

## *Chapter III*

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### **Cultural Anthropology: Transnationalism and Multiculturalism**

Cultural anthropology is the facet of anthropology which analyses human customs or cultural behavior. Cultural anthropology studies both the similarities and differences of human society. In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the French Philosopher Montesquieu wrote, *The Spirit of the Laws* in which he discussed about social life, type of governance and made a study of anthropology. The important cultural anthropologist of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century are Sir Edward Tylor, Sir James Frazer and Lewis Henry Morgan, Bronislaw Malinowski and Franz Boas. They developed a theory of cultural evolution where they had stated that all cultures have hierarchies which are categorized to be of higher or lower standard.

Culture is based on the concept such as race, religion and ethnicity. Cultures meet and intersect through trade, commerce, education, migration and tourism. The term microculture denotes the shared behavior among people of a particular group.

Globalization is the development of interconnectedness between cultures due to the movements of people, goods and information which acts as a driving force for the major cultural change. Globalization does not spread evenly among the local culture.

Globalization might lead to positive changes or it might result in cultural destruction.

The spread of capitalism throughout the world led to alienation, disenchantment and resentment among various cultural groups.

The anthropologists have investigated the sense of alienation, sense of belongingness which has resulted in political and economic transformation. The ideological representation

of rootedness within their culture has been the main concern of analysis for the anthropologists. The transmutation of culture had led to the development and has resulted in globalization. In the early 1990's anthropologists began to study socio-cultural context within home communities. This particular period led to the progress of diaspora, transnationalism and multiculturalism within the anthropological study and these concepts are closely related to literature.

The term diaspora comes from the word 'dia' meaning away or scatter or sow. Initially it refers to the dispersal of Jews outside Israel but now it is the movement of people from any nation or group away from their own country. Diaspora is associated with the evolution of human civilization. Diaspora also refers to the homogenous entity of geographically displaced people during the colonial regime such as indentured labourers or slaves who are often referred to as exile or expatriates. Bill Ashcroft defines diaspora as, "Voluntary or forcible movements of the people from their homeland into new regions" (68-70).

The history of diaspora is divided into three stages: ancient, medieval and modern diasporas. The ancient diaspora means the dispersal of Jews in the sixth and seventh century. The medieval period is from 200 A.D to 900 A.D, during which a large number of migration took place because of opening up for new ports. Modern diaspora was mainly due to the World War II. In the post-modern age, the movement of people from one country to another has created the multicultural world. People migrated in search of economic status. The history of diaspora has brought a complex changes both for the country and the individuals. In *Diasporas In Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return*, "William Safran identifies six features of the diaspora namely dispersal,

collective, memory, alienation, respect and longing for the homeland, a belief in the restoration and a self-definition with this homeland” (Safran 83-99). Diaspora is not crossing just over from one country to another, rather it involves numerous crossing over.

Diaspora is a complex phenomenon where cultures intersect, identities emerge and languages melt. Robin Cohen defines diaspora as: “Victim diasporas, labour diasporas, imperial diasporas, trade diasporas and cultural diasporas. But the common element of diaspora is that these are people who live outside their natal territories and show their love to the homeland, tradition, religion, culture and language” (52).

Robin Cohen defines the common features of diaspora thus:

- 1) Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
- 2) The expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
- 3) A collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
- 4) An idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity;
- 5) The frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;

- 6) A strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
- 7) A troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
- 8) A sense of empathy and co- responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
- 9) A possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism (17).

Diaspora is a state of dislocation from the place of origin and setting in a new country. Arjun Appadurai comments about diaspora thus: “Any singular or uncontested meta-narratives to approach any social process but rather talks of multiple reference points” (296-297). The complexity of acceptance, rejection, attachment, alienation, assimilation lies not with the individual but with the diasporic community. Migration, indentured labour, colonialism, conquest, enslavement, invasion are the issues discussed in exile literature.

Exiles are people who are forced or compelled to move out of the homeland. “The poetics of exile lies in the interplay of the center and the periphery that the diaspora are engaged in” (Bhabha 78). In the modern day, diaspora is referred as the separation from the homeland and failure to identify themselves with their native culture and country.

Refugees are people who move to other countries due to war and natural disaster. They seek their shelter on the borders of the host country. Expatriates are the citizens of

one country but residents of some other country. In the modern day, these expatriates are considered to be happily displaced communities who managed to adopt by sticking to the ethnicity of their homeland in the host country.

Transnationalists are the diasporic members who lead hyphenated lives, living in two worlds simultaneously. Transnationalism is part of multiculturalism as it nourishes both the native and the adopted land. The new Indian diaspora is termed by Vijay Mishra as, “Incorporated India into its bordered, de-territorialized experiences within Western nation-states” (434). Vijayashree analyses the South Asian immigrant women’s writing and states that migration of women starts from their home and she battles against the new environment.

The survival of female diasporic literature deals with (i) physical survival to stay alive, (ii) cultural survival to belong to a particular community, (iii) Social survival by accepting a specific group of society, (iv) Psychological survival for remaining in their own senses in a new environment, (v) Spiritual survival which leads to overcoming of despair and alienation. (Vijayashree132)

Identity crisis is the first major problem that an immigrant faces when entering a new land. “Identity cannot be anything but problematic, especially because of its dis-embedded nature” (Bauman 5). The condition of the immigrant in a new land begins with the sense of loss. Even though the immigrants are away from their homeland they never leave their hold on their nativity. There is always a constant emotional and cultural bondage among the displaced people. There is a huge cultural change when people try to adjust themselves in another society. Thus identity becomes the core factor in a diasporic community.

Nostalgia is the most prominent feature of the diasporic immigrants. “Nostalgia as the real reason for the expatriate’s need to evolve ethnic origins” (Howe 174). Feeling of rootlessness, reminiscence for homeland and isolation cause utmost misery in the migrants while recollecting their past. “No matter where you lived, even if you lived in the same place all your life, you would look at the past, at lost moments, at lost opportunities [and] lost loves” (Abraham 55). When an immigrant is unable to adapt to the uniqueness of a culture then it leads to cultural disparities. Bill Ashcroft speaks about alienated diaspora as, “... the alienating process which initially served to relegate the post-colonial world through a kind of mental barrier into a position from which all experience could be viewed as non-centric, pluralistic, and multifarious” (85). The immigrants are living in the dual world and become hyphenated individuals because of cultural assimilation.

The feeling of rootlessness, alienation, nostalgia and dislocation leads to conflicts, and fractured identity. The immigrants try to adapt and amalgamate with their host country as well as maintain the culture and identity of their native land. The diasporic communities pass on their culture to the next generations. The cultural elements varied according to the situations. The immigrants feel that they neither belong to the host land nor the native land thus develop a dual identity leading to the formation of a sandwich culture.

The term multiculturalism refers to a state of cultural, racial and ethnic diversity within a specified geographic place. To promote social cohesion, it celebrates and maintains cultural identity within a specified society. Multiculturalism is a condition where every culture in the society attains equal status and where no culture is predominating. William James, in *Pluralistic Universe*, speaks about the idea of

pluralistic society and states the essence of multiculturalism. “Pluralism is crucial to the formation of philosophical and social humanism to help build a better, more egalitarian society” (20).

The term multiculturalism was theorized by Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor. He defines multiculturalism as, “The politics of recognition or the political recognition of the relative values of the different cultures within a nation-state under the liberal democratic framework” (Taylor 24). Colonization and migration has led to globalization. Ghosh skillfully portrays the complexities of human relationship in the multicultural world. Brinda Bose rightly comments:

It is no doubt fitting that in the age of the extravagantly embracing of globalization, we may claim to have closed the other and straddling it; certainly, the legacy of postcolonial angst today appears to have settled into a potentially numbing acceptance of bi- or multi cultural euphoria. In such a circumstance, the diasporic imagination of Amitav Ghosh, that wrestles with an understanding of bi-culturalism as it ‘yokes by violence together’ discreet and distant identities- is essential to our understanding of our history even as it is being created. (15-16)

The existing culture is exposed to different culture and they interact forming a global force. In this interaction, some cultures become dominant while some become marginalized. The primary concerns of diasporic writers are the issues of reminiscences of homeland, pain of displacement, dislocation and relocation between home land and alien land. Memory carries the imaginary homeland as frozen pictures leading to nostalgia.



