncanny. Most of the Orientalist thinkers have associated India with superstitions, for instance Ronald B. Inden says, “the third world; where religion and superstition still run rife, are underdeveloped” (Inden: 76). Even Karl Marx a critic of capitalism and colonialism supported colonialism as quoted by Saïd in his Orientalism:
we must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath the traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies (Said: 153).

It is very strange that Amitav Ghosh, who intends to challenge colonial depiction of India, glorifies superstitious nature of Indians. In *The Sea of Poppies* Ghosh makes use of an omen, a superstition as the source of wealth for the family of Neel Rattan. At that time, his father was the king and Mr. Burnham who was just a beginner in the opium business and who required a lot of money comes to the old Raja for financial help. Instead of looking into the merit of the case the Raja looks at

a white mouse had appeared under his chair – hidden from the trader, but perfectly visible to the zemindar, it sat still until the Englishman had had his say. A mouse being the familiar of Ganesh-thakur, god of opportunities and remover of obstacles, the old zemindar had taken the visitation to be an indication of divine will: not only had he allowed Mr Burnham to defer his rent for a year, he had also imposed the condition that the Raskhali estate be allowed to invest in the fledgling agency (Ghosh, 2008: 84).

The problem with Ghosh’s depiction of superstitions is that he proves them right every time not even for once they fail. Similar is the case when Bahram is about to leave for China on his perhaps last visit and when “the appointed morning arrived, everything had gone wrong: an owl was heard at daybreak, a dire augury; and then his turban was
found on the floor, having fallen down at night. Worse still, while dressing to accompany Bahram to the docks, Shireenbai had broken her red marriage bangle” (Ghosh, 2011: 112). Ghosh proves this bad omen true first Bahram’s ship is caught in a storm and he loses a significant amount of opium, then the Chinese authorities do not allow sale of opium. He finally dies in mysterious circumstances, and Ghosh puts the blame on ghosts when he indicates that the spirit of his Chinese wife appears before him and invites him down into the sea where he drowns and dies. Later on, his Ghost appears twice before different people. Ghosh in a novel based on history brings in the Ghost of Bahram Moddie who comes to rest in the same room. First Raju who is in no way related to Mr. Bahram and completely unaware of even the existence of someone known by this name spots the ghost. Ghosh describes this encounter very realistically:

Moonlight was flowing in through the windows, one of which was wide open. Raju saw now, to his great surprise, that someone was sitting by the window, in a chair: all Raju could see of him was a turbaned head, silhouetted against the moonlight. To Raju’s relief it seemed that the man had not noticed his presence. Holding his breath, he took a step backwards, thinking that he had better leave while he could. But just as he was about to slip away the turbaned head turned to look in his direction: the silvery moonlight gave Raju a glimpse of a man with a broad, square face and a clipped beard (Ghosh, 2015: 448).

When Raju tells Freddie, Bahram’s son by his Chinese wife that he saw someone in the room, which is supposed to be empty and gives the description of the person he has
seen Freddie at once realizes that Raju saw the Ghost of his father Bahram. Then he walks towards the door at the end of the gangway, Paulette also follows him and they see:

One of the windows was open and its shutter was flapping gently in the breeze; beside it stood an empty chair. Freddie walked over to the window at a slow, measured pace, almost as though he were afraid of what he would find. Paulette heard a deep sigh as he looked over the sill. ‘Come. See.’ Stepping up to the window she saw that a rope-ladder was hanging from the rim, flapping gently in the breeze. ‘Is it this ladder you saw that day?’ said Freddie. ‘Was it hanging like this, eh?’ ‘Maybe, I cannot say,’ said Paulette. ‘Anyway why is it hanging there now (Ghosh, 2015: 454)?

Ghosh projects superstitions as integral part of Indian life that forewarn Indians about the dangers and provide them guidance if they follow them. He does so in a very subtle manner by making a ghost out of a person who “was one of the few who never sought the guidance of augurers, astrologers, fortune-tellers and the like. If he was an exception in this, it was mostly because he had always placed more trust in his own intelligence and foresight than in the divinations of kismet-doctors (Ghosh, 2011: 382).

In this Trilogy, he moves from superstitions to science but by mixing science and superstitions. Deeti portrays the storm that helped her husband and others escape with an eye. She may not be aware of the scientific details about the storm that it is a cyclonic storm and each cyclone has a center that is named eye by the scientists but it does not resemble eye in any way still through Neel, Ghosh tries to prove her a visionary if not a scientist when he says, “Deeti’s depiction of the Parting that was genuinely visionary: this was the fact that she had shown the storm to be wrapped around an eye. This bespoke an
understanding of the nature of storms that was, for its time, not just unusual but revolutionary: because 1838, the year of that storm, was when a scientist first suggested that hurricanes might be composed of winds rotating around a still centre – an eye, in other words” (Ghosh, 2011: 20)

The only point when he challenges the orientalization of Orient by the colonial forces is his depiction of Shireenbai’s father, Seth Rustamjee, who has genuine interest in science and technology. He heads a shipbuilding industry and is “responsible for several significant innovations in shipbuilding techniques, he had also trained his apprentices to stay abreast of technological advances in this rapidly changing field….Indeed, their ships were so advanced in design, and built at such little cost, that many European fleets and shipowners – even Her Majesty’s Navy – had begun to send commissions to Mistrie & Sons in preference to the shipyards of Southampton, Baltimore and Lübeck” (Ghosh, 2011: 49). Here Ghosh shows that once the Europeans are unable to face a challenge form an Indian they amend the rule to buy ships from abroad in such a way that buying ships from an Indian company will be costlier. Here he indicates how advancement in the field of science and technology is restricted by the colonial intervention.

In the world, which is mostly dictated by caste, class and racial prejudices and the capitalist forces intervene even in the private life of people; Ghosh shows that it is only the ability of the individuals to transcend various barriers created by the discourses of race, caste, religion, nationalism etc. that proposes a ray of hope. For instance, Paulette, the white European woman is able to transcend the narrow boundaries therefore instead of aligning herself with colonial power she “renounces the privileges of imperialism and elect[s] affinity with victims of [European] expansionist cultures” (Gandhi: 1). Baboo Nob Kissin
transcends orthodox Hinduism and treats Neel Rattan, an upper caste who has lost his caste as his son, has full sympathy and love for Kalua and frees him when he was imprisoned on the Ibis. He does not have any grudges against anybody including his employers who many times kick and abuse him. Towards the end, Kesri Singh is also able to transcend the barriers laid down by his caste when he accepts Kalua, an untouchable as his brother-in-law.

The *Ibis Trilogy* is different from his other novels because it challenges both the European colonization as well as the internal colonization to some extent. However, he conforms to the Orientalist projection at many places still he challenges it at some other places. For instance, he highlights how the absence of science and technology in India has more to with colonial intervention than the temperament of Indians as evident from the example of Bahram’s father-in-law whose shipbuilding industry is destroyed by the colonial intervention. However when it comes to superstitions, caste-based exploitation, illiteracy, oppression of women etc. he does not explore the role of colonial scholarship, colonial money and colonial military.
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