

ABSTRACTS
OF
PAPERS PRESENTED
IN
TWO DAY NATIONAL SEMINAR
ON
AMITAV GHOSH : A WRITER EXTRA-ORDINARY

25th & 26th March 2011



Sponsored by
UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

Organised By
Department of English
TARAKESWAR DEGREE COLLEGE
Tarakeswar, Hooghly, W.B., PIN-712410

In Collaboration with
Department of English
RABINDRA MAHAVIDYALAYA
Champadanga, Hooghly

**Beyond the Subaltern Syndrome:
Amitav Ghosh and the Crisis of the *Bhadrasamaj***

The paper begins by asking what help we might derive from Amitav Ghosh's own fiction and non-fiction in understanding his vast and complex body of works. The tentative answer is that the works enjoin upon us an attitude of passionate engagement towards the texts, as Kanai felt for deciphering meaning in other languages or Piya for dolphins while scanning the waves in *The Hungry Tide*. The texts, as eroticized objects of desire, generously offer multiple points of entry into them. In addition, they also provide a method to read them, which is to look for clues, traces, and scraps of evidence from which we, the reader-critics, might try to construct a coherent narrative. The non-fictional texts, to compliment these clues, record an epistemic disorientation that is engendered by the breakdown of grand narratives of nations and the eruption of civic violence; what the writer is left with is the compulsion to tell stories of lost worlds or forgotten people. It is the story alone, piecing together fragments of information, that the writer can offer to shore up against the ruins of our times.

Starting with these resources, the paper next tries, in a somewhat more conventional manner, to locate Ghosh in the dynamic of cosmopolitan Indian writing as well as in the more specific literary-cultural tradition of the Bangla *bhadralok*. On the horizontal axis in such a grid, Ghosh is situated between V. S. Naipaul, whose influence he readily acknowledges, and Salman Rushdie, whose postmodern fictional techniques are amply evident in works such as *The Circle of Reason*. But it is the vertical axis, in which a direct line of descent may be traced from Rabindranath Tagore, whose famous story "Kshudit Pashaan" Ghosh has re-translated, and Satyajit Ray to whom he pays moving homage, to Ghosh himself that is perhaps more significant. This brings us to the heart of the paper which is about the

crisis of the *bhadrasamaj* or the middleclass makers of both the nation and civil society in India. This crisis is first identified as a combination of private and the public failures in a text such as Tagore's *Nashtonir*, filmed so eloquently as *Charulata* by Ray. A similar crisis in the private and public domain is then shown in Ray's *Ganashatru* and *Agantuk*, his last and admittedly minor movies, but still valuable for the manner in which his central concerns are revisited and staged. Versions of such a crisis are now shown in Ghosh's works including *The Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, and *The Hungry Tide*. However, the paper argues that instead of confronting the crises head on as his predecessors did, let alone providing alternatives or resolutions, Ghosh evades the issue, either by not allowing it to develop fully or escaping into coincidence, "doubling," or romanticism. Is the recuperation of lost pasts or subaltern histories a sufficient antidote to the crisis of the *bhadrasamaj* and by extension of the individual and collective, whether conceived of as an individual relating to his or her society or a nation? Does the retreat from such crises into either narratives of exodus, however hopeful, or romanticized celebrations of a failed experiment such as the "Dalit nation" at Morichjhapi signify a shift in both the self-confidence and the priorities of the *bhadrasamaj*, whose product and representative Ghosh continues to be? Is this a mutation of the *bhadrasamaj* "chromosome," to use Ghosh's own metaphor, vacating its traditional role and responsibility, seeking instead a personal solace or solution, often in the act of emigration? The paper, having posed such a question, Ghosh-like, does not consider it entirely necessary to provide any definitive answers.

Professor Makarand Paranjape
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
e-mail : makarandrparanjape@gmail.com

Cosmopolitans of a Borderless Space

Defining locals as those who remain at home and cosmopolitans as those who move, Ulf Hannerz points out that those who move physically are not necessarily cosmopolitans because they might not travel psychologically at all. In contrast to the narratives of cosmopolitanism that have emerged recently in the wake of the new global process and focus largely on elite cosmopolitans, the movements of ordinary people beginning several centuries ago predate the history of cosmopolitanism. Amitav Ghosh's writings, both fiction and non-fiction, have uncovered in the histories of nations more instances of contact rather than insulation that interrogate essentialist notions of self and community. They have also engaged with movements within and without of ordinary people who moved voluntarily or were forced to move due to indenturement, trade and ethnic violence before and after the partition of the Indian subcontinent.

