CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation of Indian novels in English can be traced in two ways. It can be done either according to the ages or the theme or mode of the novels. The critics consider Indian writing in English as a distinct form. It gained its prestigious position during the 1930s. A large number of novels in the early years are historical in nature. Novels till date make use of history for weaving a didactic and interesting book. Novel has its origin from the art of story-telling. In this sense, it can be dated back to the Rig Veda and Upanishads.

Human perspectives, ideas, passions, experiences, joys, sorrows, aspirations, frustrations and the struggles in life form the core of all arts and more particularly of literary art. Man is restless and rootless in his search for peace, comfort and shelter. He does not have the sense of belonging. The bliss and comforts of heaven have disappeared from this complex and harsh world. Human existence is meaningless, futile and complex.

Immigration and cultural alienation are global phenomenon of the modern scenario. "Post-modernism" or "Pre-colonialism" is a current movement of thought or literary theory that deals with the effects of colonization on the culture and thoughts of the settled population. The theoretical tirads of Jacques Lacan, Michael Foucaldt and Edward Said brought this term to be applied extensively to
post modern-literature. The term takes its root from colonialism which refers to a group of people getting settled in a new society and forming a social order subject to their parent state.

In India, we have an array of postcolonial writers adorning the literary horizon. India has offered a noteworthy and salutary contribution to the growth and grace of global literature. It has made its powerful presence known to the world more particularly in the realm of fiction writing. Indian English fiction is now considered as one of the major branches of Commonwealth literature. The last two decades have witnessed the flowering of Indian English fiction with novelists like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Allen Sealy, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Seth, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Dina Mehta, Shashi Tharoor, Arundhati Roy, Manju Kapur and many others. They have been recognized outside India for their contribution to English novel writing.

Amitav Ghosh is probably the best narrative artist in the recent decades who has come to limelight after 1980s. Ghosh has moved across four continents and has a personal and professional interest in diaspora. The term 'diaspora' is used to refer to the dispersion of religious or ethnic groups from their homelands, either forced or voluntary. "Displacement" is a key term in the post-colonial theory which applies to all migrant conditions. It refers to physical displacement and a sense of being socially or culturally out of place.
"Hybridity" is another catch-phrase from the post-colonial theory which refers to the migrant's culturally mixed identity as the opposed forces of assimilation and the search for roots. Ghosh's five novels are selected to represent the major themes on the basis that, out of struggle and displacement, the characters yearn for personal significance and strong relationship in their place of existence.

This research work deals with the Ghosh's first five novels; which provide distinct perspectives: The Circle of Reason (1986), The Shadow Lines (1990), The Calcutta Chromosome (1995), The Glass Palace (2000) and The Hungry Tide (2004). Ghosh has also written four works of non-fiction, In an Antique Land (1992), Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma (1998), Countdown (1999) on India's nuclear policy and The Imam and the Indian (2002). He has written a large collection of essays on different themes such as fundamentalism, history of the novel, Egyptian culture, and literature.

The fictions of Amitav Ghosh are marked by extreme themes that go side by side with post-colonialism. He blends the legends of history in his novels, which intensify the interest of his novels, thereby bringing together literature and history, young people, culture and tradition. His major works include The Circle of Reason, The Shadow Lines, The Calcutta Chromosome, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide and The Sea of Poppies.
In India, in the early thirties and forties nationalism, freedom struggle with social reform and political consciousness dominated the novelists concern, but the novelists’ of the 1960's shifted the focus to the individual's quest for the existential problems and social relationships. In the 1980s there is further discernable change with Rushdie's *The Midnight Children*, novelists were inspired to take up the relationship between national issues and the and the individuals in the society.

Women writers like Anita Desai and Shashi Deshpande looked back at the issues of freedom struggle, Independence, Partition, Emergency, India China War, the birth of Bangladesh, the Massacre of Sikhs in 1984. The post-modernists equate riots and rebellions with wars and battles since their focus is to bring to the centre the marginalized events and persons. The focus is on the individual and the private rather than the royal and the public, to show the public and political affairs influencing and shaping the private life of a nation.

Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Ice Candyman* examines the inexorable logic of Partition as an offshoot of fundamentalism sparked by hardening communal attitudes. First published in 1988 in London this novel is set in repartition India in Lahore. Other partition novels are Manohar Malgonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges* (1964), Chaman Nahal's *Azadi* (1965) and Kushwant Singh’s *Train to Pakistan* (1956). However in Indian English fiction it is the second novel on partition by a woman author.
Bapsi Sidhwa uses a narrative to tell the tale. A precocious Parsi girl, eight years old with a handicapped foot narrates the story of her changing world with sophistication and wonder. With the wonder of the child, she is observing social change and human behaviour, noting interesting sidelights, seeking and listening to opinions and occasionally making judgements. The subtle irony and deft usage of language create humour which does not shroud but raucously highlight the trauma of Partition. In her first novel The Crow Eaters the dying businessman, Fardoon Junglewalla vehemently protests against the nationalist movement exhorting his offspring to remain loyal to the British Empire.

Attia Hosain's partition novel Sunlight on a broken Column (1961) also uses a narrator-heroine to similar effect. Attia Hosain's narrator heroine Laila reveals the trauma of Partition through her memories and insights of her Taluqdar family disintegrating. Like in the Icy Candyman, the enigma of partition is sensitively shown. Like the narrator in the Icy Candyman, the grown up Laila is also both nostalgic and restless. She ruminates and wanders in her disbanded ancestral home Ashiana, after partition. Like a torrent memories come flooding back. Her new found identity and struggle to be Ameer's lover and wife curbs any desire for a return to the cloistered feudal order. Instead it broadens her horizons of life. She feels enlightened like the Buddha.

Both Bapsi Sidhwa and Attia Hosain realize that there are no easy solutions to communal holocausts except intense struggle against dogmatism. These receptive writers share similar perspectives on the calamities of partition. The
denouement of both their novels is quite similar. Both stress a similar vulnerability of human understanding and life, caused by the throes of partition which relentlessly divide friends, families, lovers and neighbours. *Ice Candyman* is a novel of upheaval which includes a variety of characters from all communities. As there are Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Parsis, there is a multiple perspective of partition emerging as viewed by all the affected communities. Thus, the prominent writers of diaspora focus mainly on the themes of displacement, migration and exile which is of great relevance to the current situations of the modern world.

Amitav Ghosh is one of the top ten contemporary Indian writers, who have won many accolades including the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Prix Medicis Etrangere of France. Although less prone to controversy, he is responsible for producing spectrum of some of the most lyrical and insightful works on the effect of colonialism on the native people. He is a novelist full of promise, potentiality, and magnificent achievement and has authored eleven books and a trilogy, out of which five are nonfiction.

Ghosh's major nonfiction writings include *Countdown*, a book on India’s nuclear policy; *The Imam and the Indians*, a collection of essays on various topics on Egyptian culture and literature and *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma*. He has published about thirty four articles encompassing a variety of concerns. From a "Holiday in Cambodia" to "The Tsunami of December 2004", from "The Fundamentalist Challenge" to a "Comment of Buddhist Monks and Ethnic
Politics: A Warzone in an Island Paradise", his essays and articles have appeared in *The Hindu, The New Yorker* and *Granta*, while his guest lectures and readings cross a hundred in number.

He has served on the juries of several international film festivals, including those at Locarno and Venice. All these contributions have established for him an international commendation. *India Today* pronounces his international acclaim stating that "he is a social anthropologist, a novelist, a commentator, on events, a critic? He is all these; if anyone comes close to a modern renaissance man, it has to be him" (*Countdown* par.3).

Ghosh resembles other post-modernist writers in using the multiple narrative techniques, the story telling style to chart the vast spectrum of human experience and its various pathways of survival and self-preservation. His conflation of time and space of distinct times and distant places is extreme. His proficiency in employing these devices makes his novels outstanding. He cannot be easily excelled in narrative technique. Ghosh is "described as being sometimes fluent in five languages, which testifies to his international, multi-cultural background" (Painter 34).

