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DOCUMENTATION OF HISTORY THROUGH STORYTELLING

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis analyzes Amitav Ghosh's emphasis on individual effort to change or widen one's own faculty of knowledge, imagination and contribution in documenting or at least keeping history of their own lives on the go providing creating a 'carnavalesque' atmosphere in through the dialogic nature of the novels. It shows the problem and status of history and possible solution in documenting history in postcolonial context. The paper points out the strong link between oral tradition and novel analyzing Amitav Ghosh's novels in the light of Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*. Bakhtin's theory of 'dialogism' is applied to culminate the state of new identity of Ghosh's setting up connection between storytelling and displacement. It highlights Ghosh's concern with the movements of the marginalized or in other word 'subaltern' who have been so far figured as an absence in histories of nations, such as lascars, 'girmitia', boatmen, housewives. Despite of being illiterate, many charm us with their visionary power and mighty storytelling techniques where we often find history mixed up with mystery. Overall the paper argues on how storytelling technique can be used as an effective tool in documentation of history which can be applied as the 'interventionist technique' proposed by Ranajit Guha and therefore stands as an act of postcolonial resistance as well.

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INTRODUCTION

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

...

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake" (*Gitanjali* 27-28).

In the situation of postcolonial cultures, the problem of history is not confined to the simple debate of either redeeming or annihilating the past rather it needs to address the acute problem that history is "defined by what is central, not by what is peripheral" and those belong to the periphery fail to contribute to the benefit of

international advancement become “people without history” in Eric Wolf’s words (Slemon 158). Professor Ranagit Guha and his colleagues have been designing a new “interventionist strategy” for including hegemonic consciousness and political agenda into history for almost two decades. They felt the need to bring into focus the large number of Indian peasants, factory worker, plantation laborer – the so called ‘subaltern’ group whose contribution in anticolonial, and antibourgeois political movement have always been suppressed in Indian historiography both by colonial historiographers and by Indian elite nationalists (Chakrabarti, 374). Amitav Ghosh, the Bengali Indian author, in his novels dissolves the concept of centrality of role and merges the distance between the marginalized and central by making it everyone’s stories. The fictitious and real life characters of his writing are central to the concern of the work; and it is their story which allows us to enter into the realm of the marginalized. By assigning the centrality to the marginalized characters, Ghosh also joins the league of postcolonial intelligentsia that deals with the dilemma of the ability of the subaltern to speak. He rather than becoming the representative, assumes the role of a narrator of a narrative which gives free space to the representations of the subaltern group by themselves. His works strongly confirm to the notion that the subaltern can speak but they are often unheard.

Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian literary critic argues that the novel is a specific speech genre which is constituted by various speech genres but those are not confined to the relation between the speaker and listener, who is always a speaker and always ready to reply rather those are determined by the time and place of utterance and, further, by the time in precise space- in which they are uttered which he calls ‘chronotope’ (Shevtsova, 750). He defines the novel as “a diversity of social speech types and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized (Bakhtin 262). Quoting the German proverb “When someone goes on a trip, he has something to tell”, Walter Benjamin stratifies storytellers into two groups, one who has ‘come from afar’, another who ‘knows the local tales and traditions’. The archaic representatives of these two groups can be ‘trading seaman’ and ‘resident tiller of the soil’. He says “the actual extension of the realm of storytelling in its full historical breadth is not inconceivable without the most intimate interpretation of these two archaic types” (Benjamin 12). He says, “in every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers” (Benjamin 14). Amitav Ghosh, born in 1956, raised and educated in different locations like Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Egypt, and United Kingdom, and now a resident of New York City. He knows five languages: Bengali, Hindi, French, Arabic, and English. This “transnational Journey” has influenced him a lot (Kooria 7). The characters of his novels rather than occupying discrete cultures, ‘dwell in travel’ like people meet each other in ‘transit lounge’ and often they show an interest in the celebration of culture. He strives to document the stories of the common man, through a mode of narration and language that fit the tongue of the common man. He has done it by adopting language as a tool and by utilizing it in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences and widely differing classes extending from housewives, refugees to researcher, teacher, lascars, girmitia, slaves, boatman, and tradesman, translator, entrepreneur, archeologist, musician, and many more. With the progress of the story, “the strands of space, memory, history and nation are woven into each other in a fine tapestry of overlapping family chronicles” (Butt 13).