Ghosh is an Indian writer settled in Canada who has experienced the cultural and geographical displacement. His narrative always shifts between two countries and the setting shifts between the past and the present. Ghosh breaks down the artificial boundaries between nation and people and supports multiculturalism and the concept of transnationalism. Ghosh through his writings asserts that multiculturalism cannot be geopolitically defined or delimited. “The cultural space that Ghosh resituates is a vast, borderless region with its own hybrid languages and practices which circulate without national or religious boundaries” (Dixon 4). Ghosh’s writing highlights the growing tendency of internationalism, where different society and culture are bound together. This chapter analyzes the trauma of the migrants, struggle of the refugees and the torments of the indentured labourers and their assimilation into single culture.

*The Glass Palace* focuses on two types of Indian diaspora- the new twentieth century diaspora and old plantation labour diaspora of indentured labourers who underwent material and cultural dispossession during colonialism. The old Indian diaspora of indentured labourers started in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and lasted till the twentieth century. Their descendants faced the issues of multiculturalism, identity crisis and hybridity. This novel focuses on the complex reality of Indian indentured labourers who suffered due to displacement. Amitav Ghosh in *World Literature Today* interview speaks about the migration of Indians.

For me, the value of the novel, as a form, is that it is able to incorporate elements of every aspect of life- history, natural history, rhetoric, politics, beliefs, religion, family, love, sexuality. As I see it the novel is a meta-form that transcends the boundaries that circumscribe other kinds of

writing, rendering meaningless the usual workaday distinctions between historian, journalist, anthropologist, and et cetera. (qtd in Bhautoo-Dewnarain 34)

As an anthropologist, Ghosh has been preoccupied with the displacement of people. The novel throws light on complex international migration which not only changed the destiny of one country but the whole world.

The controversial term ‘coolitude’ was first proposed by Khal Torabully and the term ‘coolie’ originally referred to unskilled labourers from India and China. According to Gordon, “Rubber reigned supreme in the agricultural economy of Malaya. By 1921 plantation agriculture in Malaya was organized on the lines of a western capitalist enterprise” (qtd in Bhautoo-Dewnarain 40). Rubber plantation mainly depended on indentured labourers from India and China. The Indian migration to Burma is long and complex.

Britain ruled the country with the help of Indian soldiers, police-men and civil servants. Indian labour was extensively used for developing the infrastructure and for construction work. Indian farmers were taken there to cultivate virgin lands. Indian moneylenders and traders followed them to take advantage of the growing economy and the consequent prosperity (qtd in Bhautoo-Dewnarain 42).

*The Glass Palace* pictures the diasporic conditions of the migrants. Diaspora happened during the colonial rule. Britishers defeated King Thebaw, the King of Burma. The novel is a saga of three generations and the narrative shifts from Mandalay to India and then to Malaya.

*The Glass Palace* is a probing critique of the civilizational imperialism of the British rulers, which colonized the native mind by reframing the existing structures of human knowledge into East. West binaries of orientalism . . . The supremacy and superiority of the colonizer get so much ingrained in the native psyche that he becomes thoroughly subservient to the master and the valorization of constructions like a nation and national identity. (Biring 96-98)

The lives of both the royal people and the commoners are affected by the power of colonial rule. “The Royal Family was being sent into exile. They were to go to India, to a location that had yet to be decided on. The British government wished to provide them with an escort of attendants and advisors. The matter was to be settled by asking for volunteers” (TGP 41).

The novel opens in Mandalay in 1885 where Rajkumar, an orphan boy finds employment in MaCho’s tea stall. He is the only survivor of his family from India and enters Burma with the hope of becoming a successful man. He was originally from Chittagong and his family moved to Burma. “Their family name was Raha” (TGP 13). Both his parents died, but the last words of his mother still echoes within him, “Stay alive, she whispered. Beche thako, Rajkumar live, my prince: hold on to your life” (TGP 14). These words exactly depict the life of Rajkumar.

During his stay in Burma, he develops a sort of sense of belongingness to the new place. His initial identity was as a worker in MaCho’s tea stall, “It was Rajkumar’s job to carry bowls of soup and noodles to the customers” (TGP 6). With the help of Saya John, he enters into timber and rubber plantation and rises as a rich merchant thus creating a

new identity for himself. Ghosh gives a transnational sweep to his characters. They do not dwell in a specific culture instead they transcend across borders. The financial loss served as a catalyst for people to move from India to other countries. Rajkumar had strong determination to overcome his difficulties: “He had only the bangle now: his mother wanted him to use it to pay for his passage back to Chittagong. But his mother was dead and what purpose would it serve to go back to a place that his father had abandoned? No, better instead to strike a bargain with the nakhoda...” (TGP 14).

There begins the journey of Rajkumar.

Rajkumar meets Baburao from India while travelling to Yenangyaung. Baburao is a labour contractor who earns lot of money by selling indentured labourers to the British capitalists. He had transported forty eight Corringhees to Yenangyaung from India. Transportation of labourers has been the quickest mode of earning money. Many foreign companies were in search of labourers to dig out oil. Baburao plants the idea of becoming rich in Rajkumar’s mind. “It was hard to find workers in Burma. Few Burmese are so poor as to put up with conditions like those of Yenangyaung. But back at home in India, there were uncountable thousands of people who were so desperate to leave that they would sign over many years’ earnings” (TGP 124). Baburao assures Rajkumar that he can grow rich easily only with few hundred rupees for the one-way passage to India to hire recruits. After thinking about Baburao’s ideas, he remembers the words of Saya John, “The time has come when you have to make your place in the world” (TGP 124). Rajkumar decided to start timber business. He meets his friend Doh Say who helps him in setting up his own timber yard, “You can start small... you can just manage with just

one-elephant. I'll come and work with you, for half the usual salary, in exchange for the business" (TGP 125). All that Rajkumar needed was a handsome capital to invest in.

Rajkumar never had the habit of collecting money more than necessary, the remaining salary was safe with Saya John amounting for about not more than two hundred rupees. But the cost of setting up a timber yard went to thousands which was huge amount to ask from Saya John. So he decided to go to India with Baburao and he gets a loan from Saya John. They travel from Rangoon to Calcutta and then to Madras. They head into the country side along with the drummers. They stop at a shady tree and when people hear the drum beating, they come running to hear the talks of Baburao. The Britishers considered Burma as a part of India. It was called as the land of gold. He invites people to touch his tasseled shawls and to see his gold and ruby rings. Through his flattering speech, he recruits people as indentured labourers.

And all these things can be yours too... not in your next life. Not next year. Now. They can be yours now. All you need is an able-bodied man from your family to put his thumb print on this sheet of paper... He took a handful of silver coins out of a velvet bag and let them fall back again, tinkling. Are there any here who have debts? Are there any who owe money to their landlords? You can settle your obligations right now, right here. As soon as your sons and brothers make their marks on these contracts, this money will be yours. In a matter of few years they will earn back enough to free themselves of debt. Then they will be at liberty to return or stay in Burma as they choose. (TGP 126)

Many men signed the contracts, few came forward eagerly to know about it and few were forced to sign by their fathers and brothers. The recruiters followed Baburao with their cloth bundles. They hired a country boat and were sent off to Calcutta. Many have not undertaken a sea voyage so they were frightened and a man leapt overboard. Baburao jumped in and saved him. Ghosh vividly portrays the cruelty of Baburao, “Where did you think you were going? Baburao crooned, almost tenderly, as though he were singing to a lover. And what about all the money I gave your father so he could pay off his debts. What use would your corpse be, to him or to me?” (TGP 127).

Rajkumar and Baburao travel together and Rajkumar tries to deviate himself and takes care of his own deal with the steward of the ship. Later Rajkumar goes to the same district that he had visited earlier along with Baburao where he is welcomed as a labour contractor. He is successful in indenturing fifty five men and three women labourers. Throughout the journey Rajkumar is very vigilant. One night, he finds a man trying to slip into the river and Rajkumar catches him. He reaches Yenangyaung and sells the labourers to the local merchants.

Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift, forced place, between a human being and native place, between the self and its true home; it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile’s life; these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (Said 173)

The exile of the King and Queen pictures the pathetic state of the Royal members. Their exile breaks their pride and humiliates them. The King is dethroned because of the exploitation of the Britishers. The Britishers waged war on Burma because they wanted the hold of Burma's teak forest.