Ghosh was born in Kolkata (then Calcutta) in 1956. His father was first a Lieutenant Colonel in the army and later, a diplomat. Ghosh grew up in East Pakistan, in Sri Lanka, Iran and India. He attended the Doon School in Dehra Dun, and then received a BA (with honours) in History from St Stephen's College, Delhi
University in 1976 and an MA in Sociology from the University in 1978. He received a diploma in Arabic from the Instuit Bourguiba des langues Vivantes, in Tunis, Tunisis, in 1979, and then a D.Phil. (Ph.D.) in Social Anthropology from (Edmund's hall) Oxford University in 1982. As a part of that course, in 1980 he went to Egypt to do field work in the village of Lataifa. He worked for a while as a journalist for The Indian Express newspaper in New Delhi.

Since then he has been a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for Social Sciences, at Trivandrum, Kerala (1982-83), a Visiting Professor of Anthropology at the University of Virginia (1988), the University of Pennsylvania (1989), the American University in Cairo (1994), and Columbia University (1994-97), and Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Queens College of City University of New York (1999-2003). In the spring of 2004, Ghosh was a Visiting Professor in the department of English at Harvard University. He spends part of each year in Calcutta, but lives in New York.

Ghosh, the great literary icon has been described as an "elder statesman" among Indian writers in English. His first novel, The Circle of Reason, won one of France's top literary awards the Prix Medicis Etrangere in 1990. Also, in 1990, he received the Annual Award of the Sahitya Academi (Indian Academy of Literature) for his novel The Shadow Lines; later that year, he received the Anada Puraskar in Calcutta for the same novel. His essay “The Ghost's of Mrs.Gandhi” was published in Best American Essays in 1995; in 1996, his science-fiction novel, The Calcutta Chromosome, won the Arthur C.Clarke Award. He also received the
Pushcart Prize in 1999 for his essay, "The March of the Novel through History: The Testimony of my Grandfather's Bookcase," his essay "Countdown" was a finalist for the American Society of magazine Editor's Award in 1999.

Ghosh has moved across four continents and has a personal and professional interest in diaspora. His perennial concerns are partition, emigration, exile, cultural displacement and individual's quest for personal significance and the stories that stem from transnational cultural flows. Shukla rightly states his concerns as "the notion of statehood and the drawing of borders, the turning of people into refugees, the making of nations and running through all this narrative form itself and its varied and multiple applications" (114).

The novels of Ghosh brim with interesting themes set against historical backdrops. His roots are in journalism and academic writing, investigations and analysis, a revelation of profound connections and patterns but first and foremost, and overriding all the many ideas that inform his work are the stories, the proliferation of characters whose lives engage us and who takes us to some richly imagined places and times.

The most distinctive feature of Ghosh's novels is their multilayered structure. An anthropologist by profession, his interest ranges from history and current events to folk myths all of which he interprets and weaves together in his novels. As a result, they are captivating to the discriminating reader who is willing
to go deep into them. Ghosh’s writing spans a variety of genres:

Ghosh’s fictional and non-fictional literature demonstrates fluidity across narrative form. His work is characterized by a thematic concern with modernity, globalization, and the violent production of the modern nation-state. Ghosh’s writing is constantly attentive to details of local persons and places, while also demonstrating their imbrications in global historical movements (Sanga 78).

The career of the author as a novelist began with an exciting novel, Circle (1986). Since then he has written various novels and each one is different from the preceding one. Every time he attempts a different theme with diverse location. His attempt at imaginative empathy characterizes all Ghosh’s writing to date and seems to be the product of humanist concern to transcend culturally constructed differences. Yet there are commonalities between several of his major interests and the concerns of post-colonial theorists who take a constructivist view of culture.

Ghosh demonstrates the hybrid nature of cultures articulated through language. He endeavours to recuperate the silenced voices of those occluded from the historical record. Paradoxically, though while metonymy appears to take precedence over metaphor in his writing, the more one reads his work the more its emphasis on particularities appears to speak larger issues. While undertaking Doctoral research in Egypt, Ghosh developed an interest in the routes of cultural
exchange through which the pre-colonial Indian Ocean cloth trade operated and making weaving a dominant theme in Circle. His "diasporic subjectivity and the subject matter of his fiction have led many critics to see him as a blossoming postcolonial writer" (Khan 43).

