



Diasporic Consciousness and Identity in Amitav Ghosh's Novels: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: Indian English literature pays homage to Amitav Ghosh. A group of people from Ghosh's book have made the decision to relocate to an uncharted island in the middle of the Indian Ocean. In that place, they take on new personas. By focusing on Deeti and a few other individuals to illustrate their unsavoury situation in Indian culture, the story also illustrates the notion of diaspora. Taking diaspora as its central topic, the article reveals many forms of oppression experienced by the protagonists and reflects the issues plaguing Indian culture. Communication transcends national boundaries. Amitav Ghosh's most significant form is this. An individual's identity is not static; it is subject to change. Departure and arrival have enduring symbolic significance in Ghosh's narrative structure, and displacement is a fundamental process in his literary works.

Keywords: Amitav Ghosh, Diasporic Consciousness, Identity

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INTRODUCTION

Literature written by South Asians defines and reflects the diasporic experience. The division is a central topic in all of the South Asian subcontinent's major books. Works such as *Train to Pakistan*, *Tamas*, *The Dark Dancer*, *A Bend in the Ganges*, *Azadi*, *Ice Candy Man*, *Midnight's Children*, *The Shadow Lines*, *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, and *The Shadow Lines* express diasporic awareness. Each of these books presents a unique perspective on the same terrible story of suffering and conflict. Postcolonial eras are the settings for the majority of best-selling South Asian literature. The English colonised several South Asian nations. The majority of South Asian countries finally achieved independence after a protracted fight, yet this newfound freedom often came with the division of nations. The Jewish people's forced migration from Palestine to other parts of the world beginning in the sixth century B.C. is known as the diaspora. Additionally, it suggests the decentralisation of religious or national groups residing outside of their country who have managed to preserve their cultural identity. Diasporic awareness is a central subject in the book *The Shadow Lines*. As a people, the Parsi left their homeland. They were compelled to flee to nations in South Asia. It was with sorrowful hearts that they departed from their homeland. Amitabh Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* explores diasporic awareness. Identity, belonging, and nationalism are dissected in the book as it explores the postcolonial and colonial experiences of India. Through the interplay of national and familial ties among the Prices, the narrator's family, Tridib's family, and Ila's family, the work explores the process of relationship creation throughout the postcolonial period. These personalities reflect or are affected by colonialism tendencies and connections, as Lint Brad notes.

People who have been forcibly removed from their nation use it to explain what it's like to be an immigrant. In a broader sense, it describes what it's like to be an immigrant, which is to physically and mentally

navigate the process of balancing one's old and new identities. The "oscillation between the strange and the familiar" is what diaspora is, according to Crane and Radhika Mohanram. But diaspora is "historically laden," and that much is true. Its significance varies not just with the gender of the diasporic individual but also with the culture and time period in which it is used. A person's socioeconomic status may also influence their diasporic experience; a refugee with limited social mobility would have a very different diaspora than a well-off professional. A person's character qualities might have an impact on their diaspora experience. Even while being in diaspora isn't easy, some individuals manage to thrive while others struggle.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Malar, V. (2022) Man has always aspired to a higher standard of living. The Stone Age led to the development of sophisticated tools, and the Bronze Age was all about discovering a better existence. Because of this need, man has always had to travel, often abandoning his own area. The displacement from one's country was so great and so terrible that these migrations have become forms of exile. Everything that pertains to belonging or not belonging—language, identity, location, and home—is interconnected, according to Jhumpa Lahiri. In the post-colonial setting, Diasporic literature rose to prominence in the universal literature, drawing inspiration from the immense migration that took place during this time. It developed in tandem with post-colonial literature. 'Rootlessness' is a reality for the immigrant throughout the transplanting process. Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Rohinton Mistry, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, and many more are among the most significant Indian authors working in Diaspora today. Among diasporic authors, Indian women in particular have made their voices known, excelled in writing across genres, and received widespread acclaim. These diasporic women authors share stories of personal struggles with illness and trauma. The principal topics covered by diasporic literature are prejudice, culture shock, loss of identity, estrangement, displacement, difficult decisions, sadness, hybridity, and nostalgia. In this article, we will take a look at three novels—The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri, The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai, and The Mistress of Spices by Chitra Bannerjee Divakaruni—that deal with the challenges of navigating different cultures and adapting to a new environment. This study compares and contrasts the plight of the female characters in the books chosen to explore immigration from a cultural and feminist perspective.

