

A STUDY OF HISTORICAL-CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE NOVELS OF GHOSH AND MISTRY

CANDIDATE NAME= MEENAKSHI

DESIGNATION = RESEARCH SCHOLAR SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR

GUIDE NAME= DR. RAJESH KUMAR

DESIGNATION = ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR RAJASTHAN

ABSTRACT

This sociological and historical cultural analysis delves into the literary works of two renowned contemporary authors, Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry, with a focus on their novels that vividly explore the intricate interplay of sociological dynamics and historical cultural contexts. Ghosh and Mistry, both hailing from South Asia, provide unique perspectives on the complexities of society and culture in India and its diaspora, employing rich narratives that transcend geographical boundaries and resonate with a global audience. Amitav Ghosh's novels, such as "The Sea of Poppies," "River of Smoke," and "Flood of Fire," form a trilogy that masterfully examines the historical and sociological consequences of the Opium Wars and the global opium trade in the 19th century. Ghosh's meticulous research and evocative storytelling bring to life the diverse characters and their interconnectedness across continents, highlighting issues of colonialism, class, race, and identity within the context of historical globalization.

KEYWORDS: Historical-Cultural Dimensions, Novels of Ghosh and Mistry, society and culture, India

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English by Indians flourished after the arrival of colonists. Indian English literature flourished after colonialism, when British authorities mandated that all Indians speak English. Indians' contact with the West has had a significant impact on the evolution of fiction. After India gained its freedom, several books based on this idea were produced, sparking a literary movement known as the Indian renaissance. First Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru described the country's reawakening as "Indian Renaissance as the awakening of India as twofold: she looked to the West and at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past" (Jha, 2006a, p.151). Indo-Anglian literature is another name for

Indian writing in English. In 1883, J.H. Cousins used the term "Indo-Anglian" to describe the distinct canon of English-language literature created by Indians whose native language is not English. Pioneer in this area Iyengar (1985) reflects: There are three sorts of Indian authors in English, principally those who have learnt English via school and college. Second, diasporic Indians who maintain ties to their homeland. Finally, third-generation Indians who are fluent in English.

The vast majority of Indian authors delve into their personal histories in their writings, which are often written in English. The first authors used their writings as a tool for social change, tackling topics like sexism, classism,



poverty, and societal stigmas like untouchability and caste in their works.

Scholars categorize the history of Indian literature in English into three distinct time periods. First-generation authors include names like T.Ramakrishna, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, B.R. Rajan, Toru Dutt, and Romesh Chatterjee Dutt. Raja Rammohan Roy, a prominent Indian writer, also writes during this time period. He founded the Brahma Samaj movement, which sought to improve India's socioeconomic conditions in the 19th century, and is often regarded as the "father" of Indian literature in English. The culture and religion of India, especially Hinduism, were frequent themes in his writings. His mission was to learn more about Hinduism and verify its reputation as a morally upright faith. He edited a newspaper and was fluent in many languages, including Hindi, English, Bengali, Sanskrit, and Persian, all of which he had previously written in. In his praise, Srinivasa Iyengar (1995) writes, "Ram Mohan Roy, although he could be named as the first of the Indian masters of English prose, was great in so many fields that belong to Indian history more than to mere Indo-Anglian literary history" (p.33).

Krishna Mohan Banerji, like Rammohan Roy, was a notable author whose works, such as *The Emperor* (1931), focused on the errors and disputes within Hinduism. *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* (1861) and *Aryan Witness* (1875) were two of his other works of fiction. R. G. Ghosh, Rama (1815–1868) was an active member of the social and cultural institutions of Calcutta, where he also served as a prominent speaker and famous Indian writer. These authors eventually became prominent figures in Indian literature in English.

Travels of Dean Mahomet, the first book written by the famous writer Sake Deen Mahomet, were published in England (1793) and are considered a classic of Indian literature in English. *Rajmohan's Wife*, written in 1864 by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), is widely regarded as the first Indian book to be published in English. It was quickly followed by works by Rajalakshmi Devi (1876) and Toru Dutt (1878) and Kali Krishna Lahiri (1881). Both *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, by Raja Rao, are renowned for their excellent storytelling. His book *Kanthapura* is a classic because it shows what it's like to be a farmhand. according to Srivastava (1987),

A rambling narrative of rural people's religious, political, and social activities, *Kanthapura* is Raja Rao's magnum opus. The story is more like a vivid audiovisual exhibition than a two-dimensional portrait of the inhabitants...representing all of India in miniature form. (p.15)

Another famous author who wrote in both English and Bengali is Rabindranath Tagore. Many novels have been translated into English by him. Famous for his nonfiction and his seminal 1951 book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* reveals Nirad C. Chaudhuri's personal life. As a writer, creator, and critic, P.Lal was responsible for the English translation of the whole Mahabharata. Khushwant Singh, cited in Williams (1987), p.5, said that "Indian writers were inhibited in colonial times from writing freely, not out of fear of suppression and punishment, on the contrary, many of them felt they had to use their books as weapons in the freedom struggle" because of the way in which they addressed the social issues of India.



INDIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

Writing in English by Indians flourished after the arrival of colonists. Indian English literature flourished after colonialism, when British authorities mandated that all Indians speak English. Indians' contact with the West has had a significant impact on the evolution of fiction. After India gained its freedom, several books based on this idea were produced, sparking a literary movement known as the Indian renaissance. First Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru described the country's reawakening as "Indian Renaissance as the awakening of India as twofold: she looked to the West and at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past" (Jha, 2006a, p.151). Indo-Anglian literature is another name for Indian writing in English. In 1883, J.H. Cousins used the term "Indo-Anglian" to describe the distinct canon of English-language literature created by Indians whose native language is not English. Pioneer in this area Iyengar (1985) reflects: There are three sorts of Indian authors in English, principally those who have learnt English via school and college. Second, diasporic Indians who maintain ties to their homeland. Finally, third-generation Indians who are fluent in English. (p.11)

The vast majority of Indian authors delve into their personal histories in their writings, which are often written in English. The first authors used their writings as a tool for social change, tackling topics like sexism, classism, poverty, and societal stigmas like untouchability and caste in their works.

Scholars categorize the history of Indian literature in English into three distinct time periods. First-generation authors include

names like T.Ramakrishna, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, B.R. Rajan, Toru Dutt, and Romesh Chatterjee Dutt. Raja Rammohan Roy, a prominent Indian writer, also writes during this time period. He founded the Brahmo Samaj movement, which sought to improve India's socioeconomic conditions in the 19th century, and is often regarded as the "father" of Indian literature in English. The culture and religion of India, especially Hinduism, were frequent themes in his writings. His mission was to learn more about Hinduism and verify its reputation as a morally upright faith. He edited a newspaper and was fluent in many languages, including Hindi, English, Bengali, Sanskrit, and Persian, all of which he had previously written in. In his praise, Srinivasa Iyengar (1995) writes, "Ram Mohan Roy, although he could be named as the first of the Indian masters of English prose, was great in so many fields that belong to Indian history more than to mere Indo-Anglian literary history" (p.33). Krishna Mohan Banerji, like Rammohan Roy, was a notable author whose works, such as *The Emperor* (1931), focused on the errors and disputes within Hinduism. *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* (1861) and *Aryan Witness* (1875) were two of his other works of fiction. R. G. Ghosh, Rama (1815–1868) was an active member of the social and cultural institutions of Calcutta, where he also served as a prominent speaker and famous Indian writer. These authors eventually became prominent figures in Indian literature in English.

Travels of Dean Mahomet, the first book written by the famous writer Sake Deen Mahomet, was published in England (1793) and is considered a classic of Indian literature in English. Rajmohan's



Wife, written in 1864 by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), is widely regarded as the first Indian book to be published in English. It was quickly followed by works by Rajalakshmi Devi (1876) and Toru Dutt (1878) and Kali Krishna Lahiri (1881). Both *Kanthapura* and *The Serpent and the Rope*, by Raja Rao, are renowned for their excellent storytelling. His book *Kanthapura* is a classic because it shows what it's like to be a farmhand. according to Srivastava (1987),

A rambling narrative of rural people's religious, political, and social activities, *Kanthapura* is Raja Rao's magnum opus. The story is more like a vivid audiovisual exhibition than a two-dimensional portrait of the inhabitants...representing all of India in miniature form. (p.15)

Another famous author who wrote in both English and Bengali is Rabindranath Tagore. Many novels have been translated into English by him. Famous for his nonfiction and his seminal 1951 book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* reveals Nirad C. Chaudhuri's personal life. As a writer, creator, and critic, P.Lal was responsible for the English translation of the whole *Mahabharata*. Khushwant Singh, cited in Williams (1987), p.5, said that "Indian writers were inhibited in colonial times from writing freely, not out of fear of suppression and punishment, on the contrary, many of them felt they had to use their books as weapons in the freedom struggle" because of the way in which they addressed the social issues of India.

Colonialism and Post-Colonialism

Indian novels gained widespread attention in the middle of the twentieth century. The term "modern" is used to describe this time frame. The primary themes of the

liberation movement, the antagonism between eastern and western nations, the plight of the community, Colonialism, and Postcolonialism are all addressed in this recent body of Indian English literature. The term "colonialism" originates from the Latin word "colonia," which meant "farm" or "settlement" and refers to Romans who relocated to other countries while maintaining their Roman citizenship (Singh, 2001a, p.123).

