Abstract

Politics of Subversion in Novels of Amitav Ghosh

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Amitav Ghosh’s fiction concentrates on the inquisition of the dominating systems of thought which do not take into account the silent and hidden genius. It demands a gradual change in the traditional system of hierarchies. Politics deals with the change in a system, an authority and a set of hierarchies. New forms of power and social struggle that are presented in the works of fiction hint at some political underpinning. The underpinning of Amitav Ghosh’s fiction is political which is set up in systems and it is in the layers of these systems that the nuances of politics have to be discovered. It is not merely a statement of a narrator, characters or the author that makes the work political. It runs throughout the entire novel. The traditional dichotomies seem to be discarded in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh that brings the element of subversion to the centre. His ‘politics of subversion’ generates dialectics.

As it is understood today, subversion is a convoluted postmodern literary device critically defined and examined by critics. There are many techniques of subversion which destruct the established and accepted traditional systems of knowledge and dominant ideology of society to bring an overall change. In fiction, subversion takes place at the level of surface, theme, characterization, setting, language and narrative techniques and even at the playfulness of novel structure.

This thesis focuses on Amitav Ghosh’s narrative strategies and characterization for subversion of traditional literary genres, thereby, procuring a privileged place for the marginalized, the unspoken and the homeless for establishing their articulative voice with an urge for co-operation and solidarity across innumerable discursive segregations. The primary purposes of this thesis are to discover different techniques of subversion used by Amitav Ghosh and explore the purpose of the novelist for making politics of subversion occur at various levels of narrative strategies, characterization, language and reference to
traditional models of oral narration and incorporation of mythic legends. This is done in
the hope that such an approach to narrative representation and characterisation based on
the Bakhtinian theories and deconstructive way of reading might bring a new perspective
of understanding the fiction of Amitav Ghosh which is teemed with many aspects
hitherto unexplored.

Chapter One introduces the rationale, assumptions, mode of exploration and the
framework of the study. An attempt has been made to define and justify the title of the
thesis and discuss its relevance in the present literary scenario. It explores in detail the
theoretical framework of Bakhtinian polyphony and Deconstruction. Chapter Two
describes and analyses the theoretical development of the study focusing on the technique
of the novelist to work for annihilating binaries in *The Circle of Reason*. Chapter Three
illustrates the pattern of subversive attributes of *The Calcutta Chromosome* by pleading
the case of the silent and mute group. Chapter Four exemplifies the working of
polyphony through the landscape setting and pattern of points of view in *The Hungry
Tide*. Chapter Five tries to explore the art of focalization employed by the novelist in *Sea
of Poppies*. Chapter Six summarises the observations made in the body of the text and
takes them to a conclusion.

The overall attempt of Amitav Ghosh is to subvert the perception of the world
conditioned by hegemonic structures, thereby privileging the silent and muted subjects of
such structures. There are numerous instances as explored in the earlier chapters of the
thesis about the endeavour of Amitav Ghosh establishing his marginalized characters- the
subalterns as the agents of social and political change. A very interesting thing about the
art of characterization in Amitav Ghosh’s fiction is that his characters are not god-like
creatures doing every time good deeds but are in constant dilemma with having basic
goodness valuing the essence of life.