### **Carnival of Storytelling**

Amitav Ghosh’s novels may appear to his readers as carnival of stories. As in carnival, everyone is an active participant and everyone performs in the carnival act, Ghosh’s characters actively take part in storytelling and thus live within and out of the story. “Carnival is not contemplated and, strictly speaking, not even performed; its participants *live* in it, they live by its laws as long as those laws are in effect; that is they live a carnivalistic life” (Storey 250). In a carnival socio-hierarchical inequality is suspended and it welcomes free and familiar contact among people. Ghosh’s novels turn the setting, consequence to that of a carnival where characters lose and discover themselves in a completely new horizon of their life where they fail to secure and guard their existing social rank and acquired polished self. ‘Bon Bibir Johuranama’ brought Nirmal, Kusum, Fokir, Piya, Kanai, under the same umbrella in *The Hungry Tide*. The ship, ‘Ibis’, brought many of the characters, Neel, Ah-Fat, Deeti, Kalua, Zachary, Paulette, Jodu, in the same canon in *The Sea of Poppies*. It becomes “fundamentally a space of dispersion, conjunction, distribution, contingency, heterogeneity, and of

intersecting and stratified lines and images- in short, a field of strategic possibilities in which the Oceanic order holds all together in a common but highly fluid space” (Boelhower 92-3) and the novel becomes a part of “transnational turn” in literary history. Stories move from one mouth to another in Ghosh’s novels, as the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* says:

I see it in the mouths of the ghosts that surround me in the cellar: of Snipe, telling it to Tridib, of Tridib telling it to Ila and me, in that underground room in Raibajar; I see myself, three years later, talking to May, the young May, to visit the house in Raibajar the day before she left for Dhaka with my grandmother and Tridib I see myself leading her into that underground room in that old house (185-186).

*In an Antique Land*, written as “history in the guise of a traveler’s tale”, is a novel where we can find Amitav as researcher, and the villagers of Nashaway and in their contact came up the practices of Middle East and India- their ritual, culture, religious practice, social norms, etc. The novel goes back to the Arab trade, Geniza document, the story of the slave Bomma, while keeping a track with the present very much which gives the novel totally a carnival inside. “Carnival is the place for working out in a concretely sensuous, half-real and half-play-acted form, a new mode of interrelationship between individuals, counterposed to the all-powerful socio-hierarchical relationships of noncarnival life” (Storey 251). *In an Antique Land* though did not take any concrete sensuous form but it collapses all the distinction of time, social status, and also geographical boundary. Eric D. Smith Finds “contradictions and internal conflicts of Ghosh’s agenda, that of recovering a postcolonial historical sensibility and mapping out a new nationalist paradigm within a modernizing world, reveal themselves and, on occasion, counterpose (or dialogize) the very logic of the project” (447) in *In An Antique Land*. There is a sense of transcending the time and space like the Spartan chant, we are what you were; we will be what you are. *In an Antique Land* is advanced through two narrations: primarily Amitav’s conversation with Nabeel and Ismail and secondarily Ghosh’s imaginative reconstruction of the lives of Ben Yiju and his slave in Nashaway. The plot of Ben Yiju had been discovered when Nabeel and Ismail left home to fulfill their dream of earning in Nashaway. This is what means to use imagination with precision. Ghosh to his alarm surprisingly found him more at ease in his mental travel at Middle East in medieval time when he felt there is an absence of authoritative gaze.

