



**SEARCH FOR A MEANINGFUL EXISTENCE AND QUEST FOR SELF: THE
STUDY OF AMITAV GHOSH'S NOVELS, THE GLASS PALACE AND IN AN
ANTIQUÉ LAND**

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Abstract

In postcolonial literature, the anti-conquest narrative examines the identity politics that are the social and cultural perspectives of the subaltern colonial subjects—their creative resistance to the culture of the colonizer; how such cultural resistance intricate the establishment of a colonial society. In reading *The Glass Palace* and *In An Antique Land*, one feels privileged to see the politics of empire-building treated in such a lyrical and sensitive way. Ghosh does a wonderful job of tying his characters to moments in history, where he struggles in tying his characters to one-another. The readers have to make a conscious effort not to let their doubts about Ghosh's plotting impinge on his authority as a chronicler of history. If the readers allow him this, they can emerge much richer from having read his work. This paper will investigate the postcolonial novelist, Amitav Ghosh's two famous novels *The Glass Palace* and *In An Antique Land* in which the writer explores the themes of search for a meaningful existence and quest for self.

Keywords: Empire- building, History, Post-colonial Novelist and Quest for Self

INTRODUCTION

Indian writing in English discloses the dialectics of imperialism in its journey from the fringe to the centre and echoes a deep core of neo-colonialism based on power politics. The stalwarts like Shashi Tharoor, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie and Khuswant Singh and the like are writing in a postcolonial space, using novels as a means of cultural representation. These writers of the 1980s aimed at raising an Indian cultural identity, and designing Indian cultural and historical heritage to enable an assertion of the Indian self.

Amitav Ghosh, one of the most widely known Indian writers, is an anthropologist and serious novelist and writing from a postcolonial consciousness. He belongs to the nation that was once ruled and conquered by Imperial Britain. As a writer, Amitav Ghosh has been enormously influenced by the social and political element of the country. Also the events and stories he heard from his parents during his childhood made an unforgettable impression on his mind. The images of the changing India, socially and politically, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh's mind.

Identity Quest in The Glass Palace

Rajkumar's life-story is a story of the struggle for survival in the colonial turmoil. As a colonized subject from Bengal, he became a colonizer in Burma transporting indentured labourers from South India to other parts of the colonial world. He has even sexually exploited a woman worker on his plantations. His post-colonial consciousness represents a conflict. Matthew, Rajkumar and Saya John are engaged in the task of colonizing people and land for the sake of wealth. Rajkumar's family comes from Akyab, "the principal port of the Arakan that is the tidewater stretch of coast where Burma and Bengal collide in a whirlpool of unease." All his family died of a fever that passed through the town, including the last survivor, his mother, who had tried to ship back to the ancestral home of Chittagong with Rajkumar. After his mother died the boy stayed to work on the boat, having nowhere else to go. In Mandalay, the Burmese royal capital, the boat needed extensive repairs, and during the wait Rajkumar went to work and live at a small food stall in town. He is there when the British invade and overthrow the monarchy. Rajkumar of *The Glass Palace*, the creative ability is apparent in his resourcefulness.

It is not just the big people who always know everything Saya, If I could find out exactly how much the other companies are going to quote, then I might be able to put in a winning bid. It is true that I can't read English, Saya, but I've learnt to speak it. And why do I need to read when you can do it for me? (*The Glass Palace* 130)

Amitav Ghosh's novels present characters occupied in their identity, and in search of reason, and truth. In this sense, they are veritable discourses on human quest. The physical and psychic explorations providing alternative visions and worlds invariably compel its characters to cross diverse geographic locations and points of time. The eventful explorative, personal Journey takes shape through individual memory and recollections of others. The individual's search for a meaningful existence is personified in memory as a re-lived experience. Accordingly,

Rajkumar undertakes a quest for identity by ransacking his memory, but without a conspicuous finale.