Circle is not merely circular but a finely patterned novel, and when seen as a whole, displays the intricate bodywork of a master weaver in the making. The journey from "Satwa" through "Rajas" to "Tamas", the three parts of the novel, is not a straight-forward narrative but one full of resonances like an unfolding raga circling and repeating notes. And like a singer, Ghosh expects appreciation of the subtle variations, the nuances and the resonances. The book is an outline of various personal efforts at imposition of order on a chaotic world in order to come to terms with it, or just to live. It is about the aesthetic quest necessary for the motivation and survival of the artiste in every soul in an inherently numbing, argumentative and hesitant environment.

Almost all the major characters in the Circle try to understand and constitute the world and hence motivate their actions through patterning of some kind. In fact, the principal quest in the novel seems to be one for the "right metaphor". The novel implies like other metafictional texts that reality is also constructed and mediated and is to the extent 'fictional' and can be understood through an appropriate reading process.
The major characters, in their various attempts of "reading reality" create and float in a "medley of metaphors" (Rao and Rajeshwar 281). Carbolic acid, sewing machines, germs, birds and the book *Life of Pasteur* appear throughout the book connecting the three sections. The other characters attempt at understanding and gaining and retaining control include singing, weaving, politics, theories of straight roads, and queues, among others. And each character plays his fiction as metaphor and reality merge in the reading.

These are the attempts at imposing and subsuming oneself in a pattern in a chosen context. This desire to find oneself a context motivates all stories and story tellers. In the relating of episodes from one's own life – choosing, editing, interpreting, one succeeds in imposing a pleasing order, in seeing significances, in transforming humdrum and apparently drab and meaningless daily existence into an aesthetically pleasing artifact.

The novel *Circle* follows the fortunes of a young weaver, Alu, who is brought up in Bengal village and, after a false accusation that he is a member of a terrorist group, subsequently flees westwards, first to a fictional Gulf state and later to Algeria. The novel suggests that weaving is a diasporic activity which transcends national origins and unites worlds that have habitually been viewed as separate; and in doing so, it anticipates Ghosh later contention in his non-fiction. *Circle* is "the novel of a boy's adventures in three different parts of the world: rural Bengal, the mythical Middle Eastern "boom" city of al-Ghazira, and El-Qued, a desert town in Algeria" (Alam, *Indian* 138).
Alu is indisputably the main protagonist, the binding force and unifying angel, but for much of the action he is the silent centre around which an abundance of other stories are told. Many of these include fabulist elements and, although Ghosh never departs from the bounds of what is strictly possibly, the use of fantasy suggest a world-view that has affinities with both contemporary "magic realism" and a range of South Asian narrative traditions. Indian influences include the Sanskrit classics and twentieth-century Bengali literature and these two strands come together towards the end of the novel, when a character attempts to stage a production of Tagore’s *Chitraganda*, a dance drama based on an episode in the *Mahabharata*.

Magic realism elements are specifically portrayed in the second of the novel's three parts, set in Ghosh’s Middle Eastern oil state, al-Ghazaria. When Alu is buried in the collapsed debris of a newly built commercial complex, he is saved by two antique sewing machines on which a huge slab of falling concrete comes to rest "just a hair away from his nose". Circle employs a complex series to suggest the convergence of the ordinary and the extraordinary and to eliminate the possibility of reading and the narrative passively, as a casual, linear chain of real occurrences.

Throughout the novel events are recounted in this manner, as so much rumour and gossip- "people talked", "it was generally reckoned", "Some said they knew", "That was a little difficult to believe", "someone said" – a mode of narration which enables Ghosh to bridge the divide between the readily believable and the
fantastic. The "magic realism" of the novel is a product of the oral folk imagination, a certain way of narrating experience, rather than an incursion into what is genuinely supernatural. In the opening page of the novel, the narrative voice relates:

Years later-thirteen to be exact – when people talked about all that had happened Some said they knew the moment they set eyes on that head. That was a little difficult to believe. But, still, it was an extraordinary head huge, several times too large for an eight-year-old and curiously uneven, bulging all over with knots and bumps (3).