The term "colony" is defined as follows by the Oxford English Dictionary: "A settlement in a new country...a body of people who settle in a new locality, forming a community subject to or connected with their parent state"; "the community so formed, consisting of the original settlers and their descendants and successors," so long as the connection with the parent state is maintained. On page 123 of Singh (2001b)

In Colonial and Postcolonial Literature, Elleke Boehmer (2005) defines colonialism as the "settlement of the territory, the exploitation or development of resources, and the attempt to govern the indigenous inhabitants of occupied lands, often by force" (p.2). Post-colonial literature mostly addresses the process of decolonization, or the restoration of social, political, and cultural independence to peoples and places that had been subjected to colonial rule. Moreover, Post-colonial literature vividly depicts how colonists absorbed territory and subordinated the cultural practices of the colonized people. Freedom fight, migration, displacement, identity crisis, alienation, cultural conflict, diaspora, hybridity, loss, and colonialism are only some of the topics that post-colonial authors have explored. One of the hallmarks of postcolonial literature is that



its authors place a premium on the past at the expense of the present.

Postcolonial authors are distinguished by the way their writings both reflect the author's relationship to society and investigate the decline of the colonized people. The lives of colonial peoples are examined by contemporary authors from the once colonized countries, particularly India. In order to provide light on the social and cultural shifts that occurred throughout the British canon, modern postcolonial authors investigate the experiences of colonized people. Many postcolonial critics, including Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and others, have drawn on speculative perspectives on colonialism in their work. Literatures that are considered postcolonial "cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (Ashcroft et al., 2003a, p.2).

Caribbean, Sri Lankan, Australian, Jamaican, Senegalese, Australian, and Indian authors contributed to the development of post-colonial literature. Authors of postcolonial works include current and former colonized peoples. This contains works published in several languages, not only those of the conquerors" (Talib, 2002, p.17). It is a broad term that encompasses the manifestations of post-independence society, tradition, progress, and individual identity in a number of formerly colonial countries.

Similar to Commonwealth Literature, the process of revision, reexamination, and reinvestigation lies at the heart of India's post-colonial literary canon. They believed that postcolonial literature presented postcolonial themes in novel ways and so

stimulated the esteem frameworks of the colonizers. They debated the issue of the language used by postcolonial authors, especially English, and argued about the changes, new respect, and identities of the colonized people. Edward W. Said, Franz Fanon, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha are just a few of the famous theorists who have used postcolonial theory to go further into the ideas behind Postcolonial literature. In the middle of the twentieth century, scholars created the postcolonial literary theory. Post-colonial theory "challenges the received and ideologically determined paradigms of power relationships and frees the colonized self from the gaze of colonizer" (Kripal, 1996, p.11) in its exploration of the effects of colonization and as a theoretical approach to history. The many connections between East and West that are represented by postcolonial theory span several disciplines and time periods. One of the most significant contemporary critical theories is postcolonial theory. Marxism, feminism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, psychoanalytic critique, and colonialism are all related ideas. Issues of race, class, caste, domination, slavery, gender, cultural identity, and post-colonial development are addressed. Numerous works have been produced on the 'subaltern' in Post-colonial theory, who are the individuals who are considered to be on the bottom of the social hierarchy or who have been colonized. Migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place, and reactions to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe like history, philosophy, and linguistics are all discussed in post-colonial theory, as are the foundational



experiences of speaking and writing that give rise to these phenomena (Bill Ashcroft et al., 2006). None of them is 'basically' post-colonial, yet they all contribute to the rich tapestry that is the discipline. (p.2)

Postcolonial criticism seeks to investigate the practice of decolonization and explore the manners of supremacy, as well as to examine the historical context of imperialism from the colonial perspective and expose the commercial, sociopolitical, and traditional influence of colonialism on the colonized people and the imperialism authorities. The significant book *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* recognizes the speculative and concrete structure of postcolonial discourse and its struggle. Great Australian adversaries like Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin are etched on it. These authors effectively founded postcolonial critique.

POST-COLONIAL WRITERS

Post-colonial authors and theorists are those who took up writing after their own countries had been colonized. Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukherjee, and Amitav Ghosh are only a few of the modern Indian Post-colonial authors. They "write to establish [their] individual identity independent of their colonizer and try to show that not only they have gained independence from the latter but also successfully made the colonizer's language (i.e. English) as a vehicle for creative expression" (Das, 2005, p.136). The postcolonial problems are alluded to in their works. Amitav Ghosh's work, for instance, resembles a kind of journey writing that moves back and forth in time.