The novel finds the imperial ingenuity in transforming the natives, docile to the imperial dictates by the erasure of their identity. Arjun's realization that he is like a clay- vessel moulded by an unknown "potter" in becoming a willing tool in the empire's proclaimed mission of modernizing the "uncivilized" East speaks out the loss of his identity. Later, it needed Alison's rejoinder that she felt only pity for him rather than love, to retrieve his self –awareness. The Glass Palace also interprets the political and social chaos that resulted out of the British takeover of Burma and the Japanese invasion of Malaysia as reflected in the quests of diverse characters. Obsessed with rootlessness, these characters spend most of their lives on the movie, reminiscent of the manoeuvring of the Indian psyche by British colonialism.

Rajkumar becomes an orphan and seeks his livelihood in the teak forest of Burma. The novel is interacted into more than a generation in old glory of empire and new ambitions of not only Royal families but also the subject of empire consisting men and women, merchants, rich and poor. Their aspirations are further shattered by the invasion of Japanese on Burma in the Second World War. The theme of homelessness and identity of South Asian families in pre and postcolonial time is explored in the novel. The abuses and devastation of war, arising out of two foreign countries British and Japanese in war against each other, the territorial ambition to win Burma are projected in the novel. The Japanese took hold of Burma in 1942 and thousands of people, mostly Indians and refugees, feeling war and devastation, travelled thousands of miles from Burma to Calcutta, in their struggle for existence. About the large scale migration of people from Burma, Ghosh describes them as:

They began to notice other people a few scattered Handfuls at first, then more and more and still more, until the road became so thickly thronged that they could barely move. Everyone was heading in the same direction: towards the northern landward passage to India a distance of more than a thousand miles. They had their possessions bundled on their head; they were carrying children on their backs, wheeling elderly people in carts and barrows (The Glass Palace 467). This is the outcome of war. Ghosh narrates the position of large scale mass people, marooned between two countries Burma and India. They face the feeling of 'outsider' in their own country. Santosh Gupta in his article "Looking into History: Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace" comments:

The 'long march' back to India once again raises important questions about the nature of national identity, the reality of border lines between countries and justification of mass migration. Exiles and migrants who moved from one country to another are displaced and become outcasts within their own country and in the new land (Indian Writing in English 248).

Ghosh that he has presented the historical details, and position of men and women, outcome of war, in novel form so that it invariably catches sight of many readers who consider history as a dry subject. Thus, once again Ghosh creates the thinking for the migrated people or people at the fringe of migration. Ghosh here projects the worst situation of war-affected people. They are forced into such positions that they face challenges for their very existence apart from the

fact of homelessness situation. The focal theme of the novel is the inevitable recognition of the human beings especially at the time of large scale dislocation of the people, individuals outraged by war. Through the character of Arjun in *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh projects the faithfulness of people in foreign rulers in their own land.

Ghosh places his discourse in the context of a family saga, spanning three generations and embracing more than a dozen characters. The spearhead of the action is Rajkumar, who, at the novel's onset, is an impoverished eleven year-old orphan living in the streets of Mandalay, Burma's capital city. Raised under the patronage of a Chinese businessman and never hesitant to help himself, Rajkumar grows into a wealthy man, eventually becoming patriarch of the sprawling brood who take up Ghosh's narrative. Although Rajkumar is a compelling and central character, he is not the most interesting in the novel. He is too dismissive of politics to carry much weight.

This mixed opinion brings him into conflict with the most political character in the novel, Uma. A widow-turned-independence fighter, Uma's efforts to understand her own status and bring others to a similar understanding stand out as accomplishments in the book. It is Uma who confronts the issue of England's contribution to India, as a ruler. When it is suggested that England has introduced reforms, courts, railways, and effectively modernized India, Uma points out that these benefits are all secondary to England's major intention, which is to exploit India for commercial gain. Through the character Uma, Ghosh argues from an abstracted point of view, placing priority on the theory behind government. If anything, the brutality of the foreign regime is downplayed in the novel, though it could easily be highlighted as an argument against colonialism. Executing this argument requires discipline on Ghosh's part. He refrains from barraging readers with political philosophy, and rather lets the objects which trope through his novel - cars, photographs, umbrellas - slide into an argument against the sacrificing of freedom and culture. The two become linked, and so culture is freedom, and customs are defiance.

