

**Amitav Ghosh's Select Factual-Fiction: An Amalgamation of Literature
and Anthropology**

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Chapter V

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Summation

Linguistic anthropology is the study of languages from anthropological perspectives. Linguistic anthropologists consider language as a sign system contributing to the society as it is the representative of culture. Language acts as a powerful tool in exchanging information, identifying people, things, ideas, recounting the past and imagining future for the purpose of solving problems.

Linguistic anthropology documents specific language varieties, linguistic genres and registers. It refines the linguistic concepts of participation, indexicality, ideology and agency. Anthropologists use various methods such as grammatical analysis of the text, interactive analysis of audio and video recording of speech events. Linguistic anthropology can be categorized as ethnolinguistics and sociolinguistics. Linguistic anthropology has drawn from the development of various traditions like historical, typological linguistics, literary studies, folklore, language acquisition, gender studies, clinical psychology and narrative analysis.

Sociolinguists study the use of language for communication by the individuals. It focuses mainly on the spoken languages such as pidgins, creoles and so on. Sociolinguists dealt mainly with the use of language in societies. Dell Hymes is considered to be the father of ethnography of communication. Language analysis is a part of sociolinguistic research which includes the oral communication between two different native speakers. The migration of people due to historical events made them to communicate with those who do not speak their language. Pidgins are spoken when the speakers of two different

languages communicate in one particular language for a specific purpose. Pidgins were formed during colonial period and they are called as contact languages. Pidgin languages shift from one generation to another by taking well-defined syntactic and morphological rules. These are called as creoles. Both creoles and natural languages have common properties. Both pidgin and creoles languages are a great source of information for historians and anthropologist. They provide better understanding of languages during the colonial rule to know about the effects of language change through social interaction and also to evaluate the language use.

In *The Glass Palace*, Amitav Ghosh speaks about the three generation spread across the locale of Burma, Calcutta and India during the British rule in India. The story happens at places like Mandalay, Burma, and India and characters use Burmese, Hindustani and English language. Characters are mostly Indians, Burmese and Christians who live together as a mixed culture, speaking Hindustani, Burmese and English. Ghosh frequently uses Burmese words like ‘min’ and ‘mebya’ meaning the king and the queen and the Hindustani words like- ‘kaisa hai sab, kuch thik thak’ which means, How is it and Is everything ok? These Burmese words at times disturb the readers because the meaning of these words is not given. Prof. R.K. Kaul comments:

Amitav Ghosh has mastered his material so completely that he uses Burmese words and expression freely without glossing them. He refers to Buddhist festivals with familiarity. The word “Longyi” perhaps needs explanation but these are passages were a whole cluster of Burmese words makes the meaning obscure. For example “Wungyis:, Windiest: Myow

UNS”, “HTI”, and “TSALOE” all occur in the same page . A glossary would have been helpful. (41)

Amitav Ghosh expresses the mixture of culture through language. He uses local Hindustani and creative metaphoric language such as Baya-gyaw, aingyi, hti, gaung-baung (the turban of mourning), patama-byan (examination), yethas (bullock-carts), htamein, lugalei, tai, etc are words from Burmese language. He also adds multilingual flavour to the scenes by adding Hindi words such as kalaa, kaisa hai? Sub kuchh theek thaak, dhobi ka kutta- na ghar ka na ghat ka, khalasis, ek gaz; do gaz; teen gaz, jhinjhinka bazaar, gaaris, kuchh to karo, basti, langot, buddhu, havildar, kaun hai etc. Tabish Khair comments about the richness of Ghosh language as:

Language is an area in which these novels by Ghosh and Chaudhary offer two versions of the same lesson. Both of them are very careful in their use of English and vernacular transcriptions. Chaudhary is the greater stylist. However, Ghosh develops a conscious and rich tradition in Indian English fiction – a tradition that includes R.K. Narayan and Shashi Deshpande. (64)

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* is a unique novel which has scope for analysis from the perspective of anthropology, environmentalism, migration, and ethnography. In the novel, Ghosh uses non-verbal communication and creates a complex situation where three people Kanai, Piya and Fokir meet at the Sundarbans. From Piya’s perspective, Fokir becomes representative of the survivor of 1979 Morichjhapi Massacre. Kanai acts as a translator to American Cetologist Piya. Piya cannot speak nor understand Bengali whereas Fokir does’nt knows English. It is Kanai who acts as a translator for them. Fokir, a rustic fellow and sophisticated Piya share a bond beyond language.

