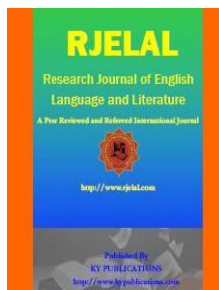




AMITAV GHOSH AND RECITALS OF ELISIONS: SCRUTINIZING GHOSH'S  
*THE GLASS PALACE*

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ABSTRACT

Amitav Ghosh is a doyen of subaltern and marginal upsurge which targets to break the glass ceiling of discrimination and exploitation on the basis of frivolous regressive mentality be it caste, class, gender and so on. Although the title of this paper is self-explanatory but its deciphering beacons to more thought provoking and brainstorming issues that Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* is pregnant with. Recital here stands for the incessant voicing of indigents who are never let on to speak. Basically elision is a deliberate omission of letter or syllable between two words because the presence of these words is deemed unnecessary or unsuitable for smooth pronunciation or rhyming. Unfortunately the same unruly and unfoundedly authoritative attitude runs in history narratives as well. History being a tool of oppression in the hands of some powerful people deliberately neglects the lives of have-nots. Ghosh in his *The Glass Palace* cedes voice to such subalterns to speak. The paper is an attempt to bring marginal affairs to the forefront as depicted in the novel taken for present study. Moreover the paper pinpoints that how discussion over the issue of subalternity or marginality begs questions on the differences embedded in this situation. To tantamount an individual's situation as universal may be an act of partiality. So, the understanding of an individual, his uniqueness must be taken into consideration. Amitav Ghosh is such a litterateur who does not believe in the universal veneering on discrete experiences. His handling of characters clearly indicates his motives as he has taken the characters from multiple class, race, gender and social hierarchy to serve this end of individual differences.

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Marginality, Discrimination, Oppression

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"Each slow turn of the world carries such disinherited, one to whom neither the past nor the future belong" (Ghosh THT165). Apparently speaking, the aforementioned lines uttered by a character Nirmal in *The Hungry Tide* by Ghosh, stands true for every age and place. Here Nirmal is not only talking about the illegal migrant and refugees in Morichjhapi rather he is giving voice to

every marginal or dispossessed having been forgotten in the annals of history. Putting simply, Ghosh is apparently concerned with those who don't have a voice in society, who are swept under the carpet by history, who are looked down upon by the powerful, and by time. The crux is that the novelist has keen interest in listening to the voice of

the anonymous individuals, the typical persons who are unrecorded in history.

The discussion over the issue of subalternity or marginality begs questions on the differences embedded in this situation. To tantamount an individual's situation as universal may be an act of partiality. So, the understanding of an individual, his uniqueness must be taken into consideration. Moreover, Amitav Ghosh is such a litterateur who does not believe in the universal veneering on discrete experiences. His handling of characters clearly indicates his motives as he has taken the characters from multiple class, race, gender and social hierarchy to serve this end of individual differences. As John Thieme puts it rightly, "The product of a humanist concerns to transcend culturally constructed difference ... (H)is concern with the recuperation and rendering of individual experiences operates against the kind of totalizing theory that habitually consigns subalternity to oblivion" (Thieme n.p).

By placing subalterns at the heart of his narratives purportedly Ghosh wants to show what he means by how the past is to be remembered. Past, for him, is not as an imperial chess game, but as biographies of otherwise unknown heroes and heroines who has the right to determine, whose lives count. Legends of the many are at the heart of the meanderings of human history but due to the tilted narratives most are never remembered to this day. Such historic neglect tells the arbitrary and partial nature of official version of history and perfunctorily shy off from, " how human beings really become whole: through the love of God or through the love of their fellow men and women"(Rushdie 395).

The theme of exile and cultural affiliation further accentuate the inevitable fragmentation and differentiation of the marginalized subject. This fragmentation has recently been reemphasized further by the questions of gender, sexuality, and male domination, which have been made imminent by the struggles of women and the voices of labour class and colonized sections. This perspective confronts a pluralistic position, which affirms marginalization as an open signifier and seeks to celebrate complex representations of a marginality

particularity that is internally divided: by class, sexuality, gender, age, ethnicity, economics, and political consciousness. With this worm eye view there can not be unitary idea of marginality, and any scope for authoritarian tendencies of those who would bank upon the cultural solidarity, in the name of their own particular history or priorities.

