

ISSN: 2395-4132

THE EXPRESSION

An International Multi-Disciplinary e-Journal

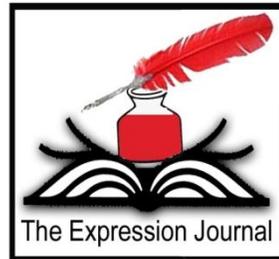
Bi-Monthly Referred & Indexed Open Access e-Journal



Vol 1 Issue 2 April 2015

Editor-in-Chief: Bijender Singh

Email: editor@expressionjournal.com
www.expressionjournal.com



**JOURNEY OF THE MARGINALIZED INTO THE CENTRE:
 A STUDY OF AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE HUNGRY TIDE* AND *THE GLASS PALACE***

Dr. Anupama Tewari

Associate Prof. & Head

Department of English, R.H.P.C. Govt. College Kashipur

&

Partha Sarathi Mandal

Research Scholar

Kumaun University, Nainital

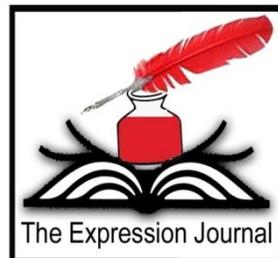
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Abstract

Amitav Ghosh is a writer who brings the marginalized into centre by including their stories and the dilemma of the postcolonial intelligentsia regarding the ability of the subaltern to speak. He draws his nourishment from the soil of a country which was once colonized and therefore he does not falter to entail post colonial issues like subaltern class. The term marginalized is related post colonial perspective as post colonialism brings into focus the marginalized people and this term also subsumes subaltern study. The word subaltern comes from the word 'subalternus' and it is the combination of two words 'Sub' means 'under' & 'alternus' means 'every other, one after the other'. Antonio Gramsci in his essay 'On the Margins of History' used the term. Gayatri Spivak Chakraborty has made the term popular and put it in the basis of post colonialism. According to Spivak the lower layers of colonial and post colonial society are included in subaltern study and therefore it is irretrievably heterogeneous. In India, a group of intellectuals established subaltern studies group to focus on the marginalized class. Amitav Ghosh was a member of that group and therefore in his novels we find a journey of the marginalized into centre. In this paper an attempt has been made to show the journey of the marginalized into centre in his two novels *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*.

Key-Words

Marginalized, Post-colonialism, Subaltern, Centre.

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Ever since the arrival of deconstruction as an intellectual project, the very tradition of western thought which provided the justification for European norms and for that matter colonialism, is dismantled and post colonial ideas came into being. The term 'marginalized' is a western construct and therefore carries with it a sense of being deconstruct. And according to Spivak this notion of deconstruction can be applied in the context of postcolonial thought. She also suggests that literature can provide a rhetorical space for subaltern groups to re-articulate their stories and struggles. In fact, Spivak's study of subalterns, the ground work is based on postcolonial discourse .Amitav Ghosh is a writer with a sense of postcolonial issues and therefore does not falter to include subaltern groups in his novels, In the present paper an attempt has been made to show the journey of the marginalized into centre in his two novels *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*.

The study of the journey of the 'marginalized' into centre as said earlier; has come to the domain of modern critical scenario with the arrival of postcolonial theory through the contemporary intellectuals such as Edward Said, Homi Bhaba and Spivak by focusing on the cultural texts of those people who are often marginalized by dominant western culture, the new immigrant, the working class, women and the post colonial subject. In *The Postcolonial Critic* (1990) Spivak identifies herself as a post colonial intellectual with a special focus on the subaltern studies. In fact in her subaltern studies the journey of the marginalized in to the centre can be traced. The term subaltern denotes a junior ranking officer in the British army. The word subaltern comes from the word 'subalternus' and it is

the combination of two words 'sub' means 'under' + 'alternnus' means 'every other, one after the other'. Antonio Gramsci in his essay 'On the Margins of History' used the term to discuss the oppression of the rural peasantry where the social and political practices were not systematic or coherent in their struggle against the state apparatus on the other hand the industrial working class appears to have a unified and coherent opposition to the working class. The basis of Spivak's study of subaltern in the postcolonial world is based on this lack of coherent political identity. In fact Spivak includes the lower layers of colonial and postcolonial society. She points out:

The centre of situational indeterminacy these careful historians pre suppose as they grapple with the question, can the subaltern speak? Taken as a whole and in the abstract this ... category ... was heterogeneous in its combination and, thanks to the uneven character of regional economic and social development, differed from area to area. The same class or element which was dominant in one areaWould be among the dominated in another. This could and did create many ambiguities in attitudes and alliances, especially among the lowest strata or the rural gentry, impoverished land lords, rich peasants and upper middle peasants all of whom be longed ideally speaking, to the category of 'people' or subaltern classes." (80)

Amitav Ghosh was the member of the subaltern studies Group. Ranjit Guha in his introduction to the first volume of this group declares the agenda:

Parallel to the domain of elite polities there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian polities in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes. This was an autonomous domain... Far from being destroyed or rendered virtually ineffective...it continued to operate vigorously.... Adjusting itself to the conditions prevailing under the Raj' (30).

Ghosh's essay "The Slave of Ms. H.6" was written for 'Subaltern Studies: writing on Asian History and society' and in his fictional and non fictional works, we see characters belonging to the marginalized group. For example in *The Circle of Reason*, we find characters from the lower strata of the society. They are Alu, Shombhu Debnath, Rakhal, Toru Debi, Rajan, Zndial-Aittaha, Kulti, Karthamma, Jeevanbhai Patel, Haji Fahmy, Zaghoul. They are in the professions generally not hold in high esteem. However, our central focus is on two novels, *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*. Here the interest of the of novelist lies in paying heed to the voices of the marginalized anonymous individual whom history fails to keep any record.