Fokir and Piya undergo an unexpected encounter in a dramatic way. One day Piya went out to see the dolphins, Fokir also ventured into the sea and crossed the off-limit to catch fish. The armed forest guard travelling along with Piya approached Fokir for money because he crossed the limit. Actually, Fokir mistook Piya as a watch guard and got tensed. “As though he were trying to reckon exactly how much money he was going to lose. At least a week’s earnings, Piya guesses, if not a whole month” (THT 49). To make the confused Fokir clear, she displayed the pictures of rare dolphins.

Piya has come all the way from the U.S to Sundarbans to study about rare dolphins. With the help of government approval, she got a guide but she found him useless. It was at this time, she came across Fokir who responded to the dolphin pictures. She was overwhelmed to know about the existence of dolphins in the river. Her joy knew no bounds on knowing the existence of Irrawady dolphins. “To her astonishment, his finger dropped to the illustration of the Irrawady dolphin, *Orcaella brevirostris*. He said something in Bengali and held up six fingers. Six? She said. She was suddenly very excited. You’re sure” (THT 50-51).

Piya developed a strong friendship with Fokir when he saved Piya from drowning and also when the forest official minted money from Fokir for illegal poaching. She sought Fokir to help her in the expedition. Both Piya and Fokir reached the secluded habitat of Irrawady dolphins because of Fokir’s deep knowledge about Sundarbans flora and fauna. It was with the help of Fokir’s fishing skills and by using GPS, they reached the dolphins’ habitat. Ghosh says, “The seamless intertwining of their pleasures and their purpose” (THT 118). In her attempt to study about rare dolphins, she developed a close

non-verbal communication with Fokir which bridged the gap between the sophisticated elite and the poor illiterate.

Piya knew that both she and Fokir shared a common love for nature. This blooming relationship was not physical rather it was platonic which crossed cultural difference of caste and creed. In due course of time, the relationship crossed all the social, political and cultural barriers. Eventhough they did not understand each others language, they had no communication barrier. At times, these incidents made Piya wonder that it was a non-verbal relationship that was more appealing than that of the verbal which seemed artificial. Piya claims:

And in contrast, there was the immeasurable distance that separated her from Fokir. What was he thinking about as he stared at the moonlight river? The forest, the crabs? Whatever it was, she would never know: not just because they had no language in common but because that was how it was with human beings, who came equipped, as a species, with the means of shutting each other out. The two of them, Fokir and herself, they could have been boulders or trees for all they knew of each other: and was'nt it better in a way, more honest, that they could not speak? For if you compared it to the ways in which dolphins echoes mirrored the world, speech was only a bag of tricks that fooled you into believing that you could see through the eyes of another being. (THT 168)

Piya trusted Fokir to a great extent. The intense love towards nature, especially for Sundarbans was the reason for their relationship. The land of Sundarbans has its historical past. Ghosh avows: "This is after all no remote and lonely frontier- this is

India's doormat, the threshold of a teeming subcontinent. Everyone who has ever taken the eastern route into the Gangetic heartland has had to pass through it- the Arakanese, the Khmer, the Japanese, the Dutch, the Malays, the Chinese, the Portuguese, and the English" (THT 53).

Fokir was a man of honesty and integrity and Piya not only trusted him but also developed a sort of admiration for him. This gives way to wordless communication between the cosmopolitan elite and the subaltern. Piya had concern for Fokir but Moyna was not able to understand the relationship between her husband and a foreigner. Moyna doubted and approached Kanai to know about the relationship between Piya and Fokir, "She's a woman, Kanai-babu. Moyna's voice sank to a whisper. And he's a man" (THT 280).

Kanai did not like Fokir acting as a guide because he could not cross cultural barriers. Kanai was a typical educated stereotype, who evaluated people with their intellect: "Kanai burst out laughing at the thought of Fokir walking down the aisle of a jet, in his lungi and vest. Piya, there's nothing in common between you and all. You're from different worlds, different planets. If you were about to be struck by a bolt of lightning, he'd have no way of letting you know" (THT 291). The simplicity of Fokir changed even Kanai at the end. During the sudden explosion of wrath, Kanai looked through the eyes of Fokir which began to translate into the other.

Ghosh pen's down one of the most tragic stories where Piya and Fokir got separated from others while tracking the dolphins. Fokir saved Piya from the typhoon by tying her to the tree to protect her against the gale. They spent a night together to escape the storm. It is ironical that because of natural violence, they were united, "Their bodies

were so close, so finely merged that she could sense the blows raining down on his back. She could feel the bones of his cheeks as if they had been superimposed upon her own; it was as if the storm had given them what life could not; it had fused them together and made them on” (THT 416). The natural disaster killed Fokir. However this disaster could not break the relationship between Piya and Fokir. Piya continued to work for the people of Sundarbans. It would be wrong to think that Fokir had a soft corner for Piya. Fokir was a true and sincere guide who never crossed his limits. Till the end of his life, he remained faithful to his family.