Even though King Thebaw tried his best to keep the Britishers away, the conflict arises which led to the exile of the Royal family to Ratnagiri in India. There was sudden chaos in the Royal Palace upon the intrusion of the Britishers. The royal courtiers, ministers, soldiers, servants turned disloyal towards the royalty. The King suffers the betrayal by his own members. "The two ministers were now competing with one another to keep the Royal family under guard. They knew the British would be grateful to whoever handed over the royal couple; there would be rich rewards. The foreigners were expected to come to Mandalay very soon to take the King and Queen into captivity" (TGP 25). This scene shows the sad state of the royal family as they are betrayed by their own members.

The people of Mandalay gave a tearful valediction to the royal family who were "herded into exile" (TGP 44). On the way to the port, King saw number of people displaced from their homeland and moving towards an alien land. This scene evokes pain in the King's heart. This enforced displacement is considered as one of the cruel acts of the Britishers. The plight of the King is described thus:

What vast, what incomprehensible power, to move people in such huge numbers from one place to another- emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen. Why? Why this furious movement- people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws, to

sit blind in exile? The king is more concerned for his subjects: And where would his own people go, now that they were a part of this empire? It wouldn't suit them, all this moving about. They were not a portable people, the Burmese; he knew this, very well, for himself. He had never wanted to go anywhere. Yet here he was, on his way to India. (TGP 50)

This forceful migration changed the lives of even the royal family. King Thebaw felt isolated and alienated and he did nothing other than watching the fishing boats. He is called as "The town guardian spirit [of the boats], a king again" (TGP 80). The fate of the princess had gone to an extent that they could not even find a single groom of true Konbaung origin. "Along with the royal family, there were royal maids too who were, brought to the palace from the far mountains" (TGP 7). These maids were dislocated from their mother-land in their childhood. "Once they came to Mandalay it didn't matter" (TGP 20). They do not remember their own families and they have lost their identity. The youngest among the maids was Dolly, who was the favourite of the Queen. She was too young when she landed in Mandalay and she had almost forgotten her parents. These maids joined the King and Queen during their exile because they were already displaced from their homeland and they do not have their native land to go back to. After few years, Dolly married Rajkumar and they went back to Burma. These characters in the novel shift from place to place and struggle for their survival.

The migrants are haunted by the past memories of their homeland and they feel alienated. Dolly, the central character of the novel, who is the sincere maid of the Queen too leaves her homeland. Most of her life is spent in India and she is terrified to go back to Burma. She is anxious about being called as a foreigner. Dolly says, "If I went to



Burma now I would be a foreigner- they would call me a Kalaa like they do Indians- a trespasser, an outsider from across the sea. I'd find that very hard, I think. I'd never be unable to rid myself of the idea that I would have to leave again one day, just as I had to before" (TGP 113).

The Collector wants to create a good rapport with the Britishers so he adopts the western code of conduct, whereas Uma leads a mechanical and lonely life in a luxurious environment provided by her husband. It is so painful for the colonizer and the colonized subject to be under false identification. This situation affects the relationship between Uma and her husband, Collector Beni. This false identity of the Collector makes Uma move away from him and finally, he suffers and ends his life.

Saya John was an orphan and he had been brought up by Catholic priests, in Malacca. These priests are from a different cultural background and they are also considered as migrants. As Saya John grew old, he left for Singapore and he was in the Military hospital for few days, where he was mocked for his identity:

... they asked me this very question: how is it you, who look Chinese and carry a Christian name, can speak our language? When I told them how this had come about, they would laugh and say, you are a dhobi ka kutta- a washerman's dog- na ghar ka nag hat ka- you don't belong anywhere, either by the water or on land, and I'd say, yes, that is exactly what I am.

(TGP 10)

The lives of the migrants undergo changes, as they rebuild in a new society. In this novel, Ghosh speaks about the experience of the migrants in the host country and how they create a positive new identity by combining their own cultural heritage.

The inner and the outer realities contribute to the making of an identity. And this does not lead to a micro entity. Rather the dramatization of global forces at work in the individual, in the concrete terms of his life sensitizes to the actual fate of people the world over. Amitav Ghosh alternates past and present to place the self in “history” . . . history that unfolds the full meaning and an insight into future. (Singh.S 138)

The Second World War affects the lives of the many people. Arjun, the nephew of Uma joins the military academy to serve the country. Arjun’s friend Hardy makes an ironic remark regarding their identity. Hardy says, “Where is the country? The fact is that you and I don’t have a country...” (TGP 330). On hearing this, Arjun feels that his identity as the British soldier shatters down. The consequence of war leads to the death of Alison, Saya John’s grand daughter. Rajkumar’s younger son Dinu and Alison were in love. “The relationship that might have bloomed and lasted a lifetime is ruptured by the tumult of war” (Tiwari 102).

Throughout his life, Rajkumar strives to establish himself as a man of social significance in Burma. He longs to live in Burma where as the war forces him to go to India as a refugee. He expresses his longing to Jaya thus: “... the Ganges could never be the same as the Irrawady” (TGP 544). He remarks about the life that he had lived with Dolly in Burma:

My father was from Chittagong and he ended up in the Arakan; I ended up in Rangoon; you went from Mandalay to Ratnagiri and now you’re here too. Why should we except that we’re going to spend the rest of our lives here? There are people who have the luck to end their lives where they

began them. But this is not something that is owed to us. On the contrary, we have to expect that a time will come when we'll have to move on again. Rather than be swept along by events, we should make plans and take control of our own fate. (TGP 310)

The worst feeling of a migrant is the lack of a sense of belongingness. The colonial rule affects the cultural and economic livelihood of the migrants. The novel brings in strange *mélange* of aliens in exile: the Indians in Burma, Malaccans in Burma, Burmese in India and Malaysia, British in Burma, India and whole of South East Asia.

Even though the Indian migrants and diasporic workers belong to different cultures, they long for their identity. Unity in diversity implies the notion of unified identity. Ghosh strongly emphasize the correlation of all cultures. He maintains a fine balance in the structure of the novel by shifting the narrative between the past memory and by returning back to the present.

The interconnection between language and culture is evident in the novel. Rajkumar Raha is transformed from “kalaa” (TGP 11) to “babu” (TGP 134) and then finally called as “Mr. Raha” (TGP 137). The Burmese royal family undergoes cultural change. Initially they were resistant towards the alien culture but later they accepted and tried to adapt themselves to the new culture. Both the King and the Queen master Hindustani language and they speak the language better than the other Parsis and Bengalis. The Collector’s wife, Uma’ style of wearing saree impressed the Queen. Later in the novel, Jaya recollects the past memories while seeing the picture of her aunt wearing saree in a particular style.

It gave Jaya a thrill, even after all those years to recall how astonished she'd been when she first heard the story. She'd always imagined saris to be part of the natural order handed down from immemorial antiquity. It had come as a shock to discover that the garment had a history, created by real people through human volition. (TGP 489)

Customs were developed to create a new culture. There is also overlapping of cultural hierarchies which entwines high and low classes to form a new society. To define our contemporary globality, Ghosh puts forth the viewpoints of dispersed people of different nations and makes plea for internationalism.

The author deftly brings out that the aim of Britishers to exploit, damage and destroy the colonies. The novel successfully brings out the condition of the migrants who are displaced from their motherland and suffer great humiliation under the British rule. Through this novel, Ghosh skillfully brings out the true feeling of diasporic people. This novel narrates reminiscence of the diasporic people. Ghosh comments about *The Glass Palace* in *World Literature Today*. "At some point in writing this book, I felt that I'd been entrusted with the story, a story that was beyond me and greater than me. I really felt that I was trying to represent an enormous multiplicity of experience and of history" (Aldama 84).

Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide* highlights the pathetic condition of the refugees in the Morichjhapi massacre. He also focuses on the culture of Sundarbans where people are culturally united. He supports the breaking down of the artificial boundaries between people and nation and strongly as he believes in unity of human beings.

The emergence of refugee led to the global diasporic discourse giving a rise to global culture. In the Indian context, refugees are connected to India's partition. This led to the displacement of Hindus and Muslims into two nations. The migration took place mainly from Western Punjab to North India and from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) to West Bengal. In October 1946, the first phase of displacement from East Pakistan took place after Noakhali and Tippera riots which paved the way for 'bhadraloks' or land owning merchant classes. In 1950, the second major exodus took place in the districts of Khulna, Rajshahi, Dacca, Chittagong, Sylhet, Barisal in Bangladesh where number of poor and agricultural class people were affected. The third took place during 1960-1962 because of the signing of Nehru- Liaquat Pact. There was massive influx of socio-cultural problems in 1970 among people of Bangladesh and West Bengal. The Indian government discriminated the refugees from Bangladesh. Prafulla K. Chakrabarti, the author of *The Marginal Men*, and the major chronicler of the partition refugees in the East, identified two basic reasons behind the discriminatory attitude of the Indian Government.