If one starts with the poser why Ghosh would be interested in this articulation of voiceless or marginalized one can guess it to be a matter of justice, of granting the large percentage of the human population that the marginal represent a deserved acknowledgement as an equal. Beyond this matter of justice there may be another reason which Ghosh is able to see accurately that the subaltern imagination opens up a different space for a new and emerging kind of coexistence between desire and the object of desire, a space for like never before camaraderie and solidarities. Moreover, Ghosh wants to emphasize that domination of marginals are alike the domination of black by the colonizer which is mainly psychological basis. The marginals are told that they do not have their own history and culture. They are illiterate, barbarians, lack wisdom, knowledge and power to move their life ahead. Gilroy delineates same kind of assumption when he says:

Twentieth century westerners who have outlived the faith of their fathers, the essence of life is no longer straightforwardly material. It has become essentially psychological: men may take power with arms, but their keeping of it is by other means. This view of the increasing importance of psychological aspects of domination, and of psychology and psychoanalysis as analytical political tools in the server of black (marginal's) liberation. ( Gilroy 170)

What Ghosh reminds one, clearly, is that there is ton that is played down and is never recorded or, if recorded, it is nonetheless ignored. In each of his narrative, he pounces upon suggesting alternate histories –by reinterpretation or re-emphasizing of things that actually happened but were not deemed significant enough for posterity's notice. Sometimes,

this means viewing history from below as recorded or lived by the suppressed or marginals.

In the last few decades novelists are engrossed with resurrecting the lost history in which the powerless, marginalized and subjugated express themselves and step up towards the centre. But the centre and the dream of the oppressed of finding a new brave world and a voice meet a silent death. The churning for change of down and outs of society, their struggle and sacrifices which went unnoticed in the annals of the history began to get a clarion voice in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh in a different way. History ceases to be the forte of those who hold power.

The debut novel of Ghosh entitled *The Circle of Reason* is replete with the characters taken up from the lower strata of society. Alu, Shambhu Debnath, Rakhal, Toru Debi, Rajan, Zindi, Kulfi, Karthamma, Jeevanbhai Patel, Haji Fahmy, Zaghoul all these characters belong to the marginal group. They all are involved in the work that is not looked upon with respect in the society. Amitav Ghosh had occupied himself relentlessly in the task of pulling the marginalized and exploited human beings back in the heart of the narrative, and saving them from getting vanished in the metanarrative of the nation. About Ghosh's second novel *The Shadow Lines*, Suvir Kaul succinctly voices the marginal's concerns iterated by Ghosh as Tiwari opines, "For *The Shadow Lines* in an archaeology of modern silences, a slow brushing away of some of the cobwebs of modern Indian memory, a repeated return to those absences and fissures that mark the sites of personal and national trauma" (Tiwari 126).

*The Hungry Tide* again is a representation of those dispossessed hungry people who are suppressed by both nature and human being. As nature having the highest tolerance power can burst curse uncontrollably, it can be said true about suppressed class. They keep silence till their patience works, but when they outburst, they would behave like hungry tide engulfing everything that comes in the way of their emancipation like the frightening face of nature.

An another feather in Ghosh's cap *Sea of Poppies*—though conceived almost on epic scale, is neither an epic nor a grand national saga. It can

apparently be called the art of the marginal or peripheral, celebrating the voices which get lost, remain unheard, unsung. In Ghosh's narratives, "silence", "gaps", "peripheral/marginal" speak and play a vital role in history making and *Sea of Poppies* is cornucopia of such voices. *Sea of Poppies* deals with different types of resistance by marginal against those who occupy center position. As implies in the interest of Ghosh, these characters become the voice through which marginal issues are streamlined. By doing so Ghosh confers agency to the powerless.