The death of Fokir made Piya speechless. Eventhough they are culturally different, they turned out to be good friends and they together became successful in this venture of locating Irrawady dolphins. Piya started a conservative group administered through ‘Badabon trust’. There was so much impact of Fokir’s death on Piya that when Nilima asked her the name for the group. She said,

I suppose you even have a name for this project of yours? Nilima had meant this ironically, but when Piya gravely cleared her throat, she realized that the manner was no joke for the girl. ‘So you do have a name? Already?’ I was thinking, Piya said, ‘That we might name it after Fokir, since his data his going to be crucial to the project. (THT 425)

Fokir becomes the eye opener and states that human beings are not bonded by their status but their skill in understanding the situation. Ghosh achieves a great success in portraying a strong bond between people belonging to two different strata of society where the relationship does not require a language to convey a message.

Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* is a masterpiece, he writes with the vision of an anthropologist dealing with historical context. He wishes to dwell on the less-exposed places where cultural identities intersect and merge, where languages melt and classes collide, where his lucid prose and power is deep and modest. His vibrant experience is clearly reflected in the novel.

In the novel *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh portrays crew of characters with diverse language. The novel depicts number of people belonging to various races and culture travelling together in the ship Ibis. The ship carries people of different strata of the society who abandon their caste, creed and called themselves Jahaz-bhais and Jahaz-bahens. They are cut off from the old familial ties and they form a new cultural community.

People there speak Pidgin, Bhojpuri, English, French and also colloquial Anglo-Indian words, obscure English and Hindustani words. The migrants create new stories to hide their past culture and identity. There are also cross-sections of Europeans who speak diluted English with the touch of Hindi and Bengali words. The communication on the ship is mainly the polyglot jargon where the readers encounter conversation and translation among characters. Ghosh has referred to nineteenth century linguistic scholarship and dictionaries namely Hobson-Jobson, A Laskari Dictionary, An English and Hindostanee Naval Dictionary of Technical Terms to employ appropriate language to his characters.

Amitav Ghosh is a polyglot, so he mixes many languages like Bhojpuri, Bengali, Laskari, Anglo-Indian, Malay, Chinese, Persian and Hindustani in the Ibis trilogy. Ghosh has researched and extensively learnt about various culture, races, history and languages.

People from different cultures interact and they find a common ground. So Ghosh being anthropologist forms the speech patterns of lascars in this novel. The lascars travelling in the *Ibis* get separated from their families and they are into trade and commerce. Not knowing their country's origin, their caste and religion, they consider ship as their home and sea as their nation. They use hybrid words picked up at different places. "Ghosh's novel takes as its task the exploration of a whole field of human communication, testing possibilities and limits as the characters seek to cross the barriers of language, religion, class and culture- as well as those between the 'old' and 'new' India, and between India and the outside world" (Pandian 120-121).

Ghosh as a young man in Egypt learnt Judeo-Arabic and Laskari. He mixes words and languages to give flavours of authenticity to the novel by including idioms, pidgins, creoles and laskari. "The unruly polyphony of languages defines the unequal surface of hybridization- however, instead of imposing chaos it lays bare as it were the authoritarian globalization operated by colonialism" (Monti 195).

The Britishers living in India for decades use English by mixing Hindi and Bengali words. The local words are spelt as such by the lascars with the European accent. Ghosh adds that the dictionary of laskari language contains words of Asian languages. "I came upon a nineteenth-century dictionary of the 'Laskari' language. I'd never seen any references to this dictionary anywhere, so it was really exciting discovery. And the language proved to be a wonderful nautical jargon that mixed bits of Hindi, Urdu, English, Portuguese, Bengali, Arabic, Malay and many other languages" ("Amitav Ghosh- an interview with author" 25).

The lascars all belonging to different countries and culture interact regularly and they shift, collide forming an alliance with other languages; by doing this regularly they formed the Laskari language. Ghosh introduces the conservation of lascars among themselves. The conversation between Serang Ali and Zachary is an example of lascar's English: "Malum Zikiri! Captin-bugger blongi poo-shoo-foo. He hab got plenty sick! Need one piece dokto. No can chow-chow tiffin. Alto tim do chheechhee, pee-pee. Plenty smelly in captin cabin" (SOP 16).

Ghosh also deals with 'Hobson-Jobson' form of English where English becomes Hinglish. There are certain Hindi words spelt according to European accent: "abihowa" means climate, "budmash", "budzat", and "hurremazad". The word 'bandar' can be misunderstood as monkey by a Hindi speaker but in Persian it is 'harbour' or 'port'. The word 'banian' or 'banyan' can be misread by a Hindi speaker. Originally it means clan or caste 'bania' or 'vania' which is related to banking, commerce and money lending while the English speaker may interpret as 'banyan tree'. The real Indian atmosphere is created when words such as Zubben, hoga, chawbuck, chitty, dawk, shishmull, duffer, jildee, chupowing, gantas, tuncaw, tumasher, thug, pukka, sahib, mali, lathi, dekkko, dhوتي, kurta, jooties, nayansukh, dusturi, sirdar and burkundaz are used.