First, the refugees in the West were close to Delhi, the capital of India, where any trouble might destabilize the Government, whereas the geographical distance from Delhi put the refugees in the east in vulnerable situation; and second there was a large number of Punjabis in the armed forces, and a military mutiny was possible, if their kith and kin were ignored. (Chakrabarti 13)

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh narrates the life history of refugees through the words of Nilima.

Dandakaranya, a resettlement camp deep in the forests of Madhya Pradesh, hundreds of kilometres from Bengal. They were surrounded by security forces and forbidden to leave. Those who tried to get away were hunted down, their flight to safety was therefore not from the carnage from Bangladesh since this was a few years after partition but instead was from this resettlement camp which the government of India had moved the refugees to. (THT 118)

The refugees decided to settle in Morchjhapi thinking that the government would support them but the Indian government tried to forcefully evict them. “The authorities had declared that Morichjhapi was a protected forest reserve and they had proved unbending in their determination to evict the settlers. Over a period of about a year there had been a series of confrontations between the settlers and government forces. And in the final cry, Nilima says, ‘If I recall correctly was in mid-May of that year-1979’” (THT 118-19).

The Bangladeshi refugees were so strong and determined to attain their freedom and to live in their native place, where they belong. It is their desire to find a home in the tide country makes them very determined. A refugee cries out:

Once we lived in Bangladesh, in Khulna jila: we’re tide country people, from the Sundarbans edge. When the war broke out, our village was burned to ash; we crossed the border, there was nowhere else to go. We were met by the police and taken away; in buses they drove us, to a settlement camp. We’d never seen such a place, such a dry emptiness; the earth was so red it seemed to be stained with blood. For those who lived

there, thus dust was as good as gold, they loved it just as we love our tide country mud. But no matter how we tried, we couldn't settle there: rivers ran in our heads, the tides were in our blood.... (THT 165)

The people of Morchjhapi shared a collective nostalgic feeling for their homeland and try to recreate the same in the displaced situation. It is not an imagined homeland but a place where they believed in cultural and religious customs such as the myth of Bon Bibi. Nirmal observes the miseries underwent by the refugees.

For their first few months on the island, they were in a state akin to shock. Nothing was familiar; everything was new. What little they knew of rural life was derived from the villagers of the plains: the realities of the tide country were of strangeness beyond reckoning. How was it possible that these islands were a mere ninety seven kilometers from home and yet so little was known about them? How was it possible that people spoke so much about the immemorial traditions of village India and yet no one knew about this other world, where it was impossible to tell who was who, and what their castes and religions and beliefs were? (THT 79)

The government added misery and pain to the settlers of Morchjhapi Island by not considering the lives of refugees to be of any value. Kusum says, "Saar, who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them?" (THT 261). During the eviction, "Dozens of settlers were killed that day. The sea claimed them all?" (THT 279). Fokir considers Kanai as the representative of the brutal hungry world. "Someone standing in for the men who had destroyed Fokir's village, burnt his home and killed his mother; he had become a token for a vision of human beings in

which a man such as Fokir counted nothing, a man whose value was less than an animal” (THT 327). The people of Sundarbans suffered without a homeland and they longed to live in their native country.

Ghosh vividly pictures the real historical event of Morichjhapi Massacre of 1978-79. The government of West Bengal forcibly evicted thousands of refugees and they moved from Bangladesh to West Bengal, then to Madhya Pradesh and finally to Morichjhapi island in Sundarbans. They took great effort in creating a settlement thinking that the government would not interfere. Through Nirmal’s diary, Ghosh presents the newly formed society. Ghosh states the problem faced by the oppressed people and his novels are an attempt to retrieve their restrained histories.

The refugees of Morichjhapi invited higher officials from Kolkatta in order to consider their society as functional. “It was soon evident that the occasion had served its purpose: the guests were undeniably impressed. Speeches were made extolling the achievements of the settlers. It was universally agreed that the significance of Morichjhapi extended far beyond the island” (THT 191). These higher officials gave lofty speeches but had no real concern for the refugees. In the name of preserving the wildlife and environment, government forcefully evicted the settlers. The whole area turned into a battle cry: “*Amra Kara? Bastuhara*. Who are we? We are the dispossessed... *Morichjhapi chharbona*, We’ll not leave Morichjhapi, do what you may” (THT 254). Many were killed in the battle. The eviction was stopped only after the High Court’s interference. Ghosh ironically states that the government was more concerned about wild-life and environment and belittled the plight of the human settlers. Kusum, the victim of the massacre express her feelings thus: “The worst part was... to sit here, helpless, with



hunger gnawing at our bellies and listen to the policemen say... ‘This island had to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals... it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers...’ Who are these people, I wondered, who love animal so much that they are willing to kill us for them?’ (THT 262-63). Thus Ghosh pictures the authentic suffering of the migrated people.

In Sundarbans, everything is uncertain and unsure and people struggle to survive in the unfriendly environment. Sundarbans itself resembles a place of cultural heterogeneity and an idealized primal society. In twentieth century, Sir Daniel Hamilton created a society where people of different class, race and religion can live together. Sir Daniel Hamilton said, “Here there would be no Brahmins or Untouchables, no Bengalis and no Oriyas. Everybody would have to live and work together... it would be a country run by co-operatives. Here people wouldn’t exploit each other and everyone would have a share in the land” (THT 51-52).

Ghosh discusses the theme of multiculturalism and universal humanism in the novel. Sir Daniel Hamilton wanted to setup a utopian society where everyone is equal. He dreamt of providing basic necessities for the backward community. Sir Daniel purchased 1000 acres of land from the Britishers in 1903 to develop a society free from caste, religion and ethnicity. “He wanted to build a place where no one exploits anyone and people would live together without petty social distinctions and differences. He dreamed of a place where men and women could be farmers in the morning, poets in the afternoon and carpenters in the evening” (THT 53).

Sir Daniel Hamilton treated people with compassion. He provided people with huge generators for electricity, brought in telephone connections and opened a Central

Bank in Gobasa. “Hamilton’s is a sort of Nehruvian ambition to make a place where people would shed their atavistic baggage of custom and prejudice and avail the blessing of modernity” (Rai.S 64). Sir Daniel’s dream of setting up an egalitarian society in Sundarbans is commendable. Even though the colonial attitude of the Britishers was harsh, cruel and narrow-minded, Sir Hamilton with his humanistic fervour held them together.

Ghosh highlights the need for religious syncretism. He speaks about the tale of Bon Bibi, the Muslim deity of Sundarbans forest. “The legendary tale of Bon Bibi is spread through oral tradition and songs are told by Abdul Rahim in *The Miracles of Bon Bibi or the Narrative of Her glory*” (THT 354). The tale of Bon Bibi stresses the importance of secularism. The people of tide country are Hindus from India but this does not prevent them from following Islamic customs. According to the tale, the twins Bon Bibi and her brother are born to Sufi Fakir in Medina for a special destiny.

When the twins came of age, the archangel brought them word that they had been chosen for a divine mission: they were to travel from Arabia to ‘the country of eighteen tides’ - in order to make it fit for human habitation. Thus charged, Bob Bibi and Shah Jongol set off for the mangrove forests of Bengal dressed in simple robes of Sufi mendicants. (THT 103)

Ghosh highlights the transcultural mixing of both Hinduism and Islam in the Sundarbans. Ghosh narrates the Hindu rituals performed to the Muslim God: “First they fetched some leaves and flowers and placed them in front of the images. Then standing before the shrine, Fokir began to recite some kind of chant with his head bowed and his

hands joined in attitude of prayer” (THT 157). Muslims pray with their hands open but in *The Hungry Tide*, Fokir prays with his hands folded. This worship is a mixture of Hinduism and Islam. Idol worship is not accepted in Islam but in Sundarbans it is accepted as long as Bob Bibi saves people from Dokkin Rai. The prayer begins with ‘Bismillah’ with the rhythm of Bangala Ramayana. There is always a conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India but such insight into the culture of Sundarbans highlights religious tolerance and unity existing in India.