"Reason" is the chief theme of the novel. In Part I, Alu's uncle and foster father, Balaram, is a passionate advocate of a supranational vision of scientific reason, inspired by the work of Louis Pasteur, which leads him to undertake a campaign against germs and a superstition in the local village. In Part II silent Alu becomes the heir, when after his brush with death in the collapse of the commercial complex, he waxes lyrical on Pasteur's achievements and finds himself the founder of an anti-capitalist community, devoted to the eradication of both germs and the personal ownership of money.

The theme continues into Part III, where Balaram's original inspiration, the copy of *Life of Pasteur*, is finally cremated, along with the body of one of the novel's central figures, in a scene which stresses the necessity of
accommodations that enables ancient traditions to have valence in the contemporary world. Reason, as the title suggests, is circular and the view that the novel propounds is antipathetic to linear historiography.

"Travel" is the spiritual quest, a quest for narrative design, for personal significance in a meaningful world. This quest that is narrated in Circle is present in all subsequent works of Ghosh. The novel "abounds in stories, odd characters, frightful journeys, strange happenings. There is the conflict between reason and superstition, mind and feeling, criminality and the law, the collective and the individual" (Wasi 52).

In the first part, Balaram's main opponent is Bhudeb Roy, who opposes his vision of circularity with a different belief on which the technological progress of Europe, America and Japan has been founded. Though Balaram's world is destroyed at the end of this section, the primacy of reason in the novel remains unchallenged, as Alu migrates to new climes and ensures the continuation of Balaram's cyclic vision through his weaving and his continuation of the campaign against germs.

The presentation of style of Ghosh in Circle is similar to Salman Rushdie's vein of imagination. Shadow, his next project is an acclaimed masterpiece and evokes postcolonial situations, socio-cultural dislocations and anxieties for a considerable period of time. Here the history of partition is very real, indeed, but its
broad strokes are used to paint a backdrop against which a personal struggle of the young protagonist and his family gets the spotlight.

**Shadow** focuses on a very particular personal history – the experience of a single family as a microcosm for a broader national and international experience. The lives of the narrator's family have been irrevocably changed as a consequence of Bengal's partition between India and Pakistan at the time of Independence and the subsequent experience of the East Pakistan Civil War of 1971, which led to the creation of Bangladesh. To Novy Kapadia, historical events in the *Shadow* have provided the raw material for the novel in her book *Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines*.

The *Shadow Lines* shows the borders that divide people and, as in all Ghosh's work, the main emphasis is on the arbitrariness of cartographical demarcations. Towards the end when the members of the family are about to undertake a journey from Calcutta to their former home in Dhaka, the narrator's grandmother wants to know whether she will "be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane" (151), an ingenuous response which nevertheless foregrounds the absurdity of the revisionist map-making of the politicians responsible for partition. Even though "not directly a novel about the contemporary Indian diaspora, *The Shadow Lines* has much in it that shows "Ghosh's continuing interest in this theme and the diasporic consciousness" (Alam *Indian* 141). The family journey to Dhaka to rescue an elderly relative and its climax ponder the deadly effects of borders, when Tridib, a figure who has always
exercised a particularly potent hold on his imagination is killed amid the communal violence.

Although he concedes that the political map-makers were well-intentioned, he is struck by the fact that the bonds that link Dhaka and Calcutta are closer than ever for "each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set up free – our looking-glass border" (Shadow 234). The shadow lines are of separation that demarcates colonizer and colonized, present and the past, self and image constructing the notions of discrete identity. It sanctions reading which is a brilliant fable of deleterious effects of domination of political portioning and colonial power.

Tridib expands the frontiers of boyhood world to the narrator telling him that perception is nothing but imagination, and articulation can enable the narrator to cross all such shadow lines, locating his place. This is essentially an act of imagination as the young hero of Shadow is taught by his hero and mentor, Tridib, who gives him "worlds to travel in" and "eyes to see them with" (20). A place does not merely exist, "it has to be invented in one's imagination".