We can explain the situations and stories present in Ghosh’s novels as interlinked to history, culture, philosophy, and to different times. The term “dialogism” can be appropriately applied here which is usually used to express the quality of an instance of discourse that explicitly acknowledges that it is defined by its relationship to other instances, both past, to which it responds, and future, whose response it anticipates. It is a popular term both in literary theory and narratology used by Bakhtin. He says in “Discourse in the Novel”

“The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of the utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. Indeed, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it—it does not approach the object from the sidelines” (276–77).

### **History, Myth and Stories**

Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?  
Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,  
in that gray vault. The sea. The sea  
has locked them up. The sea is History.

— “The Sea is History,” Derek Walcott

In his every novel, Ghosh takes history as a backdrop but he seems to have dissatisfaction with the rhetoric of history. In one of his conversations with a historian Natalie Zemon, Ghosh says that he finds the rhetoric of history is very much at odds with practice. It fails to uphold the predicament of the individuals which he thinks is impossible to show without the help of characters. Fiction gives him a sense of liberty as it does not claim truth like history. His anthropological eyes made him a keen observer and he always emphasizes on direct observation rather than relying on received historical knowledge. Ghosh makes a point that there comes a point when you have to stop accepting received knowledge and start seeing. This is how one can inhabit a place (“Storytelling and Global Past”). Ranajit Guha’s “On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India” which announced a revisionist agenda for the Subaltern Studies Volumes on Indian history, accused the dominant historiography of India nationalism of leaving out ‘the subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people’. He defined ‘subaltern’ as ‘the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those we have defined as elite’ (Guha 44). Ghosh Strives to document the stories of the common man, through a mode of narration and language that fit the tongue of the common man. He has done it by adopting language as a tool and by utilizing it in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences and widely differing classes extending from housewives, refugees to researcher, teacher, lascars, girmitia, slaves, boatman, and tradesman, translator, entrepreneur, archeologist, musician, and many more. Sankaran says Ghosh’s works are distinct for his ‘consummate skill’ to tell stories and to interpret history using it as backdrop of his novels (xv).

Amitav Ghosh wrote *The Hungry Tide* in 2004, when the government of West Bengal assigned Sahara India for an ecotourism project based on large parts of the Sundarbans. The project planned construction of restaurants, hotels, business centres, theatre and other leisure centres and also boating expeditions through the water ways and other water sports without doing any in-depth survey. “The government announced that all movement in and out of Morichjhapi was banned under the provisions of the Forest Preservation Act. What was more, section 144” (*The Hungry Tide* 252.) Kusum utters in distress,

“the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was 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 reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world.” Every day, sitting here, with hunger 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? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? As I thought of these things it seemed to me that this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just human beings always have, from the water and the soil. No human being could think this a crime unless they have forgotten that this is how humans have always lived- by fishing, by clearing land and by planting the soil” (*The hungry Tide* 261-262).

Kusum’s predicament clearly upholds the vital fictional and factual conflict in *The Hungry Tide*. The outcry gives voice to the conflict between human and non-human species for existence focusing on the socio-environmental politics of the environmental conservation drive project undertaken by the state. The concept of displacement, conservation, encroachment taking place ‘in the midst of an unpredictable and hazardous setting as Sundarbans where the conflict takes place man and nature and man vs. man leaves the novel to a very credible and powerful position for the reader and also questions the ‘conservation’ policies (Selvamoni 156-171).

Nirmal told Kanai the history of the naming of Canning and how a mighty port turns into a Sunday post office and about the storm lover Mr. Piddington and his prophecy. “A place is what you make of it” (*The Hungry Tide* 283). “And then he told a story so unlikely I thought he made it up. But after I went back home, I

actually took the trouble to look into it and discover it was true.” (*The Hungry Tide* 283) He recalls Nirmal’s every word as story has long lasting effect in memory. Holding up a finger and pointing it to the heavens he quotes Nirmal, “All right then, comrades, listen: I’ll tell you about the Matla River and a storm-struck *matal* and the *matlami* of a Lord who was called Canning. *Shono kaan pete shono*. Put out your ears so you can listen properly” (*The Hungry Tide* 283). From Historian H.E.A. Cotton, we get the history of Port Canning, as “The year 1864...It witnessed also the speculative mania over an unlucky scheme for the reclamation of the Sunderbans, of which nothing remains but the deserted wharves of Port Canning, but which resulted in ruin to many” (Cotton 183). Another historical document regarding Port Canning, we find from Animesh “The idea of developing a major port at Canning faded with the chocking of the Matla river as a result of inadequate headwater supply” (124). Listening to Ghosh on a book-reading of *The Hungry Tide*, Rita Bhimani said he has brought Canning into the story:

Lord Canning wanted to build a port that would be an alternative to Kolkata and a rival to Singapore. What no one heeded were the warnings of a lowly shipping inspector Henry Piddington, who has lived in the Caribbean and knew all about hurricane and storms. He wanted mangroves to be left alone, as they were Bengal’s defensive barrier against nature’s fury and absorbed the initial onslaught of cyclonic winds, waves and tidal surges. They went on to build a grand Canning with a strand, hotels and homes, but in 187, the Matla river surged its fury on the new port town, reducing it to a “bleached skeleton”. (Sunderbans Shadow Lines)

Bon Bibir Karamoti or Bon Bibir Johuranama (The Miracles of Bon Bibi or the Narrative of Her Glory) is another story that has been mentioned repeatedly in *The Hungry Tides* as narrative, song, and as drama. The booklet was written by a Muslim author Abdur-Rahim. It was a Bangla folklore but pages opened to the right, as in Arabic. It looked like a prose but read like a verse. A complete example of syncretism can be seen here. It is the story about how Dukhy was left on shore of an island to be devoured by the tiger-demon Dokkhin and was rescued by Bon Bibi. Nirmal being surprised at the diversity of elements and languages of the booklet says

“the mudbanks of the tide country are shaped not only by rivers of silt, but also by rivers of language: Bengali, English, Arabic, Hindi, Arakanese and who knows what else? Flowing into each other they create a proliferation of small worlds that hang suspended in the flow. And so it dawned on me: the tide country’s faith is something like one of this great mohonas, a meeting not just of many rivers, but a circular roundabout people can use to pass in many directions from country to country and even between faiths and religion.” (*The Hungry Tide* 247)

This tale weaves Nirmal, Kusum, Kanai, Fakir, Pia in a single thread. Kanai watched the folk-tale with Kusum in the form of drama staged when they both were teenagers. Kusum though knows the story, starts crying everytime she listens the tale. Nirmal was surprised when he found Fakir who cannot read reciting the folklore. He actually has memorized the whole tale listening to Kusum. Pia who does not understand Bangla, listening to Fakir’s singing of the folklore, felt the intensity and feelings of the song. So she asked Kanai to translate it and his reply was “You asked me what Fakir was singing and I said I couldn’t translate it: it was too difficult. And that was no more than the truth, for in those words there was a history that is not just his own but also of this place, the tide country” (*The Hungry Tide* 354). Later on, he translates it and leaves the note “This is my gift to you, this story that is also a song, these words that are a part of Fakir. Such flaws as there are in my rendition of it I do not regret, for perhaps they will prevent me from fading from sight, as a good translator should. For once, I shall be glad if my imperfections render me visible” (*The Hungry Tide* 354).

Stories of migration has close link to the dream of nationalism. Kusum and Rajen staying in Dhanbad always dreamt of returning to tide country and could not settle in other place because “rivers ran in ‘their’ heads, the tides were in ‘their’ blood.” (*The Hungry Tide* 165) So, when she heard of a great ‘march to the east’ and found they are from Khulna district of Bangladesh, refugee of war, Kusum could not resist herself from joining the march towards Morichjhapi. She says,

“listened them talk and hope blossomed in my heart; these were my people, how could I stand apart? We shared the same tongue, we were joined in our bones; the dreams they had dreamt were no

different from my own. They too have hankered for our tide country mud; they too had longed to watch the tide rise to full flood." (*The Hungry Tide* 165).