Sundarbans is a land of different religions but they are bound together by the spirit of unity. The legend of Bon Bibi brings in the concept of unity in diversity. Ghosh conveys that religion should be a unifying force. The world would be peaceful and prosperous only when there is no difference of race and religion. The story of Bon Bibi is enacted in every village and the worship is celebrated. Every year hundreds of people are killed by animals and tide in this country. So they do not enter the island without worshipping Bon Bibi. This tale explicates the harmonious relationship between human beings and the environment. Thus Ghosh brings in the diasporic sensibilities of the refugees and provides an insight of Sundarbans culture.

The novel *Sea of Poppies* has a variety of characters travelling on the ship Ibis where their fate is intermingled, thus creating a bond and solidarity among them. All the characters in the novel belong to the different background but their lives are surrounded by opium. Opium is produced from poppies and the whole of North India is immersed in the sea of poppies because the Britishers forced the farmers to cultivate only poppies. The novel explains opium war, right from its cultivation, addiction and trade. It is opium trade that controls the lives of people thus plunging them in agony.

... opium war is not Ghosh's subject in this novel. Rather, his attention is focused upon the events that lead up to it, and upon the complicated web of human interactions that global trade produces. For in a sense this is a novel about the first great period of economic globalization, about the patterns of human migration and movement initiated by colonialism and the expansion of capital. (qtd in Chaudhuri 3)

Brinda Bose, a well-known critic of Amitav Ghosh says, "Diasporic identity in its inherent fracturedness clearly intrigues him [Ghosh]; he analyses the space with reference to its histories. Patterns begin to emerge as he travels between culture/lands that diasporas straddle" (17). Ghosh traces the lives of people during their hard times.

*Sea of Poppies* presents an array of characters from different corners of the world. Captain Chillingworth and his wife were from England and she left him and married a Portuguese. Zachary Reid who was allegedly white is actually a mulatto. Deeti, a high caste Rajput woman marries an untouchable Kaula. Munia, a Hindu girl is in love with a Muslim boatsman Jodu. Paulette's father was French whereas her mother was from Mauritius. Ah Fatt is half-Chinese and half-Indian. "Since the nineteenth century consolidated the world system, all cultures and societies today are intermixed. No country on earth is made up of homogenous natives, each has its immigrants, its internal 'others' and each society, very much like the world we live in is hybrid" (Said 196).

The movement of Indians who travelled across the sea increased with the advent of indentured emigration. Ghosh forcefully brings in these ideas through Mr. Burnham's remarks.

Isn't that what the astery of the white man means for the lesser races? As I see it ... the Africa trade was the greatest exercise in freedom since God led the children of Israel out of Egypt. Consider ... 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?... 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. (SOP 73-74)

The East India Company transported opium which was cultivated in India to China. The Chinese banned opium into their country. Mr. Burnham states, "The Ibis won't be carrying opium on her first voyage, Reid. The Chinese have been making trouble on that score and until such time as they can be made to understand the benefits of free trade, I'm not going to send any more shipments to Canton" (SOP 78). Mr. Burnham with the guidance of the Britishers started to transport indentured labourers to Mauritius. A plantation owner in Mauritius send word to Mr. Burnham thus: "Tell Mr. Burnham that I need men. Now that we may no longer have slaves in Mauritius, I must have coolies, or I am doomed" (SOP 21). The real diaspora begins mainly by the cruel acts of the Britishers. The labourers accept indenturedship due to famine. The farmers were forced to cultivate opium which turned the fertile Gangetic plains into an area where staple food became scarce. Ghosh vividly portrays the cultivation of opium in the Gangetic plain and the economic impact upon the peasants.

The town was thronged with hundreds of... improvised transients ... willing to sweat themselves half to death for a few handfuls of rice. Many of these people had been driven from their villages by the flood of flowers

that had washed over the countryside: lands that had once provided sustenance were now swamped by the rising tide of poppies; food was so hard to come by that people were glad to lick the leaves in which rice had been boiled. (SOP 187)

This famine made the hungry farmers to accept employment as indentured labourers in some faraway country. India Today review says “If migration is a movement that animates history to the rhythm of the outcaste’s heartbeat Amitav Ghosh is the most elegant choreographer. A richly textured minutely researched novel [SOP] chronicles the migratory movements in which we may find the first drafts of a million ancestral sagas” (Ghosh, “A Voyage”1).

Thousands of Indians were transported to European colonies to work in plantations. The word ‘permit’ was mispronounced as ‘girit’ and those who signed it were called as ‘giritiyas’. In 1826, French reunion government introduced the labourers to the colony. Every individual was produced before the magistrate and declared his willingness with the contract of five years and eight rupees pay per month. The first attempt to transport Indian labourers to Mauritius was a failure. It was in 1843, a total of 3218 male and 4307 female labourers were shipped from Madras to Mauritius. This historical event is presented in the novel as the vision of a tall mast ship which Deeti envisions in her dreams.

Girit means transportation of labourers through agreement basis, which prevailed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century. A record states nearly 40 million slaves were captured by European colonies and shipped to America. During their journey, many died and the remaining were sold as slaves or worked free till their death. Officially slavery ended in

1834, which led to the beginning of girmmit. Ghosh brings out the painstaking image of the girmmitiyas. In the novel, the author traces social anthropology and history of the girmmitiyas. Ghosh speaks about it, in his interview with Sainen thus, “I wanted to understand what it was like for deeply rooted people from India’s heartland to travel across the seas (which they thought as the ‘kala pani’). It took a great deal of courage to undertake such a journey- this is one of the reasons why I am fascinated why the migration of labourers” (Wikipedi Contributors).

The transportation of people through girmmit system began in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The slaves who were in Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad refused to work anymore which lead to the labour problem in the colonies. During the British Raj, Indians were economically exploited through the land tax system. Unable to pay off the taxes, people were forced to sign as indentured labourers. “The people entered their names on paper girmmits; after these arguments were sealed, they had been given a blanket, several articles of clothing, and a round-bottomed brass lota” (SOP 204). African slavery was replaced by indentured labourers which led to the migration of millions of Indians to various colonies. Poverty, hunger, draught, unemployment was the reason for migration. Opium cultivation and indentured labourers are two sides of the same coin. Ghosh portrays indentured labour system in *Sea of Poppies*, which authenticates the trauma of the dislocated people.

Migration leads to loss of identity. The migrants in the ship travel to start a new life. Erik Erikson comments about identity thus, “Identity... contains a complementarity of past and future both in the individual and in society: it links the actuality of a living past with that of a promising future” (310). The characters travelling in the ship lose their

identity thus waiting for their new life. During the voyage, Deeti gives herself a new identity.

As the newcomer, Deeti knew that she would have to account for herself before she could expect the same of the others. It was on her lips to identify herself as kabutri-ki-ma the name by which she had been known ever since her daughter's birth... What was then to be her name? Her proper given name was the first to come in mind, and since it had never been used by anyone, it was good as any Aditi, she said softly, I am Aditi. (SOP 233)

Identity crisis and separation from the family are the major factors that the labourers face and they are filled with nostalgia and melancholy. The labourers become nostalgic thinking about their homeland when they are on the Ibis.

. . . the knowledge that this was the last they would see of their homeland, created an atmosphere of truculence and uncertainty in which no provocation seemed to slight for a quarrel... no matter how hard the times at home may have been, in the ashes of every past there were few cinders of memory that glow with warmth and now, those embers of recollection took a new life, in the light of which their presence here, in the belly of a ship that was about to be cast into an abyss, seemed incomprehensible, a thing that could not be explained except as a lapse from sanity. (SOP 397)

Human beings have the tendency to long for things that they can't experience again. The migrants feel nostalgic about things such as, ". . . colour of poppies, spilling across the fields like air on a rain-drenched Holi; the haunting smell of a cooking fire



drifting across the river, bearing news of a wedding in a distant village; the sunset sounds of temple bells and the evening azan; late nights of the courtyards listening to the tales of the elderly...” (SOP 397).

The Ibis becomes the microcosm of the world where people of different nationalities co-exist together. Ghosh brings in the characters from different strata of the society. Deeti says, “They were all kin now, their rebirth in the ship’s womb had made them into a single family” (SOP 432). Ghosh remarks in an interview with Amrita Tripathi in CNN-IBN:

One of the most wonderful things that happened historically with Indian indentured labourers as they went to other countries abroad was that when they were in the ship they began to think of themselves as jahaz bhais (ship brothers). So once they would settle in Mauritius or wherever, that relationship between them continued as they continued to think of themselves as jahas bhais. So it became a family, not a natural family but as it was a family of accidents. In a way I found that concept to be very beautiful when I first came across it, so that was in a way the inspiration of the book. (Tripathi1)

The ship Ibis becomes the “vehicle of transformation” (FOF 606) where Deeti becomes a low caste worker, Zamindar becomes a convict, French orphan disguises herself as an Indian Brahmin. It becomes an area of cultural utopia where they break the barrier of all culture, caste, religion and nation. They are bound under the humanitarian ethic. They had the belief of losing their caste once they crossed kalapani. A new era began when they crossed the river knowing that they would not return back. The major

character Deeti is a high caste woman who escapes the evil practice of sati and is transformed into a low caste woman on entering the Ibis.