The central protagonists of the novel *The Glass Palace* are portrayed show how these characters experience search for identity and feel their past as discursively separate and opposed to the present. These innocent victims of the social and political unrest created by the whirlwinds of colonialism and its aftermath, share almost the same emotional phenomenon in spite of changes in their times and milieu. As a result, alienation remains a constant factor throughout their life stories and experiences, incessantly driving them to quest for their real identity. These subversive quests portrayed in the novels celebrate the ultimate triumph of the native spirit proclaiming centrality to the subaltern.

The Question of Self in “In An Antique Land”

Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* is an experimentation on form, diction, style, plot, narration and characterization. *In An Antique Land* is a typical work that pools up of ancient history, colonial and post-colonial history and Social Anthropology on one hand and on the other hand it is an autobiography, dissertation and travel writing.

All these things are interlaced and fabricated together by the narrative technique of Amitav Ghosh. Anna Sujatha Mathai, compliments “ not since i read A.K. Ramanujan’s Speaking of Siva some years ago made me read a book so intellectually thrilling, so compelling, so revealing as Ghosh’s In An Antique Land. ” To study and excavate the ancient history of two continents namely, Asia and Africa, Amitav Ghosh has used autobiographical narration. As a travelogue writer, Ghosh is totally different from his contemporaries as his art keeps on bringing fresh images, giving expressions to new ideas and themes. In an interview with Ranjan Banerjee, Ghosh talks about the book's theme and form, no this time I am not writing a novel. Not even Sociology or Belles letters based on historical research. My new book cannot be described as any one of these. It is a strange sort of work, within the parameters of history; I have tried to capture a sort of work. Within the parameters of history, I have tried to capture a story, a narrative, without attempting to write a historical novel. You may say as a writer. I have faced a technical challenge. [Ananda Bazar Patrika]

Amitav Ghosh sends his characters to cross the nation's boundaries and let them travel across continents. Through this he gets an opportunity to see the connections between civilizations, affinities with customs and beliefs. As the author is concerned much about revealing the minute details of cultural manifestations across different parts of the globe, he transformed these details into fictional accounts. “ He (Ghosh) relentlessly questions the ‘Shadow lines’ the divide human beings by nation, class culture or religion; it is no accident that all his books move back and forth across time and across continents” (Ramachandra Guha). While giving this account, the novelist has deviated from the differences between genres in literature, academic disciplines and even the critical tolls of appreciation. These characteristic features have made the novel multi-generic.

It establishes connections to present similarities between cultures of different continents and disregard artificial boundaries. It shows the humanism of the author. Therefore the novel has deviated from all forms and even deviated from the category of postmodern and postcolonial. He first published “The Slave of MS H 6” which is a part of the narrative, in Subaltern Studies.

Antique Land deals with the major themes of historical and cultural displacement, alienation, displacement and dislocation. As it is clearly noted by John C. Hawley, The book is not recognizable as a novel, nor is it simply a historical investigation: it is a new genre, something that blends an anthropological record with a travelogue, a diary, and perhaps some imagined sections. The effect that this has on the reader is to force us to question whether particular events and characters are literally factual [Amitav Ghosh, 89]

There are three narratives kept pace in the book In An Antique Land. The bottom line action of the novel revolves Ghosh’s own experience as an anthropologist working for a D.Phil at Oxford. This narrative is discontinued and connected with Ghosh. He stayed in Egypt and studied the lives of the fellaheen of Lataifia and Nashway. These two narratives are further deflected by the protagonist’s effort to determine the identity of an Indian slave catalogued as ‘ Number MS H.6’ in the University Library at Jerusalem. The study of the reinvigoration identity of the slave moves like a mesmerizing and mysterious drama. Amitav Ghosh finally superseded in determining the identity of MSH.6 with the help of many historical

manifestations and relevant clues. The revivification of the forgotten name of a marginalized slave is an illustration of the postcolonial agenda. There are many traversing narratives intersecting past and present and geographical boundaries which are also a trait of postmodernism.