The conversation between Doughty and Paulette in laskari is most entertaining "pon my sivyv, Miss Lambert! Arent you quite the dandyzette today? Fit to knock a feller ootler pootler on his beam ends!" (SOP 250). When Mrs. Burnham thinks Paulette is with child, she uses local phrases "bun in the oven", isn't a rootie in the choola, is there? And also idioms like "samjo", "chupowing", "little chinties". There are also certain laskari words that undergo changes. The anglicized Baboo Nob Kissing Pander who's

original name is Babu Nobokrishno Panda. Similarly, the names of the girmitiyas are also changed. Kaula's name changes to Madhu Charmor in the Ibis trilogy and later changed into Maddow Colver in Mauritius. So language plays a major role in changing the characters identities.

Ghosh uses Laskari, the language of the lascars on the ship; Ghosh uses dictionarists and linguists to refer to grammar of Bhojpuri language, its lexicon and glossaries of Anglo-Indian words and phrases in the novel. Ghosh is very much interested in languages and his characters are often translators, students of languages or speakers of many languages. In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh depicts the world of heteroglossia namely seafaring lingo, French, English, including Hinglish, Chinglish, and Franglais, Pidgin and Creole and many indigenous languages like Bhojpuri, Bengali and Hindustani. Ghosh minutely brings out the intricacies of English language used in different circumstances. Shirley Chew rightly comments: “‘The motley-tongue’ is as much a part of the cultural scene at the lower reaches of the Ganges, and of the multi-layered history of the subcontinent, as the collision of people on one of the great rivers of the world” (n.p)

On the website of Amitav Ghosh “The Ibis Chrestomathy”, a glossary of 35 pages of fine words created by Neel is published. Neel being obsessed with words comments, “... it was of the view that words, no less than people are endowed with lives and destinies own” (Ghosh “The Ibis” n.p). Neel acts as a link in translating languages. In the chrestomathy, the word linkster refers to a great lexicographer of 19th century Charles Leland, his *Pidgin English Sing-Song: Or Songs and Stories in the China-English Dialect*; is provided with glossary.

The cultural and political transformation of words is brought out through Neel's glossary: *Girmitiya*: The genius of the Bhojpuri language derives this memorable term from the root *girmit*, which is a corruption of the English agreement or indenture. A finer word for climate was never coined, writes Neel, joining as it does, the wind in Persian, Arabic and Bengali. Were there to be, in matters of language, such a thing as a papal indulgence, then I would surely expend mine in ensuring a place for this fine coinage. Neel was contemptuous of those who identified this word with Indian nursemaids and nurseries. In his home, he insisted on using its progenitors, the French 'aide' and the Portuguese 'aia'. (Ghosh "The Ibis" n.p)

The novel is well noted for its Bhojpuri language and Ghosh mentions about the Bhojpuri grammar of George Greisens. This novel gives a unique description of Bhojpuri language and society. The novel traverses linguistic borders. He dives deep into the ship *Ibis* to explore the *laskari* language and goes to the Ganges shore where native Indian languages are spoken by the British people. The pidgin and creole languages presupposes multilingualism, linguistic assimilation due to border crossing. Pidgin is an auxiliary language which originated to communicate between speakers of other languages. The main purpose of Pidgin is utilitarian which is communicated between two speakers who do not share a common language. Pidgin renders possible basic activities like trade, tour, travels, sea-faring and even plantations across borders of race, culture and religion.

Sea Pidgin is the *laskari* language used by the marginalized lascars. It originates from Persian/Urdu 'laskhar' meaning soldier or army. Later the meaning got transferred as native crew members of the ship. They had their origins spread across the wide

cartography along the shores of Indian Ocean. There were assorted people from both west and eastern coasts of Arabia, East Africa, Malaysia, Sima, Phillipines, China and few places of undivided India. Zachary is awestruck initially by the language spoken by the lascars. “He [Zachary] had thought that lascars were a tribe or nation, like the Cherokee or Sioux: he discovered that now they came from places that were far apart, and had nothing in common, except the Indian Ocean; among them were Chinese and East Africans, Arabs and Malays, Bengalis and Goans, Tamils and Arakanese” (SOP 13).