Deeti thinks about the past and about her daughter Kabutri. “Memories from which she would be forever excluded; the years of growing she would not see; the secrets she would never receive. How was it possible that she would not be present at her child’s wedding to sing the laments that mothers sang when the Palanquins came to carry their daughters away?” (SOP 397). Memories are the painful reminders of the past and the present that holds the key to a new cultural identity created through personal history. Homi Bhabha states, “Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful remembering, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present” (63). Displacement and belongingness lead to hyphenated self-identity.

Raja Neel Rattan Halder a wealthy zemindar loses his properties by investing in opium trade with Mr. Benjamin Burnham. Mr. Burnham uses cunning tactics and usurps the Zamindar’s properties. Neel Rattan is arrested and he is unable to pay off his debts. He is convicted for forgery and he is deported to Mauritius. Neel feels the nullness of the ocean and loss of human connection. “He saw himself as a castaway on the dark void of the ocean, utterly alone, severed from every human mooring” (SOP 342).

In *Sea of Poppies*, the ship encompasses people of different cultural background thus forming a multicultural situation. Ghosh pictures the migrants getting adapted to the new culture. This is brought out through a scene where Neel who was once the Raja of Rashkali had become a papuer travelling as a convict exiled from India. He admits: “Yes, I was indeed once the Raja of Rashkali. My circumstances are very different now,

as you can see... My present Zamindary consists of no more than a toilet bucket and a set of rusty chains” (SOP 385-86).

The memory of the lost homeland, lost cultural commonalities often becomes stronger to fight against the dominant culture. These memories do not in obvious and ordinary sense exist of its own unless they are remembered, until they are brought back into waking life and understood by the individual as memories, separate from the present. (Wehne 19)

A man loses his identity and detaches himself from everything around and he becomes alienated. Ghosh portrays indentured labour system and thus brings out the trauma of the dislocated people. Paulette was in pain and misery when she was dislocated from her motherland and had to adapt to her adopted homeland. During her journey in Ibis, she bursts into tears on seeing the river’s mangrove-cloaked shores, “They were then companions of her earliest childhood . . . no matter where she went or how long, she knew that nothing would tie her to a place as did these childhood roots” (SOP 381).

This scene vividly brings out the trauma of the migrant when they are away from their homeland. “The migrants standing at (the temple’s) threshold, gathering together to say their last prayers on their native soil; it would be their parting memory of sacred Jambudwipa before they were cast upon the Black Water” (SOP 197). Ashcroft states, “Diaspora does not simply refer to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory and home which such displacement produces” (218).

The ship Ibis brings them together creating communities of choices who form new familial relationship among each other. The black sea becomes symbolic to Deeti, “All the old ties were immaterial now that sea had washed away their past” (SOP 431).

Sareen states, “Migration that leads to separation may be seen as rebirth, rebirth in a new place/city/country marked by a new culture, different flora and fauna, new adjustments and so on...it takes the memory back to the earlier birth even as the migrants have to ‘build a new world’” (86).

All the characters in the novel hide their identity at one point thus forming a new one. The characters Deeti and Kaula hide their caste thus gain their new identity. Paulette flees from Mr. Burnham’s house because of sexual harassment and thus transforms herself as a lascar in the ship. Baboo Nob Kissin, becomes divine after the death of his aunt, giving himself a female identity. Raja Neel loses his identity as a landlord and becomes a common criminal. All the characters enter the ship in the search of their new identity and they move towards the new horizon. Journey plays a major role in diaspora. During the journey the characters undergo fear, anxiety, agony of leaving their homeland and the pain of searching for their new home.

Robin Cohen defines diaspora as, “Dispersal from an original homeland” (17). Cohen states this dispersal as “sometimes traumatically” built with other voyages. The trauma of each character is portrayed with the concept of migration. Many people travel in the ship and they migrated to Mauritius with the sense of displacement and nostalgia. A sense of attachment and belongingness develops among the crew members. Most of the characters travel by Ibis to Mauritius. The reasons for people to move to different places are mainly because of British rule and economic condition, and caste based oppression. The British Raj, did not give proper financial support to the farmers and increased the land taxes, thus making them poor and driving them to the level of becoming *girimityas*.

The girmitiyas are oppressed by authorities like Bhyro Singh, Zachary Reid and Captain Chillingworth in the ship. “The pulwar became a cauldron of rumours: it began to be whispered that their rations on the Blackwater ship would consist of beef and pork; those who refused to eat would be whipped senseless and the meats would be thrust down their throats” (SOP 246).

The girmitiyas in the ship share their personal stories with each other. Though they have another family on the ship, they are reminded of their homelands and they feel alienated. Day by day, the crew members adapt themselves to the present situation. They are all united by the Britishers tyrannical rule. Their unity and happiness are narrated by Deeti, “Here, she said, taste it. It is the star that took us from our homes and put us on this ship. It is the planet that rules our destiny” (SOP 452). The crew form a new bonding of empathy and consider the sea as their nation. They are united through singing and ritualistic performances. The ship becomes the epi-centre of the displaced.

On a boat of pilgrims, no one can loose caste and everyone is the same: its like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannatha, in Puri. From now on, and forever afterward, we will be ship siblings- jahaz-bhais and jahaz-bahens- to each other. There will be no differences between us. This answer was so daring, so ingenious as fairly to rub the women of their breath. Not in a lifetime of thinking, Deeti knew she would have stumbled upon an answer so complete, so satisfactory and so thrilling in its possibilities. In the glow of the moment, she did something she would never have done otherwise: she reached out to take the strangers hand in her own. Instantly, in emulation of her gesture, every other women reached out too, to share in

this communion of touch. Yes, she Deeti, from now on, there are no differences between us; we are Jahaz-bhai and Jahaz-bahen to each other; all of us children of the ship. (SOP 356)

The crew members faced hard times due to the harassment of the authorities. The shipmates supported each other and developed a sense of security among them. It was not difficult for them to acculturate and assimilate because they have made their own choices. The characters in the novel are ready for their new life and they are ready to adjust to their altered living conditions.

Ghosh pictures the separation from the homeland as that of a bride parting from her family. The indentured labourers part from their families and sing a song to denote their separation. On hearing the song sung by women labourers, men too become nostalgic. “At home too, during village weddings, it was always the women who sang when the bride was torn from her parent’s embrace, it was as if they were acknowledging through their silence, that they as men had no words to describe the pain of the child who is exiled from home” (SOP 398). The only way for the labourers to remember their homeland is by singing songs.

Their pain of leaving their homeland led to physical suffering. During the journey, the girmitiyas suffered from seasickness and they found it difficult to adapt to their new surroundings: “Yet even as the others were getting better, a few showed no signs of improvement at all, and some grew steadily weaker and more helpless so that their bodies could be seen to be washing away” (SOP 413). During their travel, they suffer from seasickness. Day by day, their bodies became weaker and their dead bodies were thrown into the water by the officers.

The collective and individual experience of the immigrants and the loneliness faced during the migration from one place to another creates nostalgia. Homi Bhabha comments about culture thus, “At some levels, all forms of cultural diversity may be understood on the basis of a particular concept, whether it be human being, class, race can be both very dangerous and very limiting in trying to understand the ways in which cultural practices construct their own systems of meaning and social organization” (209).

The girmitiyas belonged to various classes of the society. “All the old ties were immaterial now that the sea had washed away their past” (SOP 431). “Thus they are kin now; that their rebirth in the shape of womb had made them into a single family” (SOP 432). The characters Deeti, Munia, Heeru are separated from their family and they shall never meet them again. The space for the girmitiyas in the ship was not enough. “To spend three weeks in that small, dark and airless space should have been, by rights, an experience of near- unbearable tedium” (SOP 241). Captain Chillingworth an opium addict whips the labourers when they protested against the inhuman condition. Captain becomes the sole authority of the ship and says, “I am your fate, your providence, your lawgiver” (SOP 404). Girmitiyas in the ship are not treated with respect and they realize that they are still the victims of the colonizers. Alessandro Monti considers, the voyage of the girmit as, “A primaeval act of enforced migration that fore lights a permanent feature of the colonial enterprise” (197).