The work is a sabotage of post modernity itself with its primary focus on the medieval ages. Amitav Ghosh endeavors to put forth an imaginary world of accommodations which at present is on demand. He strongly believes that colonial invasion as a kind of dividing force to humanist continuity: “ indeed if one looks carefully at Ghosh’s medieval construction one can see that his medieval postmodern world has all the hallmarks of “ post modernity”: syncretism, non- territoriality, multilingualism and hybridity. Ghosh’s restoration of this ruptured human continuity thus enacts a kind of historical detour which bypasses modernity completely, in effectively wiping it out of history” (Anshuman A Mondal 31). Ghosh noticed thoroughly that what is impossible at present was possible at once. People believe that the terms like humanism and secularism are products of modernity which in fact is a wrong notion according to Ghosh. In this novel Ghosh presents a medieval society which celebrates concepts like secularism and human values the ideal in practice. These philosophical concepts are grandeur in philosophy in the present scenario. They are found more in theory rather than in practice. The novelist in this novel clearly sees the changes. When he met his Egyptian friend, Zaghoul, the novelist observed the ignorance of the people. Zaghoul asked the novelist whether he could reach India on donkey. The other notable differences are found with the image of visas which is a big obstacle for the people to move. The image of the war between Iraq and Iran made the author more worried about insecurity. These kinds of symptoms were not found in the twelfth century. The novelist Ghosh clearly depicts the freedom for people in those days.

During the pre-colonial period a Jewish trader named Abraham Ben Yiju started his journey from Tunisia and reached Mangalore coast without a visa. He settled there for many years and married a Nair wife, Ashu. He did trade with the help of a Tulu-speaking low caste slave, Bomma. The concept of journey set in different time frames became the counter point in the novel and reveals that human relationships were cordial and harmonious in the 12th century. The hostile weather only grew gloomy in the twentieth century. “What is significant to note is the ease with which the narrator-protagonist moves between these time-frames in splendid disregard for the conventions of academic history-where the time is, above all continuous” (Ramachandra Guha 451). Ghosh’s vision meticulously rejects the concepts of the westerners and pictures a balanced state which could be traced back to ancient Indian and South Asian cultures. His humanism and secularism do not prefer exclusions as in the Western context, but are all embracing as is depicted in the medieval society of India and Egypt in this narrative.

The narrator-researcher – protagonist’s journey itself is significant in many ways. With remarkable enthusiasm the researcher moves from the libraries of Oxford to the Jewish Geniza; from the small dusty Egyptian village where the narrator watches in wonderment the transformation that catapults innocent farmers, labourers into the 20th century, to the American Libraries. In the process, the journey loses its physical contours, and becomes a spiritual discovery. The process of fulfilment is embodied in the small connections. “Ironies of seemingly disparate culture (Anna Sujatha Mathai 32). The sense of fulfilment is complete with

the actually shaping and embodying the distant , rejected, unknown element ". reconstructions of the identity of the forgotten slave reaching its logical conclusion.