Ghosh seems, though his carefully realized representation of past, present and, in the case of Calcutta future, to address many of the central concerns that are troubling contemporary consciences, among them the construction of cultural difference, the tensions between Eastern and Western value-systems and the merits and demerits of globalization, in its various avatars.
Ghosh's next novel Calcutta (1996) was a piece of research, relating how Malaria breeding mosquito was accidentally identified. It was complicated by the story of a computer technician in New York and many other distractions. The novel amalgamates literature, science, philosophy, history, psychology and literature.

The author highlights the problem of women and reserves a rightful place for them in the society. He pleads for emancipation of women in Calcutta which is ostensibly more fictive. He makes Mangala, a sweeper – woman, the central character of the novel. The novel interweaves a network of traces – from the history of malaria research, theological movements generally deemed to be heretical in the West and slight futuristic computer technology to provide the possibility of an alternative subaltern history, which exists in parallel with colonial history as an equally or possibly more-powerful epistemological system.

The novel "remains mysterious in more ways than one. Ghosh looks in the direction of magic, conspiracy and silence to overturn the logic of Europe's conquest of the East" (Sujatha 112). The main narrative of the novel involves a re-examination of the history of late nineteenth century malaria research by a possibly deranged Calcutta-born man named Murugan, who is convinced that Ronald Ross, the British scientist who was awarded the 1902 Nobel Prize for Medicine for his work on the life-cycle of the malaria parasite was not a "lone genius" (Calcutta 51), a brilliant British dilettante who outstripped all of his contemporaries.
Murugan's research has led him to the conclusion that Ross and other Western scientists working in the field of Malaria research in India have been manipulated by their Indian helpers, led by a woman named Mangala, who appears to be both the high priestess of a secret medical cult, offering a cure for syphilis, and the brain behind the discoveries that eventually led to Ross winning the Nobel Prize.

**Calcutta** forces its readers to engage in the possibility of an alternative historiography, in which traditionally disempowered subjects prove to be the real puppet-masters. The counter-science cult led by Mangala can only operate through silence, but the fictive reconstruction, in which Murugan, Antar and ultimately Ghosh engage, subverts the hegemonic and total dominance of Western. In **Calcutta**, the web actually takes over the role occupied by weaving in Ghosh's earlier work *Antar* crosses continents in his quest for his fugitive subject, becomes a substitute for transnational communication.

His search for Murugan leads the reader into a Russian doll-like assortment of other quests, which are gradually revealed to be interlocking narratives that erode both temporal and spatial shadow lines, in a manner similar to the seemingly very different narrative of **Shadow**. Murugan is first encountered through mediation of a New York based computer systems operator Antar, who comes across a fragment of an ID card on the screen of his super-computer which sets him off on a quest to reconstruct the recent life-history of its missing owner.
The owner in question is a man named Murugan, whom Antar has interviewed a few years before, on behalf of the company for whom he worked, to try to dissuade him for a request to be transferred to Calcutta, so that he can pursue his:

"theory that some person or persons had systematically interfered with Ronald Ross's experiments to push Malaria research in certain directions while leading it away from others" (33).

Antar pursues Murugan through the resources of the World Wide Web. As early as Circle, Ghosh has drawn attention to the relationship between the loom and the computer, in a passage which erodes East-West binaries and discloses the Asian origins of this supposedly European technology:

Charles Babbage built his first calculating machine, using the principle of storing information on punched cards, he took his idea not from systems of writing or from mathematics, but from the draw-loom. The Chinese have used punched cards ... gave it (unwillingly) to the Italians, and the Italians gave it to the rest of Europe, in the form of the draw-loom (61).

Ghosh's writing is not confined to narrow lanes but spans a variety of genres. From the travel narratives in Dancing in Cambodia and At Large in Burma (1998) to the combination of ghost story, science fiction, and revisionist history that characterizes Calcutta (1996) to the epic narrative scale of Glass
(2000), Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional literature demonstrates fluidity across narrative form.

His work is characterized by a thematic concern with modernity, globalization and the violent production of the modern nation-state. The novelist is constantly attentive to the details of local persons and places, while so demonstrating their imbrications in global historical movements. Through his consistent critique of the operation of empire and the legacy of the colonial encounter, Ghosh emphasizes the impact of colonialism on shaping modern understandings of subjectivity and nationhood.