Ghosh brings out the history and migration of the girmits and their condition under the colonizers. Man cannot live in isolation so he needs identity and sense of belongingness. The Ibis is considered by the migrants as: “Great wooden mai-bap, an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynastic yet to come” (SOP 356-57). Deeti understands

the vision that haunted her often. “It was because her new self, her new life, had been gestating all this while in the belly of this creature, this vessel that the Mother-Father of her new family...” (SOP 356).

In 1810, when the Britishers captured Mauritius there were not only Indian traders and labourers but Indian jewellers and shoe-makers as well. Transformation does not disconnect the migrants completely from their old belongings. “Beyond the cape of Good Hope, the slave ship becomes a vehicle for the articulation of polyphonic diasporic associations across cultures that overcome but do not entirely erase territorialized forms of identity” (Crane 18).

The ship itself becomes the floating identity thus proving it to be a global diaspora. In *Sea of Poppies*, few characters do not want to go back to their homeland because they consider it to be an escape from their homeland. Vijay Mishra describes the migrants thus :

. . . their homeland is a series of objects fragments and narratives that they keep in their heads or in their suitcases. Like hawkers they can reconstitute their lives through the contents of their knapsacks: a Ganaapathi icon, a dogeared copy of the Gita or the Quran, an old sari or other desi outfit, a photograph of the pilgrimage or in modern times a video cassette of the latest hit from the home country. (68)

Hybrid culture is the result of displacement due to colonialism which mainly affected the identity of the migrants. The main concern of diapsoric community is to retain, “some sense of Indian-ness” (Rai.R 8). Indian-ness is sustained through a deep



sense of nostalgia. The giritiyas reminiscence about their helpless condition and they worry about their uncertain future.

Colonial authority requires modes of discrimination (cultural, racial, administrative...) that disallow a stable unitary assumption of collectivity. Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the reference of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something different- a mutation, a hybrid. (Bhabha 111)

In the novel *River of Smoke*, Ghosh unfolds the opium trade in Canton by East India Company. The principal characters in Canton face the trauma of being displaced. The novel also focuses on the Ibis migrants who form a new community in Mauritius and it speaks about how they are all culturally united forming a new community.

The theme of the novel is search for identity, rootlessness, alienation and exploitation. The ocean becomes the symbol of forgetfulness and rebirth. All the major characters undergo identity crisis and later they transform. This happens because people belonging to different places gather in the Ibis ship. The characters belonging to a different nation are travelling to unknown places are joined by misery and pain. The characters who reached the island after the storm from the Ibis formed a diasporic community. They have travelled through space and time. They form a new ethnicity and thus they create a new identity.

The novel *River of Smoke* portrays characters from various cultural and geographical background and their common interest is trading in China. The novel pictures Asian diasporic culture. The novel begins with Deeti performing “a proper puja with flowers and offerings” (ROS 3). Deeti continues the art of drawing that she had acquired from her grandmother. She carved her memories on a small hollow in the rock. Deeti along with the indentured members in the island go on a pilgrimage to Deeti’s shrine once in a year. This temple becomes the memory of transformation of cultural identity. Thus Deeti creates a new culture in a new location. According to Clifford, “Women in diaspora remain attached to, and empowered by, a ‘home’ culture and tradition” (252). In the process of globalization, historical transformation leads to cultural hybridization. “The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerged in the moments of historical transformation” (Bhabha 3).

The ship acts as a melting pot of identities where multicultural people meet communicating in various languages. Ghulam Murshid says, “Earliest Indians who crossed kala Pani were the sailors- the lacars as they were called in those days, generally referring to a class of non-white indigenous sailors” (15-16). The characters are thrown into a situation where they are compelled to migrate. Deeti says, “It wasn’t chance but destiny that led her to it – for the very existence of the place was unimaginable until you had actually stepped inside it” (ROS 3). The characters like Deeti, Paulette, Zachary, Serang Ali, Jodu all enter the Ibis with the hope of finding a new life.

The word lascar is derived from a Persian word ‘lashkar’ which means army or group of followers. Portuguese used the term lascarn in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century to denote the

sailors of India, Burma, China, Africa, Malaysia, Thailand. The Britishers employed them on the ships due to the expansion of the trading routes. These lascars are very cheap and they are known for their work and discipline. They are expert in the art of trade and commerce. These lascar systems were very famous till the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and they were of major help to the Europeans in trading and also during war times.

In the novel, the word ‘lascar’ means Jahazi or a Khalasi. Among the lascars, the senior most was Serang Ali. There are also Kussub and Topas who are treated lesser than that of a sweeper. There was also ship’s boy who was mainly there to be mocked and kicked. He is usually called as launda or chhokra.

The Ibis lascars belong to different nations. They not only change their personal history but also the world’s history. Like the girmitiyas, the lascars belonging to different regions who do not have anything in common but they become ship brothers leaving aside all their caste, community and religion. On entering the ship they develop a sort of relationship thus creating a multicultural panorama.

Hybridity is the consequence of globalization. Multi cultural situation unites people of various societies. The only problem is that they do not belong to a single culture. In the colonial era, hybridity was associated with the superiority of the white race. “Hybrid culture concentrates on the consequence of colonialism in people's mind which appears to be disconnections of identity” (Fanon 190).

Zachary Reid starts his career as ship’s carpenter. He is a mulatto and he hides his identity from Serang Ali. These lascars are native seamen and Zachary is one among them, who is from Baltimore, but he is treated superior to others. These lascars were a group of ten to fifteen joining the ship and they have Serang to speak on their behalf.

Most of the lascars did not speak about their past. They were kidnapped and sold when they were young. Serang Ali belongs to the Arakan and he has worked with many other crew all belonging to different nations. Baboo and Mando Tindal were close friends, one being Hindu and the other as Shia Muslim. The lascari term ‘tindal’ refers to boatswain. The lascars group contains people of different culture, caste, creed and religion.

The lascars are of religious heterogeneity “Coorghee Hindu, and another is a Shia Muslim and a grey-haired catholic from Goa” (SOP 174). Zachary is pictured as a classic alien, as days pass by he gets adapted to their speech, language and food. “They had nothing in common except the Indian Ocean; among them were Chinese and East Africans, Arabs and Malays, Bengalis, Goans, Tamils and Arakanese” (SOP 13). The migrants in the ship leave their traditional identity and form a new one. “The conditions on board ship made it difficult to sustain many of the taboos associated with religious ritual life . . .” (Rai.S 74).

On the Ibis, the convicts, sailors and girmits face hardship. Captain Chillingworth and Mr. Crowle tame the girmits through violence. The convict’s Neel and Ah Fatt are brought before the officials with their legs chained and Ah Fatt is forced to piss on Neel’s face. Neel was once the Raja of Rashkali estate but now he is treated badly by the colonial rulers. “Ghosh’s rewriting of the marginal lives also takes the readers to a multidisciplinary experience in the novel as the narratives float over the fluid bodies of disciplines like language, culture, anthropology, history and politics” (Kumar 30).

Characters like Deeti, Paulette, Zachary transgress, transcend and form alliance across the boundaries. The ship mates create communities of choice to give strength to hold on further. Characters like Neel, Baboo, Deeti feel birth of a new existence on the

ship. Deeti is drawn to Paulette. A new family is born in the womb of the ship. The transnational cultural flow is clearly reflected in Ibis trilogy. The image of India changes both politically and socially in Ghosh's narrative. "...in his fiction, Ghosh has concerned himself with subjects such as emigration, exile, cultural displacement, and the stories that emanate from transnational cultural flows" (Nelson 137).

The whole of Cantonese island becomes the symbol of salad bowl where people of different culture, race live together forming a community. Bahram Moddie is a ployglot who speaks Gujarati, Hindustani, English, Pidgin and Cantonese. "In Canton stripped of the multiple wrappings of home, family, community, obligation and decorum, Bahram has experienced the emergence of a new persona, one that had been previously dormant within him: he had become Barry Moddie" (ROS 52). Barrie Moddie is "confident, forceful, gregarious, hospitable, boisterous and enormously successful" in Canton when he returns to Bombay "Barry would become Bahram again, a quietly devoted husband, living uncomplainingly within the constraints of a large joint family" (ROS 52). The cultural transformation is evident when Bahram dines at Canton; he enjoys, "akuri, pori and he wears a turban... and uses idioms and phrases that are often used by rich Parsi people" (ROS 67). Bahram becomes the victim of opium trade where he is torn between the Indian and Chinese culture. Neel becomes the survivor of multi-cultural world who documents the hybridized world.