Ghosh elaborates upon the lexicon of the lascars. He writes based on several reliable sources namely Thomas Roebuck’s *An English and Hindostanee Navel Dictionary* (1811), later revised and republished by George Small with a new title, *A Laskari Dictionary or Anglo-Indian Vocabulary of National Terms and Phrases in English and Hindustani* (1882). Roebuck being a meticulous researcher collected all the necessary data with the help of several native lascars.

Ghosh’s interest in words makes him do research of the laskari lexicon. The ship’s anatomy, crew members’ hierarchy, rationing system, obscene slangs are put into the laskari lexicon. Zachary when he joined Ibis newly is lost in the intricate network of this linguistic labyrinth.

. . . he had to learn to say ‘resum’ instead of ‘rations’ and he had to wrap his tongue around words like ‘dal’, ‘masala’ and ‘achar’. He had to get used to ‘malum’ instead of mate, ‘serang’ for bo’sun, ‘tindal’ for bosun’s mate, and ‘seacunny’ for helmsman; he had to memorize a new shipboard vocabulary, which sounded a bit like English and yet

not: the rigging become the ‘ringeen’, ‘avast!’ was ‘bas!’, and the cry of the middle morning watch went from ‘all’s well’ to ‘alzel’. The deck now become the ‘tootuk’ while the masts were ‘dols’; a command become the a ‘hookum’ and instead of starboard and larboard, fore and aft, he had to say ‘jamma’ and ‘dawn’, ‘agil’ and ‘peeheil’ (SOP 15-16)

The word ‘Serang’ used originated from Malay; ‘tindal’ is a word from Malayalam.

The word ‘Malum’ is from Arabic ‘Mu’ allim. Burra Malum was the word used for the first mate and the Chota Malum for the second mate. The laskari words ‘agil’ and ‘peeheil’ are from Hindi/Urdu word ‘agey’ and ‘peechey’. The speech between lascars is different from that of the speech between lascar and an English official. Ghosh falters the lascars too much to chaste English in both vocabulary and syntax.

Laskari is a language spoken in the Ibis is significant in creating a realistic picture. “From the silmagoors who sat on the ghats, sewing sails, Jodu had learnt the names of each piece of canvas, in English and in Laskari- that motley tongue, spoken nowhere but on the water, whose words were as carried as the port’s traffic, an anarchic medley of Portuguese calalizes and Kerala pattimars, Arab booms and Bengal paunchways, Malay proas and Tamil catamarans, Hindustani pulwars and English snows...” (SOP 104). The language of Serang seems to be different when talking with Zachary:

Serang Ali, where are you from?” he asked.

Serang Ali blongi Rohingya- from Arakan-side.

And where’d you learn that kinda talk? (SOP 468)

The English language adapts to the native tongue. This is evident when Mr. Doughty invites Neel for dinner.

Wouldn't chalo at all, dear fellow: no sahib would have one at his table. We're very particular about that kind of thing out East. We've got out Bee Bees to protect, you know. Its one thing for a man to dip his nib in an inkpot once in a while. But we can't be having luckerbaugs running loose in the henhouse. Just won't ho-ga: that kind of thing could get a man chawbuck'd with a horsewhip. (SOP 49)

The greatness of the novel lies in the heterogeneous linguistic quality. The American English, the Anglo-Saxon dialect, lascars jargon, Pidgin, Hindi and Urdu amalgamates in the novel. The English language has changed due to globalization where the individuals speak various dialects of the language. Serang Ali, the head of the lascars speaks mix-dialects where he mixes English, Hindi, and Chinese. When Zachary asks Serang Ali, about his acquisition of language, he says, "Afeemship, came the answer. "China-side, Yankee gen'l'um allo tim tok so-fashion. Also Mich'man like Malum Zikiri" (SOP 16).

Amitav Ghosh uses distinctive style of language by synthesizing the imagination of a novelist and with the detailing of an anthropologist. He takes up the events of history which border between fiction and non-fiction and thus he sprinkles over some colourful imagination of his own. There are many scenes where language is used to indicate class. Deeti who speaks Bhojpuri in the village is intimidated by a clerk who sells opium. "The muhari behind the counter was a Bengali, with heavy jowls and a cataract of a frown. He answered her not in her native Bhojpuri, but in a mincing, citified Hindi" (ROS 143).

After arriving at Calcutta, Ghosh presents the 19th century Calcutta, from country to town by authentically representing the sounds of ships, men and accents. Jodu speaks “In a quick-silver, citified Hindustani that Deeti could just about follow” (ROS 258); meeting with the migrants is the gomusta speaking in “heavily accented Hindi” (ROS 259). Raja Neel, the Zamindar of Rashkali is not only well versed in English and Bengali but also in “Hindustani, Persian and Urdu, and even with knowledge of Bhojpuri, speaks an aristocratic Bengali, with “silky phrasing and refined accent”, who could detect “a raffish, river-front edge” in Paulette’s Bengali from her inflection and accent” (ROS 360). Neel and Raju developed their own terminology in flying kites: “In their vocabulary, a strong breeze was “neel”, blue; a violent nor easter was purple, and a listless puff was yellow. The squall ... suqlat- a shade of scarlet ... associated with sudden reversals of fortune” (ROS 37).