In his *The Imam and the Indian* Ghosh reiterates his diligence to the cause of marginal, by resurfacing the stories that otherwise slip from human consciousness and from recorded history for him, "It is when we think of the world the aesthetic of indifference might bring into being that we recognize the urgency of remembering the stories we have not written," (Ghosh *Imam and Indian* 62). In *An Antique Land* also Ghosh's concern for the marginal section of society has been observed by Alok Kumar and Madhusudan Prasad:

And history it is in a way—a history of the microstructures of tradition or the history of little tradition as opposed to the Great Tradition, concept first used by Robert Redfield. The little tradition comprises the study of the folk of unlettered peasants as opposed to that of the elite, and *In an Antique Land* is the history of "fella", the common peasant of Egypt. It is properly speaking "subaltern" history. (184)

In almost all his novels, "Ghosh has looked back at the annals of history from the perspective of the subaltern who has either been silent or virtually non-existent" (Hawlay 6). The voiceless subalterns, in these novels to whom Ghosh lends voice and even personality, are Deeti, Kalua, Munia, Paulette in *Sea of Poppies* and Fokir, Moyna, Kusum in *The Hungry Tide* and so on. It is just like uncovering their existence, as Ranajit Guha says in the first volume of *Subaltern Studies* :

Parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant

groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the subaltern classes.... This was an autonomous domain ...far from being destroyed or rendered virtually ineffective... it continues to operate vigorously adjusting itself to the conditions prevailing under the Raj. ( Guha 4)

Ghosh's texts bring to fore margins/ subalterns as active agents in shaping and reshaping their world and give them a voice. Pankaj Mishra describes Amitav Ghosh in the *New York Times*, as one of the few postcolonial writers, "who have expressed in his work a developing awareness of the aspirations, defeats and disappointments of colonized people as they figure out their place in the world"( N.p). In his interview with John C Hawley Ghosh admits that while writing *The Glass Palace*, he has in his mind the cause for the subaltern. He tells why the question of discrimination over race, caste class gender run through his narratives vein, he says:

I think I share some of the concerns of the Subaltern Studies group because I am from the same milieu as many of the group's members . But it is true also that anyone who looks into Indian history must necessarily be amazed by how little is actually known about it. And I don't just mean the history of 'subaltern' groups, but even of dissenting elites (for example the story of the founders of the Indian National Army is unknown to most Indian). As far the history of the Indian presence in Burma, it is completely unknown –there is very little written about it. In this sense I felt I was bearing a double burden when I was writing *The Glass Palace*. When an American writes a historical novel he or she can generally rely on the historian to have done the research. I didn't have this luxury available to me. I had to do much of the primary research while also telling a story (Howley 12)

*The Glass Palace* ponders the effect of history on individual lives, take special care to focus central attention on minor characters from multiple, race, caste, class, gender, age along with different

sociopolitical and economical background. It challenges, the notion of boundaries and imperial definition. This novel traces the life of Rajkumar, an orphan boy of Indian origin. He is roped in as a slave crew member transported illegally from India to Burma who after lots of struggle became a rich teak merchant. The novel throws light on women's active participation in freedom struggle through the character of Uma.

It addresses the issue of various political turmoil which drastically changed and affected lives of innumerable victims of these upheavals as Dolly, King Thebaw and his family are from the group who had to bear the burnt of British invasion on Burma. Arjun and the other Indians serving as soldiers in British army witnessed the mayhem of World War II along with racial discrimination in day today's dealings. Britishers have played significant role in all of Ghosh's novels either directly or indirectly. Shubha Tiwari has rightly said, " Colonization, recolonization, neocolonization and decolonization are recurring thoughts in Ghosh's works. Ghosh compulsively turns to this perspective" ( Tiwari 3). *The Glass Palace* is laced with political overtones, revealing the hypocritical and dangerous mindset of the then Englishmen, who compelled the natives to the level of subaltern in their own land. But Ghosh get back at them by thrashing them only to the background. The most notable aspect of the novel is what Bhattachajee finds out:

There is not a single episode in the entire book directly representing the British. They are in the background all right, but they are not brought into the story as characters. Ghosh has treated them almost in the same way 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century, British writers used the colonized countries –as backgrounds or as references that may affect the life style or the story line, but do not have direct association with the characters. It is actually a short history of a nation seen through the eyes of subaltern. (Bhattacharjee 18)

The present study airs the same views regarding Ghosh's treatment of Britishers in this novel. All Ghosh is doing might be said with justice, is flipping a picture dominated by British accounts. History in

this case is having been written mainly by the departing losers. In this novel one comes to know about the lives of servants, governesses of queen and princesses after the downfall of the royal couple i.e. king Thebaw and queen Supalayay. It also throws light on Indian settlement in Burma, which is almost negligible in Indian literature. Somehow it has been overlooked by the historian but Ghosh's eagle eye has penetrated through the dust of time and place to serve the cause of subaltern.