Nationalism is also born of the notion of a common heritage of a people that stretches over a long past and shared ethnic and or religious root. They divided the Morichjhapi Island into wards. "They have set up their own government and taken a census-there were some thirty thousand people on the island already and there was space for many more. The island had been divided into five zones and each family of settlers had been given five acres of land." (*The Hungry Tide* 172) Like others it took little time to Kusum and other refugees in Morichjhapi to witness their hope getting shattered.

The narrator's Thamma in *The Shadow Lines* tells stories of war and blood that she has witnessed in her life. It is through her narrator gets to know people's attitude about nationalism and why people are ready to sacrifice their own lives. She believes in a united people fighting for freedom. Grandmother in *The Shadow Lines*, like Ursula in Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, lives throughout the novel and gives us account of many important historical details through her stories to the narrator. We can visualize her past and through her past, we can revisit history of her time. Grandmother narrates the stories of her past life at Dhaka to the narrator when was a student of History at Dhaka University. She is not interested to fables or fairy tales; rather she narrates the stories of war and freedom and of her past. Her view on nationalism profoundly came up in those stories. She upholds the belief in a united people fighting for freedom and autonomy and constituting a nation held together by blood. She thinks in the way Sandip, a radical nationalist in Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*, thinks and makes people believe that any action in the name of the nation is right, no matter how far it may be from truth or justice, "country's needs must be made into a god" (61). Tagore explains:

"The Nation, with all its paraphernalia of power and prosperity, its flags and pious hymns, its blasphemous prayers in the churches, and the literary mock thunders of its patriotic bragging, cannot hide the fact that the Nation is the greatest evil for the Nation, that all its precautions are against it, and any new birth of its fellow in the world is always followed in its mind by the dread of a new peril" (*Nationalism* 17-18).

When narrator tells Grandmother the treatment Ila has received in London from Nick Price, she says

"Ila has no right to live there,...She doesn't belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country, hundreds of years, years and years of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lies there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother's blood and father's blood and their son's blood. They know they are a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood. Hasn't Maya told you how regimental flags hang in all the cathedrals and how all their churches are lined with memorials to men died in wars, all around the world? War is their religion. That is what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is what *you* have to achieve for India, don't you see?" (*The Shadow Lines* 78)

Narrator grew up with this idea about nationalism

"I grew up believing in the truth of the precepts that were available to me: I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporal substance; I believed in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality" (*The Shadow Lines* 219).

But fifteen years after Tridib's death, narrator 'tried to learn the meaning of distance' (*The Shadow Lines* 232). He drew circles in the map and felt "within this circle there were only states and citizens; there were no people at all" (*The Shadow Lines* 233).

Grandmother always wanted to do something for the country. In her college, when she found 'the shy, quiet boy, with a wispy little beard boy' caught up by police for being 'a member of one of the secret terrorist societies since he was fourteen', she kept dreaming about the boy. The root of grandmother's fascination came from

the stories she had heard about the terrorists: about the heroism of Khudiram Bose and the sad death of bagha Jatin, hunted down on the banks of the Buribalam river, betrayed by treacherous villagers who had been bought with English money. Ever since she heard those stories, she had wanted to do something for the terrorists (*The Shadow Lines* 39).

This is how stories shape our unconscious. "And afterwards whenever she and Mayadebi were walking past the gali in which the boy had lived she would point it out and tell her the story" (*The Shadow Lines* 38).

In an interview with Lila Azam Zanganeh, Ghosh talks about past and present condition of Indian diaspora and we see its reflection in *The Shadow Lines* that begins with- "In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my father's aunt, Mayadebi, went to England with her husband and her son, Tridib" (*The Shadow Lines* 3). Being in the diaspora fascinates Ghosh and he thinks this has been the most important thing to him about being outside India. He came to realize that the most interesting thing about being Indian is that India is not in one place. He thinks this is in some very important way the pattern of the future.