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In *The Hungry Tide* Nirmal records the subaltern group of Sundarbans. There the struggle of the people for their rights is shown along with the agony of failed hopes and destructions. Fokir represents the subaltern group and with his representation the lives of enduring people in the mangroves of West Bengal come to our view. Kanai asks Nilima about the significance of the place Morichjhapi, Nilima exhorts:

Morichjhapi, said Nilima, was a tide country island, a couple of hours from Lusibari by boat. It tells within a part of the Sundarbans reserved for tiger conservation, but unlike many such islands it was relatively easily accessible from the mainland. In 1978 a great number of people suddenly appeared in Morichjhapi... (In time it came to be learnt that they were refugees, originally from Bangladesh, they had been among the poorest of rural people, oppressed and exploited both by Muslim communalists and by Hindus of the upper castes (THT-118)

These dispossessed people are a marginalized group and they struggle to come to the centre and as it happens always, this struggle is fraught with hopes and despair. Kusum is another marginalized character who finds a presence in Nirmal's journal. Kusum expresses her feelings of hopelessness when "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 confrontation between the settlers and government forces". (HT, 119)

Kusum in a conversation with Nirmal voices out the pangs of a marginalized condition:

... The worst part was ... to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, were worth less than dirt or dust. "This island has 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, which is paid for by people from all around the world." Everyday, sitting here, with hungry gnawing at our bellies, we would listen to these words, over and over again, who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names? (THT-262)

However, finally they are taken to a 'Government resettlement camp in central India... to a place called Dandakaranya, deep in the forests of Madhya Pradesh, hundreds of Kilometers from Bengal' (HT1118). Here Ghosh is able to show the effort of the marginalized to come into the centre stage of life through series of displacements. Now let us come to *The Glass Palace* where:

The king raised his glasses to his eyes and spotted several Indian faces along the waterfront. What vast what incomprehensible power, to move people in such number from one place to another emperor, 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? (TGP-43-44)

The novel opens with an account of Rajkumar, a marginalized but gradually he comes to the centre. This journey of Rajkumar is an interesting study of how the marginalized comes into centre. Besides, in this novel we see servants, urchins and the royal family comes down to the marginalized position. The novel gives us an account of three generations and the writer's father's family's connection with Burma gives the novel a solid foundation. John C.Hawley points out:

Set principally in Burma and Malaya, *The Glass Palace* spans several generations and it partially based upon the experiences of Ghosh's uncle, Jagat Chanrda Dutta, Who had been a timber merchant I Burma. In his 17 July 2000 interview with Outlook, Ghosh mentioned that his father's family had lived in Burma for several generations. (113)

The downfall of Burmese royal family is significant as it suggests the royal family is going to be marginalized in the hands of the British in their exile condition. The queen Supayalat narrates:

In a few decades the wealth will be gone– all the gems, the timber and the oil. and then they too will leave...This is what awaits us all; this in how we will all end as prisoners, in shanty towns born of plague. A hundred years hence you will read the indictment of Europe's greed in the difference between the kingdom of Siam and the state of our own enslaved realm.(TGP -76).

This narration is the deep cry of a queen and for that matter once the ruler going to be ruled. This comment has a postcolonial touch and thereby the journey of the marginalized to the centre is obvious. In this novel Beni Prasad Dey is an officer under the British and therefore he only follows what they dictate leaving wide his individual self. After his death his wife Uma gives a graphic description of his condition that suggests his marginalized condition in the hands of the British Uma says:

There seemed never to be a moment when he was not haunted by the fear of being thought lacking by his British colleagues. And yet it seemed to be universally agreed that he was one of the most successful Indians of his generation, a model for his countrymen. Did this mean that one day all of India would become a shadow of what

he had been? Millions of people trying to live their lives in conformity with incomprehensible rules? Better to be what Dolly had been: women who had no illusions about the nature of her conditions; a prisoner who knew the exact dimensions of her case and could look contentment within those confines. (TGP 61-62)

In fact, Beni Prasad Dey could not bear out his demotion and in his struggle to take the journey from the marginalized to the centre, he fails and commits suicide. On the other hand Uma was under the shadow of Beni Prasad and therefore doubled marginalized and after her husband's death she takes the journey from the marginalized in to the center manifested through her effort to collect funds for India's freedom movement.

On the other hand Dolly another marginalized character under the hands of the Burmese royal family .She was very loyal to the rayal family in fact, "It was impossible to think of Outram House without Dolly: impossible to imagine Ratnagiri emptied of her presence". Dolly took a very courageous step to go out secretly to marry Rajkumar. In fact, Rajkumar says, ``come, Dolly Let's go There's nothing to be done and again says "chalo, chalo , Jaldi chalo`` These words suggest the journey of Dolly from the marginalized to the centre.

Arjun finds a place in Indian military Academy in Dehra Dun under the British. On the other hand Hardayal finds himself in a marginalized condition under the hands of the British despite his family's long connection to the British military But finally they both allied themselves to the Indian national movement and journey from their marginalized condition to the centre.

To conclude we may say that as we cannot think "Hamlet without the prince of Denmark similarly without the marginalized class in Amitav Ghosh's novels we can not have a full view of his novels. In *The Hungry Tide* and *The Glass Palace*, the marginalized characters take a journey to come into the center thus Spivak's question can the subaltern speak finds an answer in Amitav Ghosh as he empowers them to represent into the centre. The intention of the author is that the poor be heard.

[Abbreviations used: The Glass Place as TGP and The Hungry Tide as THT]

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Vol.1. Issue 2 (2015)

Editor-in-Chief: Bijender Singh