Ghosh went on to trace out the similar connections in medieval periods. Through uncanny research he came to know that the name of the slave Bomma. As far as the information he received he understood that the name Bomma is not derived from the Brahma of the Sanskrit word but from the much earlier Tulu deity, Berme or Bermeru, one of the Bhutaspirits of Tuluva pantheon, absorbed by the all-inclusive Sanskrit incarnations of the later period. At the highest level this relationship between master and servant gleaned into a spiritual dimension. In south India “ amongst the pieties and fiercely egalitarian Vachanakara saint pots of Bomma’s own lifetime, for example, slavery was often used as an image to represent the devotee’s quest for God”. In *An Antique Land* 260). In the poetry of Vachanakaras slavery was turned in to the paradoxical embodiment of perfect freedom. The bondage does not end here. Ghosh even conducted further research to find connections with other cultures such as Sufism and Judaism. Ghosh’s work is the embodiment of history and fiction and invites questions on the recorded of historical knowledge. As one critic points out, Ghosh, “ while calling into question the ‘truth’ of historical knowledge, links the production of knowledge to the expansion of European colonialism: History, therefore, is revealed to be the history of appropriation”. (Anushuman A Mondal 20). The books beginning can be seen from the Crusades on wards and ends with the Gulf War. Once the colonization started after the pre-colonial period, many hostile conditions were formed. It was no longer possible to speak “of things that were right, or good, or willed by God”. But thrive on “the ascending ladder of Development....” and a language of “funs and tanks and bombs”.(In *An Antique* ,237). The destruction of the Geniza by the Europeans manifests the senseless deed of the imperialists to the values and treasures of the East. The Geniza was the archive of the synagogue which Ben Yiju attended in the early eleventh century. The letters referring to Bomma were lodged in that archive. The Geniza was used as a storehouse. It contained many writing documents in the name of the Holy Spirit.

Those were kept for fear of blasphemy. Ghosh’s search for the identity of the subaltern MS.H brought him there and he took pride in the fact that it held the “greatest single collection of medieval documents ever discovered”.(In *An Antique Land* 59). But inside there was only absence which has long since been moved. The dissemination of the Geniza material took place during the late nineteenth century under the preconception of the European scholarship harmonizing with the age of high imperialism. During the circulation of the Geniza, the largest acquisition of the Geniza material was procured by Soloman Schechter, a Reader in Cambridge University. It is not an eventuality that many of the works mentioned in the 25 odd pages notes appended at the end of the narrative, Ghosh does not acknowledge even a single work by a European scholar. Ghosh disrupted his historical knowledge which is testimony in his attempt at finding the minor details and highlighting them in a large framework. The novelist is baffled and wondered when he noticed the homogeneity in beliefs, myths and customs of the two ancient civilizations of Egypt and Indus. The Egyptians believed that their legend Sidi Abu Kanaka’s gravel is a sacred place for their people. The gravel was laid in the way where there were plans for building a canal by the authorities. When the authorities tried to remove it they found it very difficult. Later they used modern machinery which also failed to dig it out. This

kind of myth was very popular in Egypt. When the narrator went to visit a Bhuta temple he was told another myth like how even bulldozers failed to break through the Bhuta shrine when engineers tried to build a road connecting Mangalore city to the port.

The comparison of the past and with the present seemed to be a kind of exposition to both the cultures. Amitav Ghosh went to Egypt again and paid a visit to the tomb of Sidi Abu Hasira at Damanhour. It revealed the transformation of society and the divisions in the society. Here Amitav Ghosh was asked about his identity by an Officer. The narrator replied that he was neither Jewish, nor Muslim nor Christian. The papers are in order but what raises their suspicion was why he was there in the first place near the tomb of a Jewish saint in Egypt. The narrator thought of telling him why he had come to Egypt and the story of Bomma and Ben Yiju. At last Ghosh relinquished it as he thought that there was nothing in his world that connected to his story. Only he knows that there were no big gaps among these cultures. During the post-colonial period only there are barriers like religion, culture and nationality between Indian and Egyptian, Muslim and Jewish, Hindu and Muslim. Thus the novelist brought out many pointers in the sphere of unity and cultural affinity among these civilizations and seeks them to realize it and maintain the same kind of harmony that was once led by the people.

Ghosh's characters thwart the border lines and go against the imaginary shadow lines of the globe without acknowledgement of any transitory or persistent barrier that might hold their movements back. Based on this view the readers can understand that Ghosh is acknowledging Edward Said's views.