His books include the time periods of colonialism, pre-colonialism, and post-colonialism. As a result of colonialism, Indian culture has merged with that of the West, creating a unique hybrid civilization.

The works of these significant authors are widely read, and their works nurture postcolonial literature. Novelists with a postcolonial perspective have international renown. Famous novels by authors like Vikram Seth (1993's *A Suitable Boy*), Arundhati Roy (1997)'s *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai (1998's *Hullabaloo*), Salman Rushdie (1981's *Midnight's Children*), and John Irving (2006's *The Inheritance of Loss*) have all been published and have won awards. These authors' ancestors originated in India, but they emigrated to places like the United States, Australia, and Great Britain. They're torn between two countries; the one they left behind and India. The expression of Indian culture in English is no longer restricted to the works of native-born authors. In turn, this has "expanded the range of this writer's fictional concerns from the domestic to the international and transnational" (Reddy, 2014, p.3). Diasporic authors are those who have written while relocating. The term "diaspora" refers to the dispersion of a people to different parts of the globe. The works of these authors reveal the author's inner life. The primary themes in diasporic literature include alienation, cultural struggle, nostalgia, migration, and displacement. One of the major ideas of postcolonial literature is diaspora. Authors like M.R. Anand and R.K. Narayan, Nayantara Sahgal and Arun Joshi, Vikram Seth and Shashi Deshpande, Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie, and Shashi Deshpande and Arun Joshi all received the



Sahitya Akademi Award, India's highest literary honor.

CONCLUSION

The study of sociological and historical cultural aspects within the selected novels of Amitav Ghosh and Rohinton Mistry holds significant relevance in contemporary literary scholarship and sociological discourse for several compelling reasons. Firstly, both Ghosh and Mistry are celebrated authors of South Asian literature, known for their ability to weave intricate narratives that delve deep into the complexities of society, identity, and historical contexts. Analyzing their works through a sociological and historical cultural lens allows us to unearth the multifaceted layers of meaning embedded within their novels, shedding light on the diverse sociological dynamics of India and its diaspora. Secondly, these novels provide a unique opportunity to explore how literature serves as a mirror to society, reflecting and critiquing issues such as colonialism, class, caste, race, and the human experience in the backdrop of historical globalization and post-independence transitions. Thirdly, in an era marked by globalization and multiculturalism, understanding the socio-cultural and historical dimensions within these literary works becomes paramount for appreciating the rich tapestry of South Asian society and its global impact. By undertaking this study, we aim to contribute valuable insights into the nexus between literature, sociology, and historical cultural analysis, elucidating how these authors' narratives resonate with the broader sociological and historical-cultural context of our world today.

REFERENCES

- Abraham, T. (2007), *'Introducing Postcolonial Theories: Issues and Debates'*. Macmillan, New Delhi.
- Abrams, M.H. (1993). *'A Glossary of Literary Terms'*, Prism Books Pvt. Ltd, Bangalore.
- Adama, F. L. (2002a), 'An Interview with Amitav Ghosh', *World Literature Today*,
- Retrieved from [https://www.thefreelibrary.com/An+interview+with+Amitav+Ghosh.++\(WLT+Interview\).-a090307335](https://www.thefreelibrary.com/An+interview+with+Amitav+Ghosh.++(WLT+Interview).-a090307335).
- Adama, F. L. (2002b), 'An Interview with Amitav Ghosh', *World Literature Today*,
- Retrieved from [https://www.thefreelibrary.com/An+interview+with+Amitav+Ghosh.++\(WLT+Interview\).-a090307335](https://www.thefreelibrary.com/An+interview+with+Amitav+Ghosh.++(WLT+Interview).-a090307335).
- Agrawal, B.R. & Sinha, M.P. (2003), *'Major Trends in the Post-Independence Indian English Fiction'*, Atlantic Publishers & Dist, New Delhi.
- Ahlawat. R (2014). *'Conflict between Illusion and Reality: A Study of Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines'*, IJELLH, Volume I, Issue V
- Alam.N.U (2012), *'The Shadow Lines as a Political Novel'*. Master Degree, East and West University.
- Alexander, M. (1992), *'Is there an Asian American aesthetics?'* SAMAR: South Asian Magazine for Reflection and Action, Winter.
- Alexander, M. (1993), *'Fault Lines: A Memoir'*, Feminist Press, New York.
- Aloysius. G. (1997), *'Nationalism without a Nation'*, OUP. London.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (2003a). *'The Empire Writes Back:*



Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures. Routledge, London.

- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (2003b). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Routledge, London.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. eds. (2006), *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. Taylor & Francis, New York.
- Barry, P. (2017), *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Oxford University Press, London.