What we see today in that nation-state is fading to be replaced by these enormous diasporic civilizations...When I started writing, if you were invited to Europe or America you went in to do a reading, and you would see maybe one Indian face in the audience, and it would be all Europeans. Now it's completely changed. I mean anywhere you do a reading, it's like 60 to 70% of your readers are diasporic people, are Indians! Twenty years ago—India was exporting. Now the diaspora is exporting to India. (Excavation)

William Darlymple says about the *Sea of Poppies*, "Like the Opium that forms its subject, the narrative becomes increasingly powerful and addictive as it takes hold" (Sankaran xiii). While scholars have largely focused on modern cosmopolitans and postmodern nomads in Ghosh's fiction, Ghosh is concerned with the movements of the marginalized who have figured as an absence in histories of nations or diasporas. One of the most conspicuous absences is that of lascars who, as the first to travel across the seas, can provide a glimpse into oceanic circulations. In his *Sea of Poppies*, which is set in the 19th century, lascars already enjoyed a dominant position in the nautical hierarchy as indicated by the position of the head of the lascars Serang Ali whose help is solicited by an American sailor Zachary Reid to become second-in-command on the ship. As Bose observes:

"In Ghosh's fiction, the diasporic entity continuously negotiates between two lands, separated by both time and space—history and geography—and attempts to redefine the present through the past. As the narrator in *The Shadow Lines* embarks upon a journey of discovery of roots and reasons, the more of the one he unearths leaves him with loss of the other. He is forced to conclude that knowing the causes and effects of that history which he had not fully apprehended as a child was not an end in itself. The metajourney this novel undertakes follows the narrator—as he weaves and winds his way through a succession of once-imagined homelands—into that third space where boundaries are blurred and cultures collide, creating at once a disabling confusion and an enabling complexity. No story—or history, for that matter—can be acceptable as the ultimate truth vary according to perspectives and locations" (239).

In an interview of *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh tells that he wanted to write a book about Indian families heading into the Indian dispersal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the 1830s was when it began, which was also the period of the opium wars. It's impossible to know for sure but he feels there has to be some casual connection between the facts that the main areas from which the early migration occurred basically the area where opium war was grown. The introduction of really large scale opium cultivation created enormous social disruption throughout those areas. We think of diversity and globalization as something new but in fact Ghosh does not think there's ever been anything as diverse as a ship's crew in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (2014). That is why the ship Ibis plays such important role in both *Sea of Poppies* and *River of Smoke*. It is an important vessel to connect colonial and postcolonial experiences.

### Conclusion

In an interview when he is asked about his interest in writing historical novels, Ghosh answers that he is not interested in academic history rather he is interested in characters, people, individual stories, and therefore, he uses history as a backdrop. He distinguishes the difference between writing a historical novel and writing history by saying:

History is like a river. But, within this river, there are also fish, and the fish can swim in many different directions. So, I am looking at it from the fish's point of view and which direction the fish swims in. So, history is the water in which it swims, and it is important for me to know the flow of the water. But in the end I am interested in the fish. The novelist's approach to the past through the eyes of the characters is substantially different from the approach of the historian. For me, seeing the past through the prism of a character allows me to understand some aspects of the past that historians don't deal with. But, I must admit that doing this would not be possible if historians had not laid the foundations (Kooria 9).

Ondaatje has remarked that 'fictionalized history' can be applied as the most effective tool to make sense of our past and to evaluate it as "the distancing achieved by storytelling helps readers and writers alike to reread history with a new and deeper awareness. Unconventional history challenges the methods of traditional history writing and seeks the truth in dimension of human experience" (*History and Theory* 43). Therefore, readers find it more interesting way to read and know the predicament of the individuals living at different time and different places in human history. By attributing the centrality to the marginalized characters, Ghosh joins the league of postcolonial intelligentsia that deals with the dilemma of the ability of the subaltern to speak. He rather than becoming the representative, assumes the role of a narrator of a narrative which gives free space to the representations of the subaltern group by themselves. His works strongly confirm to the notion that the subaltern can speak but they are often unheard. Using memory as the main device to create a bond among his characters, he has blurred the notion of national boundaries and has created a community of human.

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