Apart from this Ghosh wants to publicise the history of Indian fleeing Burma in fear of invasion. It is not a recorded portion of history but Ghosh wants it to make the people know about this surprising incident. Regarding the long March, when Indian fled from Burma, Ghosh told a reporter in his interview with *Outlook*, " ...It's not been written about at all... it's strange –there were over half a million people on the long March over 400000 of them Indian, and there is such a silence about it...(n.p). In the novel:

The king raised his glasses to his eyes and spotted several Indian faces along the waterfront. What vast, what incomprehensible power, to move people in such number from one place to another –emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen, Why? Why this furious movement –people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws to sit behind in exile. ( Ghosh TGP 44)

In his destitution Thebaw, the king of Burma deliberates upon her fate and many of exiles and dislocations experienced by the people's history due to various political and historical forces. This is the scene where Britishers are transporting more and more Indians in Rangoon than the Burmese. The king has been sent to India for exile. So this counter migration raises the question in king's mind. Burmese royal family, after the exile, lives an uncomfortable life in India. The condition makes him to ponder over forces and nature of British Empire that was changing fates of thousands of people across the country.

The people were being suppressed by the British colonizer at the name of purity of their race. But no race is pure race. Although being mimic men

of British system Beni Parsad Day also recognizes it very well, "The smell of miscegenation has alarmed (the British) as nothing else could have: they are tolerant in many things, but not this. They like to keep their races tidily separate. The prospect of dealing with a half-caste bastard has set them rampaging among their desks," (149).

The racial concerns are put forward by the writer emanates through the dealing of Rajkumar by his British counterparts. The gulf between the white colonizer and the colonized population is maintained throughout the text. For instance, even after Rajkumar's success as a teak baron, there is hardly any meaningful or sustained dialogue between him and any white person, male or female. The discrimination on the basis of races in the plantation thus serve as a metonym of the racial hierarchies that underpinned British colonial rule, especially at the frontiers, poor tribal belts of the Indian hinterland or the fallen races such as the Tamils. They were often forced or roped into signing up for the plantations by immoral selfish local agents like Rajkumar and Baburao. Many of them succumb to the atrocities of sea passage from Calcutta to the locations of the plantations. Their value as mere objects is accentuated by the following comment of Baburao who, upon reaching the Rangoon docks, calculates the relative loss of his human merchandise thus, "Two out of thirty-eight is not bad...On occasion I've lost as many as six" (109).

The height of racial arrogance of Britisher can be witnessed in their treatment of coolies because at the extreme bottom of this racial pyramid of the plantation economy was the coolies. These coolies were recruited from the lower castes. They were incessantly subject to racist disapprobation from their white and Eurasian overseers fall under this debate. For instance, Mr. Trimble, the Eurasian manager of a rubber plantation in Malaya, after beating up his unruly coolies, berates them by saying, "You dog of a coolie, keep your black face up and look at me when I'm talking to you" (200).

Giving it a gender colour, coolie women especially were recipient to the relentless threat of physical and sexual violation and coercion, both by the European master and the native and Eurasian overseers. They are multiply marginalized in the

scheme of the things. The story of Ilongo—Rajkumar's unacknowledged son with a coolie woman on the plantation light up this aspect in the text. Uma retorts:

How dare you speak to me like that? You—an *animal*, with your greed, your determination to take whatever you can—at whatever cost. Do you think nobody knows about the things you have done to people in your power—to women and children who could not defend themselves? You are no better than a slave and a rapist, Rajkumar. (Ghosh TGP 214)

One must not forget on prima facie Rajkumar hails from the marginal section of society who is destitute, deserted, and forcibly displaced as an illegal migrant. But later on he turns out to be the one who got the chance of basking in the silver lining of British invasion on Burma particularly due to the flourishing of teak and rubber plantation. Two noticeable aspects stand out in the representation of Rajkumar's character from the outset. The first is his applaudable sense of resolution to meet his needs. He knew, "with utter certainty" that wealth and rewards would "one day be his" (12). This sense of self confidence teamed up with his pragmatic, worldly view of things makes him, in Saya John's eyes, "...a *reinvented* being, formidably imposing and of commanding presence" (113, italics mine). This audacity to reinvent himself and seek voice to register his demands eventually ties in with a larger, historical theme that Ghosh explores. Even on this arduous trek, he faces the unscrupulous and caustic barrier of race. One of the most heart rending features of the "forgotten long trek" of 1943 was the institution of white and black routes. White could sneak away to India through the shorter and safer routes, while Indians and Burmese were forced to hoof through the dangerous routes of the forests in Nagaland and Assam. An estimated 60,000 people died on this arduous trek. Manju's disdainful statements to Rajkumar during this trek to India is an indictment of the tragic predicaments of colonized subjects like Rajkumar whose lifeworlds had collapsed absolutely with the failure of the colonial system, "Look at you: you've gone on—and on and on and on. And what has that brought you?" (407)