Dr. Venkateswarlu Yesapogu (2016) Throughout his many writings, including essays and journalism, Amitav Ghosh reflects on a small number of core themes. His focus is on modern schools of literary criticism, and he approaches each of these topics from a fresh angle. His fiction deftly explains such complex topics as the so-called developing world's ambivalent relationship to modernity, the formation and reformation of identities in colonial and post-colonial societies, and the troubled legacy of colonial knowledge and discourse on formerly colonised societies, peoples, and ideas. In several public statements, Ghosh has rejected the notion that his writing exemplifies postcolonial thought or that he is a "post-colonial" author. Even more so, he has asserted his ignorance of the term's meaning. Despite this, Ghosh maintains cordial relationships with numerous influential critics and theorists in the field; they, in turn, recognise his writings as an essential tool for identifying and analysing the myriad problems that make up the post-colonial dilemma as it exists in the present day. By analysing Amitav Ghosh's work critically, we may learn about his own interests and values while also delving into the potential and constraints of

postcolonial theory and practice. Amitav Ghosh sheds attention on hitherto overlooked aspects of colonial tyranny, such as the practice of local moneylenders oppressing the impoverished. This essay takes a postcolonial stance in its humorous assessment of colonialism's oppressive effects. In doing so, it exposes how benign masculinity has been integral to the post-national future's conceptualization. According to Ghosh, feminism is linked to unacceptable nationalism. But I've decided to write a seminar article on "The impact of post colonialism in Amitav Ghosh's novels— A Post colonial Perspective" that attempts to examine how post colonialism has affected Ghosh's novels, which have dealt with issues and challenges that modern society is facing. In any case, I did my best to decipher the article's meaning by looking at it through the lens of several cultural features of modern Indian culture.

Guruprasad S Y, (2014) Memory and identity are the central themes of this article, which examines *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh and *Never Let Me Go* by Kazuo Ishiguro. Memories and individuality are significant themes in the writings of both writers. The fundamental themes in their writings are on liminality, identity, nostalgia, grieving, and memories. As opposed to Ishiguro, Amitav Ghosh is based in the United States. They both use their works as a means of reminiscence and self-expression. Characters in these chosen works explore the importance of memory and identity.

Dr. Ashish Gupta et.al (2016) Among the most prominent figures in Indian English literature, Amitav Ghosh stands out. In 2008, his book *Sea of Poppies* made it into the Man Booker Prize shortlist. The story takes place against the backdrop of colonial control in India, when the country was desperately trying to meet China's need for opium. An objective description of the opium-growing peasants in India, the work is also a reflection on the sociocultural growth of the Indian diaspora and a tale of struggle by the downtrodden and wretches of colonial India. Regarding diasporic sensibility and identity reconstruction, it is a work of fiction. Adapting to their new environment and circumstances is something that most of the novel's protagonists do quite well. In order to fit in with their new environment, the characters try to rebuild or change their identities.

Dr. Priyanka Singla et.al (2023) While it is important for writers to draw on their own cultural heritage, the power of contemporary creative imagination comes from exploring themes of isolation, belonging, exile, and identity through the lens of personal experiences. Because of this inherent diversity, diaspora authors' accounts of diasporic experiences can never be identical. Because their birthplace does not unite their "home" (their culture of origin) with their "world" (their adopted culture), there is enough opportunity to discover difference. As a young man of twenty-three, Rohinton Mistry departed for Canada, although his fiction is deeply entrenched in the slums of Bombay. For the vast majority of Indian authors living abroad, the imagined country serves as a primary setting for their works. Rohinton Mistry has been compared to Salman Rushdie, another Bombay-born novelist who now lives overseas, due to the images of Bombay. On the other hand, the similarities and contrasts between the works of these two writers are just as interesting. Bombay is the backdrop for two works by Indian authors—Rushdie and Mistry—set under the government of Indira Gandhi and the period of internal emergency. The preceding research compares and contrasts the two writers' diasporic consciousnesses based on the adopted places to which they return. The fact that Mistry seems more at home within the Parsi community while Rushdie's work centres on Muslim middle-class forces them to have distinct perspectives and attitudes towards their birthplace. Some commonalities exist between the novels of these two authors, nevertheless, and these contrasts are not the only significant

ones. Throughout both books, the boundaries between the private and public spheres become more blurry. As two of the most notable South Asian diasporic writers, Rushdie and Mistry's diasporic awareness has been the focus of this critique.

