ABSTRACT

POSITIONING ORIENTALISM IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH

The thesis “Positioning Orientalism in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh” analyzes praxis of Orientalist discursive formations and their ideological as well as practical influence on the Oriental world. It questions the postcolonial writers like Amitav Ghosh along with the whole category known as postcolonial theory and literature, which is seen as an extension of neocolonialism. It will position the novels of Amitav Ghosh in the discourse of Orientalism by revealing the elements of Orientalism in the written part of his texts, in the silences, and in the ways the texts are produced, published, popularized, canonized and interpreted. The theoretical framework for this research is based on the cultural function of literary artifacts.

In his novels instead of looking at what is right or wrong from social point of view he invents a character who is somewhat spiritual in nature for instance Nirmal, the school Headmaster, in The Hungry Tide, Jethamoshai in The Shadow Lines, Mangala in The Calcutta Chromosome and Baboo Nob Kissin Pander in the Ibis Trilogy and confuse the social issues with spiritualism. In the depiction of these characters, Amitav Ghosh confirms to the Orientalized version of the Orient and projects Indian culture merged in spirituality, which is an invented tradition, and Orientalist scholarship has much to do with it. The West associates India with superstition and irrationality and very ironically Ghosh tries to challenge this notion by glorifying superstition in the name of spiritualism for instance in The Calcutta Chromosome he shows that Ross’s research is remote controlled by a group of native technologists of interpersonal transference, which allows them to enter new
bodies. This image reverberates with Western stereotypes of the Hindu belief in reincarnation.

A close study of Ghosh’s novels reveals that despite his characters’ movement around the world they conform to the Orientalized version of the Orient and their identities are not that fluid.

In the post-colonial period when most of the former colonies got political freedom, the neocolonial forces adopted a new strategy of fabricating its allies by proposing a share of the center in a seemingly new way so that it can emerge as the sole proprietors of both the neo-Orientalism as well as the anti-colonialism. Therefore, in reversal of previous situation of East is a career for the Western Orientalists, it has now become a career for the displaced Easterners. The Third World migrant intellectuals are converted into the carriers of the task, which was once started, by Erpenius, Guillume Postel, Anquetil-Duperron, Sir William Jones etc. In this way, postcolonial writers are caught in the contemporary Orientalism, which is designed to avoid making sense of the current crisis, and, in the process, to cover up the origins of postcolonial intellectuals in a global capitalism of which they are not so much victims as beneficiaries.

These displaced native intellectuals come from the colonized world, which was made to internalize the ideological procedures of the colonial mission through the assimilation of English text that spread the colonialist imperatives within the unsuspecting native body. It rendered them human individuals, who as per Poststructuralist theory given by Gilles Deleuze in his Anti-Oedipus (1977), are not sovereign subjects with autonomous agency over their consciousness that is constructed discursively through shifting discourses
Chapter One introduces the author and the critical framework that is to be applied to analyze the novels of Amitav Ghosh. This chapter establishes how this research is the first of its kind where a novelist who claims to speak on behalf of Oriental subaltern and who historicizes the Oriental experience is going to be questioned from within.

Chapter Two locates Amitav Ghosh in the discourse of Orientalism and Orientalism in the works of Amitav Ghosh.

Chapter Three shows when “reason” becomes religion it causes tragedies as it happens in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason*.

Chapter Four deals with *The Shadow Lines* and shows how the narrative of the novel conforms to the idea of nation as “minoritarian phenomena that could be termed “nationalitarian,” through the incidents related to the life of Ila in London, Grandmother’s idea of nationalism and murder of Tridib by a nationalist mob in Dhaka.

Chapter Five deals with the study of *The Calcutta Chromosome* and shows how Colonial powers in India either glorified or condemned all irrational and superstitious acts practised by some people here.

Chapter Six through the study of *The Glass Palace* looks into the history of expansion of British colonialism with the help of Indian Army.

Chapter Seven locates Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* in colonial and neocolonial machines and vice versa and finds that these are the major forces responsible for the emergence and canonization of Indian diaspora literature.
Chapter Eight 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.

Chapter Nine concludes the research, establishes the uniqueness of this thesis, and shows how it will transform the research on Amitav Ghosh in future.