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**Exploring the Maladies of Migration in the Select Novels of Amitav Ghosh**

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**Abstract:**

Fiction is the dominant form of literary art, more than any other genre in Literature. Fiction writing represents India's most valuable contribution to the world of books. Contemporary novelists daringly experiment with the language and the technique of fiction. The use of science fiction, fantasy, magic realism, and blending of various literary genres has enriched the form of Indian English novels. This trend has been evolving since and has reached its pinnacle in the contemporary world of fiction writers- a fearless new creed that is not afraid of experimentation in any form. Amitav Ghosh is at the forefront of this newly acquired fearlessness and freedom of Indian writers. A critical study of Amitav Ghosh's novels is an opportunity to peruse a substantial body of work and meditate upon a core set of issues concerning post-colonialism in contemporary fictional writing with a novel perspective. Attempt in the proposed research paper would be to make maladies of migration study of the fictional works by Amitav Ghosh try to unravel the incidents inherent therein.

**Keywords:** Experimentation, Fiction, Maladies, Migration, and Perspective.

**Introduction**

The research paper will be devoted to unraveling the alienation and migration of the characters who cross boundaries and make several transitions during their lifetime. It would unravel how Amitav Ghosh weaves the stories of a proliferation of characters, of various nationalities into a postcolonial narrative of epic magnitude. The paper will discuss in detail the identity crisis faced by the refugees in India, East Pakistan, and West Bengal after the partition. Again, the emphasis would be on unravelling the obliteration of borders as resulting from the crossovers and transitions presented.

**The Maladies of Migration**

Human migration is a movement led by people from one place to another to settle temporarily or permanently in a new world. Migration happens over a long distance from one country to another, and internal migration is also possible in many places. It would be possible for individuals, family units, and large groups. Poora Raj Srivastav comments on the novels of Amitav Ghosh:

Amitav Ghosh's sympathetic attitude towards post-colonialism can be perceived in his major novels. The problems of alienation, migration, and existential crisis in the life of an unprivileged class of society are explored through his fiction. (Srivastava 2015)

People were separated overnight, friends became enemies, and homes became strange places. To borrow the appropriate phrase from Amitav Ghosh, "million were left with no homes but in memory." (TSL 198) The people were conscious of their borders after the partition of India. The border was created based on religion, and people were forced to move from their respective areas after the partition. They left their motherland without hope.

The effects of migration could be observed in three locations, namely in the places of origin, of passage, and of destination, which are affected and altered by the movements of people. Homi Bhabha focuses on origin and destination, which asserts that 'the migrant is empowered intervene actively in the transmission of cultural inheritance or "tradition" (of both the home and the host land) rather than passively accept its venerable customs and pedagogical wisdom, and thus stresses the progressive and innovative potential of migration.' (Bhabha 1994)

Internal migration takes place within a country, either through seasonal human migration or shifts of the population into cities (urbanization) or out of cities (suburbanization). Almost half of these migrants are women, which is one of the most maladies of migration. The pattern of migration changed in the last half-century. The female migration is viewed as associational rather than independent. The distinction made between voluntary and involuntary migration is difficult to make and partially subjective, as the motivators for migration are often correlated.

Amitav Ghosh's novels mostly focus on the lives of common people, their lifestyles, and migration. Fakir was born in Lusibari and brought up on Morichjhapi Island. He married Moyna in Satjellia. Amitav Ghosh presented the female characters as challengeable in his novels. Moyna wanted to achieve something in her life. She migrated to Lusibari with her family for education and job. The people on the Island moved from one place to another place for livelihood. The refugees, too, moved to Morichjhapi to live happily, but the West Bengal government forced them to move back to their motherlands.

The Literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century mostly focused on the theme of partition and migration. The writings of partition and migration provide the place for postcolonial studies in Indian Writing in English. The writers like Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, M.G. Vassanji, and Amitav Ghosh wrote their novels on the theme of Diaspora. The sufferings of refugees are portrayed in their novels in a beautiful manner. The characters of Diaspora's writings depict the real condition of the migrant people in a foreign land. Amitav Ghosh is the first well-known Indian English writer who presented the Morichjhapi incident in his novel.

The year 1947 was the end of British rule, and it laid the way for the partition of India and Pakistan. Millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs who had shared neighborhoods for generations suddenly found themselves on the wrong side of the newly created borders. The lines of Azad can be included;

After the end of the Western Colonization, the world had two new peripheries: settlers colonies and colonies of occupation. From both the colonies, a huge number of natives migrate themselves to local and regional circumstances and sometimes by their own choice. (Azad 2014)

Over 14 million people attempted to cross hastily drawn borders, which was the largest migration in history. The Hindus and Sikhs migrated to India, and Muslims to Pakistan. The newly built Grant truck road and the railway track became the major routes where millions of refugees traveled. Thousands of people were brutally attacked and murdered during migration. A large number of refugee camps were initiated along the roadside.

When independence was declared in India, there started a fight regarding the creation of borders, which forced the people to move from their motherland. The words of Bates could be included for better understanding:

India and Pakistan won Independence in August 1947; following the nationalist struggle ... it was accompanied by the largest mass migration in human history of some 10 million. (Bates 1)

The people were forced to leave their houses for political reasons. The community party in West Bengal forcibly evicted thousands of Bengali refugees who had settled on Islandthe. Bloodshed and human suffering accompanied the partition. Hindus from East Pakistan and Muslims from India migrated in the opposite direction. The educated upper classes were able to settle in the urban environs of Calcutta, and the poor Hindus moved to areas outside West Bengal, like inhospitable terrain in Orissa and Chhattisgarh. The dry forest region is broadly called Dandakaranya.