The most fascinating character Paulette takes different incarnations of names in different languages: “Paulette in French; Putleshwari in Bengali farrago; Putli meaning “doll” (ROS 61) to her nurse; and Puggly/Pugli meaning “mad” to her adopted British family” (ROS 327). Along with French, English and Latin, she learns to speak Bengali, Hindustani and Sanskrit. Baboo Nob Kissan when telling the story of Pierre Lambert to Paulette, he shifts from English to Bengali and then to French:

Lambert-sahib always discussing with me in Bengala, the gomusta continued. But I am always replying in chaste English. U now, as if to belie his own pronouncement, he surprised Paulette by switching to Bengali. With the change of language, she noticed, a weight of care seemed to lift from his huge, sagging face: Shuman. Listen. Your father,

Miss Lambert – how well he knew our language. I used to marvel as I listened to him speak... But now, even as the gomusta continued, in the same sonorous tones, Paulette heard his words as though they were being spoken by her father, in French:... a child of Nature, that is what she is, my daughter Paulette. (ROS 125)

Gomasta speaks to the Europeans in English but he speaks Bengali with Paulette whereas Paulette develops an intimacy towards French. The Englishmen in the ship, describe Neel as “bookish native, who gives himself all kinds of airs” (ROS 44). His knowledge about politics, philosophy and poetry of “Mr. Hume, Mr. Locke, Mr. Hobbes” is misunderstood by officers as “Bengal Board of Revenue” (ROS 109). When he is sentenced to exile for seven years, Neel seems oblivious to the situation he is in.

Neel’s schooling in English had been at once so through and so heavily weighted towards the study of texts that he found it easier, even now, to follow the spoken language by converting it into script, in his head. One of the effects of this operation was that it also robbed the language of its immediacy, rendering its words comfortingly abstract, as distant from his own circumstances as were the waves of Windermere and the cobblestones of Canterbury. So it seemed to him now, as the words came pouring from the judge’s mouth, that he was listening to the sound of pebbles tinkling in some faraway well. (ROS 220)

Neel’s knowledge of English is more of written than that of oral. So when the judge passes the verdict, the word seems to be unreal to him and he begins to translate the words. When Neel is convicted and sent to jail, a British serjeant is infuriated “By the

mere fact by being spoken to in his own language by a native convict that he mistreats Neel and answers him in rough Hindustani” (ROS 264-65). At a point, Neel realizes that English language is most powerful weapon and he speaks back in defiance.

Sir, he said, “Can you not afford me the dignity of a reply? Or is it that you do not trust yourself to speak English?” The man’s eyes flared and Neel saw that he had nettled him, simply by virtue of addressing him in his own tongue- a thing that was evidently counted as an act of intolerable insolence in an Indian convict, a defilement of the language. The knowledge of this- that even in his present state, stripped to his skin, powerless to defend himself from the hands that were taking an inventory of his body- he still possessed the ability to affront a man whose authority over his person was absolute: the awareness made Neel giddy, exultant, eager to explore this new realm of power, in this jail, he decided, as in the rest of his life as a convict, he would speak English whenever possible, everywhere possible, starting with his moment, here. (ROS 266)

Neel recites the English passage when he is cruelly treated. His voice, “. . . rose till the words were echoing off the stone walls” (SOP 56). These words gave him courage to face the darkness around him. Neel is cruelly beaten up for conversing in English with Zachary. “You think you can impress me with two words of angrezi? I’ll show you how this ingi-lis is spoken...” (ROS 355). When Baboo brings food secretly to Neel, he switches over to Bengali, “Kindly eschew native vernacular. Guards are big trouble shooters- always making mischiefs. Better they do not listen. Chaste English will suffice” (ROS 426). In the jail, Neel developed a close relationship with AhFatt. “All you have, your caste,

your family, your friend, neither brother nor wife nor son will ever be as close to you as he will. You will have to make of him what you can; he is your fate, your destiny” (ROS 291). The relationship between Neel and Ah Fatt is beautifully brought out : “. . . a touch- when Neel take care of AhFatt a word – when Ah Fatt holds Neel in his nightmare state, people call AhFatt, AhFatt your friend. Those flattering childlike words offered more comfort than was in all the poetry Neel had ever read” (ROS 315-316). Neel and Ah Fatt develop friendship as they both knew English. Thus English language acts as a privilege of the colonized.