Robert Young rightly states, "There is no single, or correct concept of hybridity: it changes as it repeats, but it also repeats as it changes" (25). Cultural hybridization is the result of historical transformation in the process of globalization. Cultural hybridity arises

due to the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized. Due to colonization and cross cultural interaction, cultural hybridity is found in every part of the society.

Ghosh points out, “no culture is an island” (ROS 188). Heteroglossia becomes the major feature of Indian culture. “India exported with her population, not a language, as other civilizations have done, but a linguistic process- the process of adaptation to heteroglossia” (The Imam and the Indian 246). Ghosh brings forth the idea that the statesmen draw the border and it is the human beings who mark their prints forming their own point in culture. In an interview with Lushsinger, Ghosh asserts, “In the 12<sup>th</sup> Century, people developed a much more sophisticated language of cultural negotiation than we know today. They were able to include different cultures in their lives, while maintaining what was distinct about themselves” (52). The multi-cultured city of Canton is beautifully pictured by Robin Chinnery through his letters to Paulette.

In a way, Fanqui-town is like a ship at sea, with hundreds- no thousands of men living crammed together in a little silver of a place. I do believe there is no place like it on earth, so small and yet so varied, where people from far corners of the world must live, elbow to elbow, for six-months of the year. Everywhere you look there are khidmatgars, daftardars, khansamas, suprassies, durwans, peons, khazanadars, khalasis and laskhars. (ROS 185)

Robin’s letter to Paulette sketches the multicultural world of Canton. It brings out the fact that these were thousands of Achha, Arabs, Persian, African all live together in the city. Goddess Kuan-Yin is the guardian deity who is brought from India. Many Buddhists from India mainly Kashmiri monks lived in Canton for centuries and they were called as Dharamyasa. The most famous Buddhist missionary who came from South India is

Bodhidarma. The city of Canton also has a mosque built for Prophet Muhammad.

“It is a most remarkable structure, no different, in outward appearance, from the Chinese temple- all except for the minaret, which is like that of any dargah in Bengal” (ROS 377).

The new rules that the Britishers brought along with opium trade did not alter the cultural structures. Robin views multiculturalism as, “The ties or trust and goodwill that bound the Hongists to the fanquis were all the stronger for having been forged across apparently unbridgeable gaps of language, loyalty and belonging” (ROS 346). In spite of the difference in class, race, gender, the traders in Canton form a new community and they are bonded together.

Though opium trade was fatal to people lives, it created a cultural unity among people. “Indian from Sindh and Goa, Bombay and Malabar, Madras and Coringa hills, Calcutta and Sylhet” (ROS 185) joined together and created “Achha” community in Canton. Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Parsis from India, whose paths never crossed in the subcontinent enjoyed an inexplicable “mysterious commonality” (ROS 193).

The Chinese were against “every variety of foreign devil” (ROS 185). Neel observes, “Fungtai Hong was a world in itself, with its own foods and words, a new country, a yet unmade Achhasthan” (ROS 192). The merchants in Canton developed a utopian belief in a trans-racial human togetherness. Canton becomes an example of cultural utopia where the cultural barrier becomes defenceless because of humanitarian ethics.

Culture encompasses all aspects of the way of life associated with a group of people which includes language, religious beliefs, customs and values in the existing society. At the same time, the social structure organizes the

work of the society as well as connects individuals to one another and to the larger society. (Gordon 62)

The novel *Flood of Fire* is set prior to Opium War. It describes in detail about the preparation for war and suffering of the soldiers during the war. Ghosh skillfully brings out the cruel act of the Britishers to capture the great nation based on Adam Smith's notion of Free Trade.

The novel contains an array of characters suffering under the colonization of the Britishers. The Britishers in order to gain profit forced the local Indian farmers to cultivate poppy instead of their staple food. This led to the great demand for staple food which made the farmers poorer and debtors. The young men of the village were forced to migrate to other countries as soldiers.

Deeti's brother Kesri Singh is a prominent character who has joined the East India Company army to help his family. Though his father warned him about the dangers in the army he preferred joining the army. Kesri underwent many difficulties during the training. He tried to run away but he was caught and punished. "With neither friends nor kin to come to his aid, he had become a kind of pariah as well as a prisoners" (FOF 112).

Neel along with Campton becomes a compiler of dictionary to help people understand diction of the hybridized world. He stays in Asha-didi's kitchen boat, she had migrated from India. Every one in the family use Bangala and Hindustani words and especially their taste for masala remains the same. "Most of them were very young when their family left Bengal to return to Guangdong but they've all preserved a few memories of the city" (FOF 106). Neel stays at Asha didi's place as it reminds him of his homeland and feels a streak of happiness.



Neel along with Campton visits a library where he finds *The Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast* by William Roscoe. He immediately begins to read the book. Tears flow down his cheek thinking of having read those lines to his son. He tries not to dwell too much on the past but he is flooded with grief thinking about his family.

Neel's son Raju had ventured from his homeland in search of his father. The fate leads him to the same budgerow where he once played kite with his father. He finds the same kite and he is in reminiscence about the happy days spent with his father. After few years, Raju goes in search of Neel to different places but he could not find Neel anywhere. He feels "cold, empty sense of abandonment" (FOF 359), but he builds up his courage to find his father on his own. "But to know this only made things worse- for he had not the faintest inkling of where to go next or what to do" (FOF 360).

Neel was very upset but he was trying to comfort himself with the books and he leafed through it many times. Then he spotted Raju in a streamer belonging to the British navy and he went running for him. He cried in Raju's shoulder and it was Raju who comforted him. These incidents clearly state the migrants longing for their homeland and it beautifully brings out the trauma that a person undergoes in an alien country. Loss of identity leads an immigrant to be alienated. The image of the homeland is frozen in the minds of the immigrants. Friedrich Schiller rightly states, "...alienation is indispensable for the purpose of cultural development and synthesis" (42).

The attack between the Britishers and the Chinese began which made people to move out of their homeland. Neel's friend Campton leaves Guangzhou and despairingly utters: "Where can I go?... if I am to set up a print-shop again I will have to go to a place where an English-language printer is needed... Everything has changed. To survive I too

will have to change” (FOF 533). Baburao decides to shift his family to Hong Kong: “In Today’ Guangzhou there is no place for an eatery like ours” (FOF 532). All these incidents made Neel even weaker and developed reminiscence towards his homeland.

Thus Ghosh skillfully explains that the capitalistic policy of the colonial British rulers had made the native people suffer. Ghosh proves that boundaries between natives are the artificial barriers and insists upon the essence of universal humanism. Ghosh’s characters are mutually bound together by compassion and a sense of universal brotherhood.

All these incidents and experiences of the indentured labourer’s portray the manner in which they became subordinate and victimized in the power relation existing in the host nation. This power relation divides the society on the hierarchical basis giving preference to one over the other. This trilogy shows us that people of different class of society are dominated, manipulated, controlled and oppressed by the powerful hierarchy.

Ghosh’s training in historical and anthropological research, his eschewing of ground theoreticist gestures and his links with the *subaltern studies* project, make his work an interesting site around which current arguments in post colonial theory can be conducted. (Khair 10)

Ghosh narrates the sense of rootlessness, nostalgia and the agonies faced by the migrants and explains the effort taken to by them to move beyond alienation and work towards assimilation in their new land. The migrant’s remember their homeland through recalling their old myths and retelling the stories of their homeland. As an anthropologist, journalist, reader and a fiction writer, Ghosh has conducted research regarding Indian diasporic culture. An immigrant oscillates like a pendulum between his own culture and

alien culture. “This global movement has led to the emergence of a new narration of travel, dislocation, displacement and uprooting . . . In these narratives, new themes, new anxieties and searches have been expressed that reflect the trauma and tensions of the displaced as they strive to recover a sense of self or construct a new self hood” (Jain 36).

In the process of globalization, multiculturalism has become the nature of living in the diasporic communities. Individual choices and economic problems have forced people to go beyond the borders. Ghosh’s works clearly speaks about the diasporic experience of people who felt a sense of displacement. Ghosh tries to bring in history within diaspora and emphasises the quest for identity. Ghosh’s sense of knowledge and travelling acts as a bridge between the novel and the reader. Diasporic displacement happens mainly because of commerce and capitalism.