The government of West Bengal invited the refugees to settle on their Island. Many refugees went to the Sunderbans, especially those who were from the nearby district of Khulna in Bangladesh. The massive inflows of refugees met with severe and violent resistance in many places. They were arrested and forcefully deported back to Dandyak, but that did not discourage the refugees who sold off their meager belongings. They decided to move out of Dandyak at any cost, and finally, several groups reached Morichjhapi.

"... When the war began, and the club's offices moved to Berkshire". (TSL 71) The people migrated to save their lives. When the clash broke down in India against the British government, many British offices safely shifted to other places. The mob attacked the British building and offices at the time of the independence war. Many British people left India to save their lives from the mob. On one side, the people were strong enough to send out the British people from India, and on the other side, the people wanted their country; because of that, many people were killed and moved to other countries. The Indians who were working

in the British offices, too, escaped from the mob. She spends her spare time going on demonstrations and acting in radical plays for Indian immigrants in East London. (TSL 87)

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* was written on the theme of partition and migration. The people used to move to other countries to save their lives from the consequences of war. The people who migrated during the partition settled in Pakistan and Bengal. The majority of the people resettled in their respective areas. The social workers and educated migrant people performed dramas and presented speeches in a newly settled land. Illa is one of the main characters in the novel. She is the narrator of the novel. She found it difficult to make a permanent settlement in London. She did not settle in London to earn money, but she needed liberation. Many Indian people went to London in order to escape from the consequences of war and partition, but there, they struggled emotionally and physically.

The narrator's identity not revealed in the novel. The narrator's family was migrated from Dhaka to Mandalay. Tha'mma was the grandmother of the narrator, who had migrated from Dhaka to Mandalay because of war. Tha'mma's son was born in Mandalay and she often visited Dhaka with her child every year for a couple of months. When Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan Tha'mma never thought of visiting Dhaka because of riots. The migrated people suffered too much after the partition.

"It turned out that many of the elderly people who went to the park had come across the border from the east too, during or just before partition." (TSL 140) The partition made a great record in history; millions of people migrated to other countries. Many Hindu people migrated to Calcutta for jobs. The people who went to Calcutta struggled without houses and security. When Tha'mma retired, she used to visit parks near her apartment. There, she found the people from the east. They settled in Mandalay and assembled in a park-like Tha'mma. She got a chance to share her views about migration. Most of the people who assembled in the park were affected by the partition of India.

The partition divided India into three major areas: Ca: Calcutta, East Pakistan, and West Bengal. The people were forcibly sent to their respective areas based on their religions. Some migrated voluntarily, and some were forced to migrate to other places. The Hindus from East Pakistan and West Bengal were sent to Calcutta, and the Muslims were sent to East Pakistan. The migrated people left their possessions and belongings in their motherland. These people used to recollect their experiences in a lonely place. The recollection of the past is one of the characteristics of migration.

They were scattered all over anyway-one of them was in Bangalore, one in the Middle East, and the other God knew where. (TSL 148) Tha'mma had been living in Dhaka with her family. When she was married, she broke down. So, her family moved to Mandalay. Mayadebi was a sister of Tha'mma. She settled in London with her family. Tha'mma's family scattered. When she was small, she had brothers and uncles, but the family was separated because of the partition. Tha'mma searched her family and found one of her

relatives. Migration was one of the prominent things during the partition. Many families were scattered during the civil war in India. The government forced the refugees to stay in camps. The Muslims tortured them. what vast, what incomprehensible power, to move people in such huge numbers from one place to another-emperors, Kings, farmers, dock workers, soldiers, coolies, policemen. Why? This furious movement took people from one place to another. (TGP 50)

When the enemy defeated the King, the people were forced to move from one place to another. British government defeated the King, Thebaw. The King's family, his servants, and maids were sent away from Burma to Madras. They went to Madras with great suffering. The queen thought that they would return to Burma soon. Dolly is one of the main characters in the novel. She accompanied the King's family to Madras. The British government had sent away the defeated King and his possessions in order to prove their power to the world.

Amitav Ghosh described the blurring border in his novels *The Shadow Lines*, *the Glass Palace*, and *The Hungry Tide*. Tha'mma and Illa were dislocated characters. They left their motherlands and migrated to Mandalay and London. Dolly's family, King's family, Shahib, and Collector's family migrated to Ratnagiri for various reasons. Dolly went to Ratnagiri to serve the King's family. The King's family went to Ratnagiri as a punishment. Shahib traveled to Ratnagiri with Rajkumar to develop his business. The most considerable thing was the King's family and his laborers' migration into *The Glass Palace*. Kenai, Piya, and Kusum families migrated to London and Morinjhapi. Kenai's life was associated with refugees. Kusum traveled to an island after several encounters with people who had migrated.

The British people used to bring the slaves with them to do their work. African people were brought to various parts of the world in the name of slave trading by the British government. The people who sold to the British involuntarily and forcefully left their motherland as well as their families. When the British government ruled India, many people were forced to work in their lands. The British officers forced the people to work in their estates, industries, and houses.

### **Conclusion**

The partition of India was an aspect of migration that led to deep maladies among migrants. The migration during the partition created a great number of refugee camps, asylum, and displaced people. They lived in constant dread and fear. The people were not only forced to stay in a new and foreign land but also suffered displacement. The new place was a land that brought them face to face with a new way of life and a different environment. They were accustomed and made to live with unfamiliar and different people. The forced migration and conflict-induced displacement. The victims of partition in his novels became not only easy prey to political forces but also subjected to the duplicity of the government. The migrated people of Morichapi prey on false hopes and promises from the political party.

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