DIASPORA

Classical Greek used the word "diaspora" to describe this phenomenon; it comes from the verb "diaspiero," meaning "to scatter." According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, a diaspora may be described as either the migration of a people to a new nation or the uprooting of a people group, such as Jews, from their homeland to another in search of a better life. To embrace both the past and the future, the word "diaspora" describes the connection between the histories of one's home place and the land to which one has travelled from various eras and countries (p. vii). A person may uproot their life and relocate from their "homeland" for a variety of reasons, such as seeking better economic opportunities, furthering their education, entering a new trade, etc. There is widespread agreement that the Indian diaspora is among "the largest" and "the most modern" worldwide. Diaspora is defined as the movement of people away from their "homeland" to a new place. "The voluntary or violent migration of individuals from their home territory into new areas" is how Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define "diaspora" (page 61 of their 2007 book). Writers from the Indian diaspora have a significant impact on the many forms of English-language Indian literature. Throughout their writings, the quest for one's own identity emerges as the central theme. The vast majority of writers from diaspora attempted to include some kind of autobiography into their writings.

DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Knowing and being aware of something is the third stage of consciousness, according to the Cambridge Dictionary. It is a multi-faceted phenomena with an inherent identity. The experience of being dispersed due to migration is known as diasporic consciousness. Displacement from one's own country, existential feelings of not belonging, longing for a bygone age, and the quest for one's own identity are among the most prominent topics in diasporic writing. First, she claims, there's the uncertainty of being in a faraway location and the sadness of leaving one's homeland behind. In the second phase, one's creative output suffers due to the overwhelming need to adapt to one's new surroundings. People in diaspora participate in third-stage activities linked to their home cultures in order to mould their lives. After reaching stage four, individuals become politically and socially engaged on a national level. The term "diasporic writer" refers to authors who have left their home country and made a new life for themselves elsewhere, often in the wake of colonialism. Writing on the Indian diaspora has become more popular recently. The diversity of topics covered by diasporic writers—including nostalgia, cultural differences, displacement, the status quo in other "countries," and so on—helped propel their work to a higher literary plane.

One of the notable diasporic authors who manages to embody the community's collective consciousness is Amitav Ghosh. In each of his works, he took a fresh tack on the theme of migration. Instead of focusing on the hardships his characters faced in their new home, he watched their adventurous lifestyles and added a positive spin on it. His books are always preoccupied with the unanswered question of why people migrate. To reveal the true impact on ordinary people and their migration, he reopened the past and reexamined all sociopolitical activities. Amitav Ghosh delves into the concepts of diasporas and nationhood in his books. These topics revolve on the connections between people from other communities, whether

they belong to the same or separate groups, and how these links may sometimes go beyond political boundaries. Having a deep-seated sense of Indian identity and upholding the social norms passed down through generations is foundational to the concept of an Indian Diaspora as a global social group. A person's path to self-discovery, -definition, -knowledge, and -realisation begins in diaspora. The creative spirit that permeates diasporic literature provides a measure of solace for the various tragedies endured. Additionally, the diasporic literature has aided in creating a fresh perception of India outside and has helped to reshape the worldwide aura around India. All of this contributes to the growth of linkages between different nations, and they start to relate to each other via economic, social, cultural, traditional, and historical connections. The diaspora was a common theme among Indian authors. The process of settling into a new location is fraught with hardship for almost every Diasporic community. Their mental health will suffer regardless of how much they attempt to integrate into the local culture, language, and surroundings. Diasporic sensibilities include a wide range of issues and topics, such as racism, homelessness, gender inequity, displacement, nostalgia, isolation, loneliness, and identity crisis. A diasporic sensibility is fluid, evolving in response to shifting geographical and temporal contexts. Through his fresh lens, Ghosh examines diasporic literature. The persistent diasporic population that was either freely or forcedly ostracised and endured many hardships as a result of British colonisation is vividly depicted in Ghosh's famous book. However, Ghosh shows how the migrants eliminated caste distinctions throughout the migration narrative. The distinctive features of diasporic literature include the words "dislocation from" and "relocation to" a foreign place. A lot of individuals are leaving their country in search of better economic opportunities, which is bad for both their country and themselves.

The first in a planned trilogy of books by Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (2008), was shortlisted for the "Man Booker Prize" and is about a frantic journey across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius Island, where the author returns to a self-reflective issue on the country. It takes place in north India and the Bay of Bengal in 1838, just before the British assault on the Chinese port, which is referred to as the first opium war. Taking place in the 1830s, before to the opium war (1839–1842), this book captures the essence of East Asian colonisation. In the book, Ghosh brings together marines, sailors, and passengers from all over the globe on the schooner *Ibis*, a former slave ship that is now used to smuggle opium and coolies to China. Ghosh arms himself with the crew to man and manoeuvre an old-fashioned literary three-decker by taking his troupe of characters to Calcutta onto the open sea, while also providing the reader with a wealth of tales.