Ghosh's most recent novel, Glass, is "epic in scale and scope". It is a product of five years of research and study. And yet it is on the best sellers list. The novel is about the rise and fall of imperial powers. It spans a historical era that begins with the fall of Burma to invading British armies in the late nineteenth century, the ideological and political tension between the British Indian Army and the Indian National Army in the South-East Asian theatre of World War II, and concludes with a depiction of contemporary Burma, now under the repressive rule of a military regime. The irony of the situation lies in the fact that it was the Indian soldiers who conquered Burma on behalf of the British.

On the other hand, it has to be admitted that the Burmese army did not offer any serious resistance. The King, the Queen and their court are exiled to Ratnagiri
in Maharashtra, where a Bengali Collector and his wife, Uma Dey, are supposed
to look after them. The Second World War intervenes to complicate issues.

The Japanese expel the British temporarily from Burma. The INA comes to
grief. After the war, the British withdraw from Burma but the Burmese did not enjoy
freedom for long. There was a military coup in which General Aung Sen was
overthrown by General Ne Win, since there has been more repression and
censorship in Burma than during the British rule. Thus the political history of this
epic of over 550 pages in each is told. But it is the human interest which makes it
memorable.

**Glass** unravels this long history of imperialism in South and South-East Asia
against narration of family histories. As Ghosh charts the rise and fall of family fortunes,
the reduction of romance across generations, and the rapidly changing political
configurations of the Indo-Burmese border, he also brings to light the destructive effect
of colonial institutions of the rule. In the process, he is able to situate the family as an
alternative site for the production of literary narratives of community.

Migration which started from the early days of mankind is also depicted in
Ghosh’s work as a universally modern condition. Thus in **Circle**, the silent hero Alu
is taken from Bengal to North Africa. In **Shadow**, the unnamed protagonist travels
imaginatively through conversation with his uncle Tridib and cousin Illa through
lived memories of war time London in the 1940s and Dhaka in the 1960s, including
the intertwined lives of men and women who live in and between Burma, India, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Ghosh demonstrates an intense engagement in portraying vividly the texture and shape of the maps of migration. In Shadow, a novel written in the aftermath of the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984-85, the unnamed narrator lives through the experiences of those who have travelled before him. As a child the narrator commits to memory the sharp details of London streets remembered by his Uncle Tridib, which becomes tangibly real to the narrator in his own talks around London two decades later.

The luminosity of the narrator's own imagination lies in sharp contrast to his cousin Illa's vague recollections of Cairo, which she remembers only by identifying the location of the ladies' restroom in the airport. While Illa associates travel and movement with the pursuit of an elusive sense of "freedom", her great aunt, who has lived through violent partition of India in 1947, condemns Illa's sense of freedom to travel. The death of Illa and the narrator's uncle Tridib in an outbreak of communal violence in Dhaka in the 1960s – preceding the Bangladeshi war of Independence in 1971 - confirms the bloody reality of national identities, that are imposed on the citizenry of a country. The narrative is thus, a complex jigsaw puzzle of varied time and place segments.

Shadow "interspersed with numerous oral narratives" (Bagchi 188) is a moving testimony to the violence of the modern state and shows as how to live
beyond the brutal reality of national borders. Ghosh demonstrates the terror of the
disciplinary apparatus of the nation-state, which insists that people must belong to
a fixed place and mark an identifiable homeland on a recognizable map of the
world.

In *Glass*, Rajkumar is the typical migrant. Having migrated from Chittagong
to Burma, he finds no difficulty in moving to Malaya. He makes business contacts
and forms friendship. He is willing to follow fortune wherever it leads him, but his
early infatuation with Dolly is not forgotten. He contrives to land up in Ratnagiri and
eventually marry her. They return to Burma and become parents and grandparents.

Chronologically *Glass* is firmly located in place and time. It records the
dates of every important event from the invention of the auto-combustion engine
(1885) to the Second World War (1939-45). The Indians emerge in a poor light as
migrants, who are imported as indentured labourers as in the West Indies.
However, when they become money lenders and begin to appropriate the property
of the local Burmese, they are disliked.