The major task is to match the new economic and socio-political dislocations and configurations of our time with the startling realities of human interdependence on a world scale. We need to go and to situate these in a geography of other identities, people, cultures, and then to study how, despite the indifferences, they have always overlapped one another, through un hierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness, and of course, conflict. [Culture and Imperialism, 395]

In *An Antique Land* chronicles the ancient history of free trade that had existed during the medieval period. The novel has never ignored the post-colonial characteristics. Ghosh has conscientiously entwined the novel with post-colonial themes. In this novel the readers can notice the themes of alienation and dislocation. These problems emerge due to either traveling or migration. Ben Yiju and Bomma travelled during the medieval period and confronted other cultures. In the 20th century Amitav Ghosh encountered with the Egyptian culture when he travelled to Egypt and Nabeel with Arab culture when he moved to oil countries in search of a job. Ghosh, as a post-colonial novelist, presented history from the viewpoint of contemporary theory by offering to the readers the two different periods i.e. one with the twelfth century and its trade and commerce and other with the writer's own time during his stay in Egyptian villages.

Quest for identity is one of the major problems of migration. When Ghosh reached Latâifa, he struggled for revealing his identity. Since Latâifa is a village and it is far off from modern technology, the native people are not aware of the incidents happening outside their world.

They have little knowledge about other countries particularly India. Only educated persons like Ustaz Mustafa can know a little about India and its culture. Because he specialized in civil and religious law. When Ghosh was asked whether he were a muslim , he replied no, ‘ I was born a Hindu.(In An Antique Land). Ustaz Mustaafa further enquired Ghosh, ‘ What is this ‘Hinduki’ thing? I have heard about it before and i don’t understand it. If it is not christainity nor Judaism nor Islam what can it be? who are its prophets ? [In An Antique, 31]

With the advent of imperialism people started comparing and contrasting one religion with that of the other and trying to find faults of others’. They are under the impression that their religion and culture are superior to others. It is transparent from the cloying smile of Ustaz Mustafa, who again asks Ghosh” I know it’s cows you worship” but Ghosh says, - In my country some people don’t eat beef because....because cows Give milk and plough the fields and so on, so they are very useful” [In An Antique Land 32]. Even Ghosh has attempted to brainwash him but Ustaz considers his views. He informs Ghosh “ that you will convert and become a Muslim. You must not disappoint me [In An Antique, 35]. Thus Ghosh was beguiled and entrapped to join the Muslim community. In Latâifa the major religion is Islamic. These village people have no connections with other country people in the world. They lead a pious life. They still follow their own ancient culture and there were no signs of evil of modern civilization.

In the local culture of Egypt people, they do not find men circumcised in childhood. In Arabic,the word circumcise means’ to purify’. According to their perception if a man is not circumcised means he is impure. In conversation with Jabir, the narrator discloses that Hindus are not circumcised. Ghosh even straightened his face to answer some of the questions. The first problem was Ghosh had no alternative and the second he was trapped by language. Jabir an innocent and harmless further asked by pointing a finger at Ghosh’s crotch ‘don’t you shave there either?’ ‘No, I said. But then, he cried,doesn’t the hair grow longer and longer until. At last Jabir confesses that Ghosh “ doesn’t know a thing..not religion, notpolitics, not sex, just like a child” (In An Antique, 44-45). Ghosh has faced many problems with language. Though the narrator was not shy, he was unable to express himself properly because in Arabic even the unoffending word, uncircumcised becomes hot under the collar with implications of irreligiousness. With these constraints Ghosh was unable to answer the questions. He simply became silent similar to that of an object of fun and stood like a child in Jabir’s eye.

The villagers in Latâifa believed that Hinduism is completely incongruous and contained multifarious system of values. During Ramadan the entire village was on fasting. Ghosh wanted to join them. Since Ghosh is not a religious fanatic he wanted to show respect towards all the religions, he thought it was the best platform. When he revealed his intention of joining fasting, everyone insisted, “ No, you can’t fast, you are not a Muslim- only muslims fast at Ramadhan” (In An Antique Land 55). He felt then like an outsider. He knew all about the festival and how it is celebrated among Muslims.He has realised at last the reason for rejecting him that belong(ing) to the immense community was a privilege which they had to re-earn every years and the effort made them doubly conscious of the value of its boundaries” (In An Antique, 57).