Ghosh's choice of fiction, as the mode for his depiction of the subaltern life has come under scrutiny he expresses his love of fiction as a genre:

Another great hero of mine is Balzac and again you have exactly the same kind of engagement with the working class, the prostitutes and similarity with the capitalists, the artists, the sculpture, you see this is exactly what I love about the novel. It allows you that range, those different forms of exploration. (The Hindu n.p)

Ghosh's meticulous concerns regarding multiplicity of subordination can be easily approached when one takes up gender concept which is of paramount importance and nucleus to any intellectual debate on this earth as Gilroy accentuates, "In our struggle for freedom, against great odds, we cannot afford to ignore one half our manpower that is the force of women and their active collaboration.... men will not be free until their women are free," (Gilroy 176)

It is interesting to analyze Amitav Ghosh's approach to woman's history in his attempt at the re-examination of subaltern history. Ghosh gives her female characters a platform to voice and exhibit their views and priorities:

A goal of historian has been to tell an objective truth as it might be seen by an objective or unbiased, observer. But... even the historians who struggled hardest to write the objective truth about history, usually left out the perspective of women: women who played an active role in the public events were forgotten quickly (Lewis qtd on net np)

Ghosh is responsive towards views, opinions and contributions of women character, who are not only great historical figure but particularly ordinary marginal class women also. His female characters are no longer helpless passive victim of the forces of patriarchy and history but an active participant, an agent and sometimes even a contributor to the historical events. By assigning the centrality to the marginalized characters, Ghosh answers the dilemma of the postcolonial intelligentsia regarding the ability of the subaltern speak. He does not become the representative—he assumes the role of



narration of a narrative, which allow the representations of the subaltern group by the same group. His works strongly confirm to the notion that subaltern can speak if given a proper chance and with an appropriate enjoyment of the discourse.

His novels endorse the intelligence, courage, resilience, and independence of poorly educated Dolly and culturally rooted Uma who resist patriarchal demands to become subservient in a male dominated society. Ghosh does his part in reclaiming feminine might by giving his heroines the courage to make their own choice even at the cost of upsetting the patriarchal society and imperials inspite of the power they inhabit.

In *The Glass Palace* the three generations of women are represented more, "greedy with wants and reckless with hope," ( Mukherjee 240) than their male counterparts. The first generation women are Ma Cho, Dolly and Uma Dey. These woman show progress in both the family and the society. In the series one first have Ma Cho, the lonely woman, struggling with her lot, who runs a food stall and offers job to many stray Indian boys like Rajkumar when in need of job from time to time. Ma Cho is the representative of such woman who has the strength of leading her life alone without the family and any male to depend upon. Ma Cho lives alone. She is half Indian but looks more Burmese than Indian. She had an independent life putting away the entire rumor about her stubbornness and rigidity. Her stall, "consisted of a couple of benches... did her cooking sitting by an open fire, perched on small stool" (6).

Like most of Ghosh's characters in the novel Ma Cho is the women who is fighting and doing her bit of struggle for her existence. Ma Cho has physical relationship with Saya John a Christian, who is continuing the same but also has the guilt of doing this with a non-Christian woman. Ma Cho knew it well. That is why her self-respect stops her to marry him. When Rajkumar, an orphan, who works on her stall asks her why does she not marry him she replies, " You don't understand, you thick-headed Kalaa. He's a Christian. Every time he comes to visit me, he has to go to his church next morning to pray and ask forgiveness. Do you think I would want to marry a man like that?" ( Ghosh GP 10)

One more important female central character in the novel is Dolly. She is the only character whose generation dominates the story from front page till the end of novel. She gets entry in novel in the childhood. She is nine –when Rajkumar first sees her and falls in love with her. After Uma's emotional support she marries Rajkumar and gives birth to Neel and Dinu. She proves to be caring mother and good wife. She is more sensitive and visionary than Rajkumar.