The music of the Bhojpuri language has become the language of the migrants. “Farmers in the Bhojpuri- speaking regions nourished by the Ganges River were among the least likely members of the rural Indian populace to embrace migration” (ROS 68). The migrants in order to forget the pain of their homeland sing a song of their exile.

How had it happened that when choosing the men and women who were to be torn from this subjugated plain, the hand of destiny had strayed so far inland, away from the busy coastlines to alight on the people who were, of all, the most stubbornly rooted in the silt of the Ganga, in a soil that had to be sown with suffering to yield its crop of story and song ? It was as if fate had thrust its fist through the living flesh of the land in order to tear away a piece of its stricken heart. (ROS 367)

Through the language of Bhojpuri, Ghosh brings out the voice of the destitute. Like people taking different forms and identities, language also takes various identities and thus connects with the characters.

Amitav Ghosh's *Flood of Fire* provides an exciting, insightful reality of politics. Great Britain conquered the world with Adam Smith's notion of Free Trade which dominated the political, economic, social, geographical landscape of the past two centuries. The English ruled our country in the 19th and 20th century. Their main conquest was linguistics. Ghosh's English language is like a magnet which attracts phrases and dialects from different corners of the world. He uses Anglo-Saxon terms like "gammonings", "dad-boggled", and "la-le-loon" (FOF 86). Communication was a prominent issue in the 19th century with regard to trade. Around 1830's only few Chinese were able to handle European languages so they appointed linguists to carry on trade dealings. They used the language called Pidgin. The linguists occupied a prominent place in Canton trade. Through Neel, Ghosh recreates the linguistic aspect of the trade.

Neel is the only character in the novel that is filled with the knowledge of many languages. His knowledge of the English language from his childhood had helped him to cross many phases in life. When he was in jail as a convict he had the habit of reading letters and newspapers to the convicts and he was considered very knowledgeable among the convicts and he was held high in regards because of his English knowledge.

Neel escapes from the Ibis ship and joins Bahram as his munshi. He would read the journals and magazines from China and India about the opium trade. Because of his knowledge of English language, Bahram held him in high rank. After the death of Bahram, Neel wandered around many places and finally decided to start a journal documenting the opium trade. Neel meets Campton who warmly greets in English. "Ah Neel! How are you?" Neel gave a surprise by responding him back in Cantonese, greeting him in his Chinese name: Jou-sabn Liang sin-saang! Nei bou ma?" (FOF 20) This shows Neel's

thirst in learning many languages. Campton and Neel jointly did the work of translation. Neel was also well-versed in his native Bangala languages. In order to get clear with certain words Campton seeks the help of Neel in translating the words like “arkati, maund, tola, seer, chittack, ryot and carcanna” (FOF 22). These incidents show that Ghosh has created a multi-lingual scenario in this trilogy.

Leaving the words untranslated from other language is the strategy that Ghosh employs to bring in the marginalized linguistic minorities to the centre. When a new word is first used it is glossed and then it becomes un glossed in the subsequent use. Ghosh rewrites history by intermingling past and present in a dynamic structural way. The linear, straight and progressive is replaced by unending, multi-voiced stories of people. He discards the narrative development of plot by amalgamating multiple stories. Ghosh uses different narrative devices and techniques to overcome the insolvability of problems.

Ghosh takes his time in building up the characters, filling in their backgrounds and circumstances leading to their current predicament. In characteristically limpid prose and with the eye of a social anthropologist—a discipline in which he’s well versed— he details the customs, diet, cloth and social restrictions of these individuals who are to be thrown together on the Ibis to become jahaj-bhais. (Sipahimalani 7)

Literary anthropology is a combination of literature and anthropology. Ghosh in his novels brings in minute anthropological details and throws light on the entire human society with the background of social, historical and cultural documents of the society. Anthropology chose literature as its subject and so literature became the subject of its

investigation. Literature is a mirror of human society that helps human beings to discover their place in this world. Literature not only acts as a connecting link between human beings and the transcendental world but imparts knowledge and experience. From anthropological point of view there is no difference between literature and existence.

Anthropology has undergone transformation through decades. During the years society has undergone many changes such as colonial, post-colonial resulting in migration, globalization and multiculturalism. The more the world comes in contact with the changing nature, the writer and the anthropologist has to stick to the reality of the contemporary world. These social movements and changes had affected both literature and anthropology.

There is a mutual relationship between literature and anthropology wherein interdisciplinary writing and research becomes common. The analysis of a literary text in a broad cultural perspective is considered more as a branch of anthropology rather than literary theory. This dissertation strongly emphasises the symbiotic relationship between the two domains of knowledge: anthropology and literature. To develop a connection between literary discourse and anthropology, Ghosh has dealt with many concepts such as history, culture, hybridity, ecology and they act as ground work to bring the link between literature and anthropology.