During his second visit to Egypt in 1988 again Ghosh was confronted with cultural problems. He came to meet Ustaz Sabry but there was Amm Taha at his home. She asked some typical

questions about the burning of dead bodies in India. The conversation went on like this, “Tell me, she said. ‘Is it true what they say about you? That in your country people burn their dead?’ some people do’ I said, It depends’. Nabeel at last convinced the Ghosh to be calm and patient and never to be upset. Ghosh again visited Egypt in 1988. He found so many changes in the two villages. The young men started moving to Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries and spent a huge amount of money. When Ghosh visited Abu- Latâifa he noticed several changes. Even the dilapidated house of Abu-Ali has vanished and in its place there is now a brightly-painted three-storeyed mansion. In the absence of Ghosh several things have been changed. He feels that he, “was assaulted by a sudden sensation of dislocation as though (he) had vaulted between different epochs [In *An Antique*, 247]. Thus the fruits of immigrant labour have opened up a new world of consumerism and the once-familiar world of Latâifa and Nashawy has changed beyond recognition in less than a mere decade. While exploring this kind of progress in Latâifa and Nashawy, the author gives the reader an insight in to the paradigmatic situation which has been prevalent in all developing countries.

In the novel, Amitav Ghosh presents the life of post-colonial society and their greed for material possessions in the globalization period. Nabeel and Ismail are friends as well as cousins. The narrator meets them in Nashawy. Ghosh Notices that these men have a burning passion to become officers in the village co-operative, a post which is held in high-esteem in their small town of uneducated fellaheen community. Both are students at an agricultural training college in Damanhour. Out of these two boys, Nabeel is more passionate about achieving success in life. Since Nabeel is brought up in acute poverty, he decides to free his family from the clutches of poverty. Nabeel considers his father is responsible for his present position because his father earns only a small amount of money as being a watchman. Though his father has been allotted some land after the revolution of 1952, he decides that it is more respectable to be a *muwazzaf*, a ‘salaried employee’ than a *fellah*, sweating in the mud. Nabeel, who is a mixture of determination and good sense, has a desire to have a white collar, well-paying job in order to improve his family and also to stand equal among his rich relatives. This intention drives him away from his native place.

Both Nabeel and Ismail are allured by the prospects of fast money. They are carried away by the promises offered by the developed and economically powerful countries. Both of them leave their homeland and move to Iraq in search of better economic prospects. Ismail works as a construction labourer and Nabeel works as an assistant in the photographer’s store. Though their jobs are not highly respectable, they are able to earn a lot of money compared with what they might have earned in Egypt as officers in the co-operative.

The family members of Nabeel receive only the money that is sent by him. They do not know about the nature of work he is doing there. When Ghosh inquires with Fawzia, Nabeel's sister, about his life in Iraq, she says” in his tapes he always said he was doing well and th . [In *An Antique*, 267]

Conclusion

Ghosh describes the aspirations, defeats and disappointments of the dislocated people in India, Burma, China, Malaysia and America such as king Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, Saya John, Rajkumar, Dolly, Uma, Alison, Dinu, Neal, Arjun, Hardayal Krishan Singh, Jaya and Ilango. The novel, *The Glass Palace* is about many places, war and displacement, exile and rootlessness, depicting human helplessness. All that a human being can do is to try to adjust, compromise, live and about everything else that forms relationships. This forming of new bonds, mixing of races and castes is something that does not stop Ghosh's novels turn down boundaries created by man and look at them as mere shadow lines. He is an author with vision and his ideas are the driving force of his novels. His central theme in almost all his novels is similar to that of the famous Sanskrit saying, *Vasudhiaka Kutumbam*. This philosophical outlook mixed up with his wisdom tries to fill the gaps between artificiality and human evolution.

Similarly the novel, *In An Antique Land* explores the problem of identity i.e in the form of nation, religion, colour and creed. In the medieval period it was not a major problem. But now to cross the borders it is mandatory. Revealing the identity with culture and nation are two different aspects that are explored in the novel by the novelist.

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