In the first glance at outran house Uma finds, "there was something unusual about her (Dolly)" (Ghosh 108). Gradually she becomes very good friend of her and shows her worries about Dolly's future life and tries to persuade her husband for arranging marriage for Dolly. But the Collector's reply is very heart rendering about the marginal position of Dolly, "But hers is an even stranger circumstances she's spent her whole life in the company of the four princesses. But she's also a dependant, servant, of unknown family and origin. How would you set about finding a husband for her? Where would you start: here or in Burma?" (115).

Uma, wife of collector Mr. Beni Prasad Dey is introduced by Ghosh when collector, "arrived in Ratnagiri accompanied by his wife, Uma, who was some fifteen year his junior, a tall vigorous-looking woman, with thick, curly hair"(Ghosh TGP 104). So, Uma is introduced in the novel after the sway of hundred pages but her personality is so impressive that the reader never felt that she is a new entry. Even queen Supalayath who used to hate the every collector and his family till how seems impressed by Uma's personality than the collector. In order to meet Uma again she invites the collector with the hope, "I hope he'll bring his wife when he comes to call. It'll be interesting to how this kind of saree is worn," (105).

Uma is not happy with this life of pomp and show in her husband's house. She always wanted to be an ordinary wife with family. But she is performing this hypocritical role only for the sake of her fifteen years elder husband, in Ratnagiri, " it was she who was the outsider, the memsahib: to her, for once, fell the silences of exile"(116).

So, her most pious relationship of marriage is based on the Collector's hope for using Uma the

way he expects from her wife. Although Uma played this role of wife-cum-host very honestly yet it never satisfied her conscience. She understands very well the hollowness of collectors mimic world. After the suicide of collector, she gets the chance to live according to her will. And she proves to be a real successful revolutionary in her later life. Uma is a break from traditional women character. She is a political activist who travels around the country to dissipate the patriotic spirits. It is in the friendship of Dolly, she starts to realize her full instinct. She admits in front of Dolly, "Dolly, will you believe me if I tell you that I love you like I have never loved anyone before? I was just a girl before I met you. You've shown me what courage is, what human beings can endure. I can't bear to think of being without you" (163). This hollowness of Uma's relationship with her husband engages Uma to fill this gap in relationship with Dolly. Although she knows Dolly will have to leave, to start her life afresh. But Dolly's behavior gave her courage to move forward in life. She joined Mahatma Gandhi's movement for freedom and offered her service through a letter to him.

Another female character who impresses the reader is Queen Supayalat, the ruthless but courageous lady whom one finds standing erect even in her defeat. Queen Supayalat in the due course of novel, is a willful woman of adamant determination and strong disposition who can go at any length to ensure safety and well being of her husband and family:

She ordered the killing of every member of the Royal Family who might ever be considered a threat to her husband. Seventy-nine princes were slaughtered on her orders, some of them new-born infants, and some too old to walk. To prevent the the spillage of royal blood she had had them wrapped in carpets and bludgeoned to death. ( Ghosh TGP 38-39)

The war too was largely of Supayalat's making. It was she who challenged Kinwun Mingyi, for his peace appeals and said that: "Why grandfather. It is you who should wear a skirt and own a stone for grinding face powder" ( Ghosh TGP 39)

Free will is deemed to be the first step of the assertion of one freedom and identity. The self-respect of a person is an essence of her identity giving the assumption that who am I and this freedom and self-respect is demamed by all the marginal characters of Ghosh even in the midst of horrible and traumatic situations. Ghosh advocates the need to identify the contribution made by women seeking a balance of woman against man. Conscious of their apprehension, their plight and their keenness to make themselves heard, he provides them a platform to make their voices heard. His women characters may not come through as the protagonists of his all novels but they do play roles that are crucial. They cannot be suppressed nor be ignored. In these terms, Ghosh both speaks of and speaks up for the marginal in all of his novels. The contemporary narratives need to beckon more reports that carry the burden of the impartial history in all its urgency-more subaltern voices, perhaps, and more direct literary engagement in pressing social issues all around the world as the world is still grappling with the denial of voices of subalterns.

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