Sea of Poppies widens the idea of diaspora as a territory where a history of its own is happening; it deals with the thrilling account of the 19th-century opium trade, which is rife with bigotry, power-mongering, and ravenous greed. *Ibis* is a representation of India's multilingual populations, and Amitav Ghosh is their voice in the book. Bhojpuri, Bengali, Lascari, Hindustani, Anglo-Indian, and other languages collide in this book with its diverse cast of characters. A vibrant feeling of living voice and the linguistic ingenuity of individuals in diaspora are created by the merging of different languages. When it comes to racial, economic, and cultural divides, Ghosh has faith in Eastern humanism and common goals. For the most part, the novel's interactions are driven by individual human emotions, such as memories, wants, disappointment, and ambitions, rather than by political commitments.

The book provides an objective picture of the opium-growing Indian peasants and a chronicle of struggle by the downtrodden and wretches of colonial India. It also serves as a reflection on the socio-cultural

growth of the Indian diaspora. Regarding dispronic sensibility and identity reconstruction, it is a work of fiction. A global network of scattered political subjects is what a diaspora is, according to definition. The concept of diaspora as a result of colonisation and migration represents a shared tragedy, a babishment in which one yearns for home but is forced to live in exile. Originally built as a slave ship, the Ibis is now undergoing renovations so it can transport a large number of "girimtiyas," or indentured migrants, to the island of Mauritius. On one hand, it serves as a means of transportation for the girimtiyas from India to the Mauritius plantation colony; on the other, it represents the colony in miniature. "A living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion" (4) is what Paul Gilroy characterised the labour ship travelling to plantation colonies in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993). There is a suggestion of their new adopted country, the plantation colony of Mauritius, in Deeti's description of the ibis as "as a vessel that was the Mother-Father of her new family, a great wooden mai-baap an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynasties to come" (356-57).

Questions of identification and belonging are central to diasporic awareness. New identities must be constructed for the protagonists in Ghosh's book as they embark on a journey across the Indian Ocean to a mysterious island. All hailing from various parts of Indian society, these individuals rise up in defiance of the heartless and constructive colonial system and plot their own destinies in an effort to forge a distinct identity despite the harsh conditions. However, their identity is always changing as they are constantly striving to establish and rebuild themselves. The novel *Sea of Poppies* delves into the topic of forced migration, shedding light on how individuals were compelled to leave their homeland due to low social standing. As a result, they adopted new surnames like "jahaj-bhai" and "jahaj-behan" to distinguish themselves from others. Throughout the book, every character struggles with a mix of emotions as they navigate their past, present, and future, attempting to reconcile memories with desires, forge new connections with old acquaintances, and ultimately achieve their objective.

The identity of migratory subjects is not perpetually marginalised in diaspora. Instead of wallowing in self-pity about being far from home, they make an effort to adapt to their new circumstances. Indeed, Ghosh's primary focus in this work is the concept of identity. It seems to be shaped by the ethico-political and socio-economic forces that continually alter the roles and paths of the individuals as they rebuild their identities in the new environment. Colonialism disrupts the social environment by tearing at the very fabric of people's positions. The conflict between individual and group identities is a key theme in his books. His allegiance to the postmodern manner of thinking is shown by his outlook on all kinds of reality as tales. Similar to Spivak's poststructuralist Marxism, which she discusses in her 2006 book *In Other Worlds* as the "strategic use of positivist essentialism" (205) By cultivating postmodern traits like the provisionality, fictionality, and fluidity of all discursive structures, Ghosh seeks a transcendental humanism in an effort to recover the subaltern consciousness.

CONCLUSION

Sea of Poppies, written by Amitav Ghosh, effectively reveals the savage realities of caste binarism in society. One unique aspect of Ghosh's work is his exploration of the dehumanised subalterns' humanity. He then moves on to build their identity in a way that allows them to break free from the oppressive caste system and find a place in mainstream society. The experiences of diaspora have profoundly changed the

diasporic Hindu, who is now more than just a Hindu whose family lives overseas. Various geographical, regional, and cultural identities interact and negotiate to create new cultures as a result of diaspora.

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