Literature is the richest source of document for the analysis of human behavior. Scholars who study literature from the anthropological perspectives find themselves at one side of the spectrum researching for facts amidst the imaginative description. Literature interprets and promotes diversity and thus literary writing gains anthropological dimension. Anthropology brings in the true facts based on social, cultural and historical

perspective whereas a novelist's facts are based on subjective relativity. Anthropological writings can be fictitious as it considers to recreate the existing reality and there is no clear distinction between where anthropology ends and fiction begins.

Fiction writing is an art which exhibits the aesthetic qualities like creativity and imagination. It is difficult to separate literature from social behavior. Anthropology reconstructs the day to day activity of different cultural groups through writing which is based on literary strategies. There is a strange romance between literature and anthropology with the new advent of writing, research and social practice is reassured.

Ghosh being an anthropologist shows keen interest in the archeologist quest to bring out the buried facts; he has unique anthropologist zeal to understand and explain certain phenomenon in social life and a desire of a historian to record and rearrange certain events. Ghosh is a great weaver of narratives that runs beyond physical and intellectual boundaries.

Ghosh is a historian, archaeologist and anthropologist which are evident through his writing, as he combines fiction, history and facts. His narrative style correlates with the subject matter and characters. Ghosh's novel widens our horizons regarding our perception of history and anthropology. Ghosh has researched and rewritten certain incidents and deconstructed certain issues to represent the silenced historical facts and events. Ghosh exposes the colonial empire through cultural encounters, national identity and migration of indentured labourers. "Colonial and imperial rule was legitimated by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the people of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves... and requiring

the paternal rule of the west for their own interests (today they are deemed to require development)” (Young 2).

Amitav Ghosh quotes in an interview, “One of the paradoxes of history is that it is impossible to draw a chart of the past without imagining a map of the present and the future” (Ghosh, “The Greatest Sorrow” 317). Ghosh focuses on two central issues in his novels; facts and fiction. Both fact and fiction meet at the same point as they are dependent on narratives and language to foreground. So his novels have been accounted as a document of social history.

Ghosh has lived in many countries and migration has become the metaphor of his life. He confesses that writing novels satisfies him the most.

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

Ghosh narrative is so absorbing that his text can be interpreted as a text of history and culture. *The Hungry Tide* showcases the Sundarbans regions, *The Glass Palace* speaks about the official history of Burma and the Ibis trilogy creates awareness regarding Sino-India relationship in the past. Ghosh states, “A lot of historians whose work I have used said to me that it lends colour to their work- it gives them meaning and context” (Ghosh, “Between the walls” 7). Ghosh is against exploitation, tyrannic and the power system which are not democratic in spirit. Ghosh has become a successful writer by bridging the gap between the past and present while representing history he deals with the contemporary issues. Ghosh’s plot construction is like an intricate web where everything is connected with everything else.

In an interview with Thakaran’ Tony, Ghosh says, “I don’t think I’ll be a novelist If I wasn’t interested in history and anthropology. Those things inform the other aspects of work. I think if I hadn’t had an interest in history, I wouldn’t be writing today” (11). Ghosh’s works makes parallel representation of facts and fiction. Despite the narrative history his fiction occupies the centre position. As a writer he has certain social, political and cultural limitations. R.K. Dhawan quotes, “He [a writer of fiction] is not free to distort history; factual accuracy has to be strictly adhered to” (15).

Ghosh gives a new interpretation of history from cultural, personal and familial point of view. He brings in the real against the unreal to give a different perspective of the past. He goes on a journey to view history from the eyes of the ordinary man. Ghosh’s attention is not only on the events but also he focuses on the ill-effects of historical events. Ghosh paints fiction with a large canvas of historical facts to recreate reality to represent common man’s point of view about the past. As a fiction writer, he

brings in the element of fantasy into the factual world. A.G. Khan remarks, “Ghosh’s fiction has given credibility to an implausible fantasy” (187). The extensive research and field work reflected in his novels prove him as an anthropologist. The research proves that Ghosh converts minute anthropological details into fiction and thus proving that his novels are the part of anthropological study. Thus, in every aspect Ghosh novels are the amalgamation of both literature and anthropology.

The cultural heritage of a nation is the result of the constant development of various domains of knowledge from ancient times till date. By constantly refining the value system of a culture, man tailored and fashioned his style of life in accordance with the scientific and technological development. In this present technologically oriented, competitive world it is absolutely necessary to understand that anthropology is very much connected with literature because both anthropology and literature bring to limelight, the inherent truth of life through traditional ritual practises, cultural codes, myth, legends, historical narratives so that the future generation will employ the knowledge of the past to the present problems in order to enhance their lifestyle in order to create a brave new world.