On the other hand, the migrants are instrumental in extending the British
Empire, mostly under British officers. Yet they are subjected to racial
discrimination. Trains meant for evacuating are marked "for Europeans only".
Loyalty during the mutiny is enforced by the spectacle of rebel soldiers impaled on
stakes. As between the Indians and Burmese there seems to be no racial barrier.
The reader observes no evidence of any ostracism of inter-racial marriages or discrimination against hybrid children or the religious differences between the Hindus, Christians and Buddhists.

Characters bearing such name as Ma Cho, Saya John, Illongo, Mathew, Raymond, Evelyn and Ma Thin Thin Aye freely intermingle with and inter-marry characters of Indian origin. Ghosh has mastered his material so completely that he uses Burmese words and expressions freely. He refers to Buddhist festivals with familiarity.

**The Hungry Tide** is the work of a novelist at the peak of his powers. Ghosh has managed to turn Hungry into a veritable page-turner, beautifully controlled and plotted making the reader delve deeply into the new environment. The setting of the novel is the extensive archipelago of tiny islands and labyrinths waterways known as the Sundarbans. Stretching from India to Bangladesh, this little-known tide country offers no visible borders between the river and the sea, and sometimes not even between land and water. In this desolate and mysterious place of mangroves and mudflats, the poor villagers lead a precarious existence.

For hundreds of years, only the truly dispossessed and the pessimistic dreamers of the world have braved the man-eaters and the crocodiles who rule there, to eke a precarious existence from the unyielding mud. Man-eating tigers, river dolphins, crocodiles, mangrove forests, lunar rainbows, the great cosmic
metronome of the sweeping tides are the marvels that Ghosh orchestrates in the entrancing tale about the conflict between wilderness and civilization.

His characters are just as alluring as the setting, and the chemistry among them is just as intricate and powerful as the natural sources they confront. The novel dynamically weaves the stories of Piya, Kanai and Fokir together with the environmental and political history of this isolated region. Piya Roy, a self-possessed cetologist born in India but raised in America, is searching for an increasingly rare river dolphin. She finds the ideal assistant, a fisherman, is Fokir. Kanai, an urbane translator from Kolkata, who visits his formidable aunt, who gives him his late uncle’s harrowing account of a violent confrontation between government officials and refugees who settled in a wildlife preserve.

Through his characters' very different mindsets, Ghosh posits urgent questions about humankind's place in nature in an atmospheric and suspenseful drama of love and survival that has particular resonance in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami. The settlers of the Sundarbans believe that any individual irrespective of his background, who dares venture into the vast watery labyrinth without a pure heart will never return. It is the arrival of Piyali Roy, of Indian parentage but stubbornly American, and Kanai Dutt, a sophisticated Delhi businessman, that disturbs the delicate balance of life and sets in motion a fateful cataclysm.
Ghosh has discovered yet another new territory, summoning a singular place from its history, language and myth and bringing it to life. Yet the achievement of Hungry is in its exploration of a far darker and more unknowable jungle, the human heart. It is a novel that asks at every turn: what danger resides there, and what delusion? What man can take the true measure of another?

Hungry is a whirlwind work of the imagination, every bit an epic in scope. In this rapid shrinking world, relationship plays a key role in one's life. The word "Relationship" not only adheres to human beings but also is applicable to culture and environment. In relationships, there are shared interests and often mutual dependence, and fairly a high degree of openness and trust. The relationship grows out of basic psychological needs to build bonds with other human beings. However "globality", the wide popular term of today steers relationship, which is very much indispensable for our existence.

As such the five select novels relate to the theme of struggle, displacement and the quest for identity. The select novels of Ghosh try to universalize human relationship which is very much essential in this current drift of globalization.

For all literary researches it is important to investigate and review previous research studies in the same realm. No doubt, researches worldwide are engaged in researching the fiction of Amitav Ghosh on various aspects which include culture study, role of history and politics, gender narratives, narrative techniques and theme of violence.