This presentation focuses on the movements of ordinary folks in Ghosh's works due to a number of reasons that equips them with an 'orientation towards the other'. It argues that his engagement with these movements pre-empts the discourse on cosmopolitanism and shows that in contrast to the contemporary cosmopolitan narratives that privilege the movements of the new professional, intellectual or artistic elite, Ghosh recovers the buried narratives of what may be called subaltern cosmopolitans even though they might have been triggered by movements from above.

Anjali Gera Roy

Humanities Department

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur

e-mail : anjali@hss.iitkgp.ernet.in

The Water Narrative in Amitav Ghosh

In his latest phase, particularly in *The Hungry Tide* and the *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh carries his narrative of colonialism to a mythical plane, with water as the historical *element* in colonial transactions assuming a healing, regenerative force, with its destructive power intact; in its violence, compelling people to rise above their prejudices and disconnections, and discover their capacity to struggle for survival.

Samik Bandyopadhyay

Eminent scholar and critic

e-mail : samikbandyopadhyay.1940@gmail.com

Amitav Ghosh qua Storie-Historian: Some Thoughts on the 'Post-' and the 'Non-'

The paper is divided into two parts. In the first part I intend to explore how Ghosh intends to look at history in his novels, particularly the way in which he undercuts the narratives of both nationalist and post-nationalist historiography. Here I use his long electronic discussion with Dipesh Chakrabarti as a pivot. I look at how in this discussion based on Ghosh's reading of Chakrabarti's book *Provincializing Europe*, Ghosh continuously brings up the issue of the writing of marginal micro-histories and sometimes uses his development of family narratives in some of his novels as examples to question the radical post-foundationalism in Chakrabarti's treatment of history. In this context I also look at the way Ghosh questions the conspicuous absence of a critique of 'race', and the privileging of discussions on 'civilization' in the kind of history that Chakrabarti is writing. My intention, in this part, is to look at whether Ghosh himself has also fallen into aporetic traps of absences in his novels.

In the second, shorter part I deal with how parts of Ghosh's novel, *The Hungry Tide*, both use and subvert Homi Bhabha's idea of mimicry. This is shown through the interactions of Kanai, Fokir and Pia, and how they unconsciously become part of a postcolonial game of power through their inability to communicate with each other at different moments in the novel. At times this lack or inability also becomes a refusal, whereby they become players in a politics of the 'non-', creating newer narratives of micro-histories that are created and destroyed at the differential moment of conception.

In conclusion, I see Ghosh as a storie-historian incessantly bringing historiography to crisis, through consistent and uneasy explorations of micro-histories, and seeking their validation beyond disciplinary boundaries, and within post-foundational theoretical paradigms. He asks many questions through his novels and leaves them for the historians to answer.

Sumit Chakrabarti

Rabindra Bharati University

email : sumit.chakravorty@gmail.com

"Live my prince; hold on to your life": Issues of transnational life and identity in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*

In his novels, Amitav Ghosh has engaged himself incessantly in the task of putting the marginalised/otherised individual back in the centre of the narrative, and saving him from getting lost in the hegemonic narrative of the nation. Particularly concerned with the South Asian diaspora in the different regions of the world, his novels are attempted narrations of anti-Hegelian history of the world, incorporating the hitherto left-out narratives of the common individual – the predicament of individual against the historical backdrop, his attempt to resist the hegemony of the nation through his own story and search for his own identity. It is in this connection that the familial space, with all its complexities, assumes a crucial position in all his narratives. By creating innumerable families transnationally, Ghosh's characters are able to resist the onslaught of the nation on the one hand, and combat the angst of the diaspora on the other. My paper aims to look at Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* from this angle.

Prof. Sajal Kumar Bhattacharya

Associate Professor

Narendrapur R.K. Mission Residential College

Also Guest Lecturer, BU

e-mail : bhsajal@gmail.com

Sea of Poppies and the Narrative of Exclusion

From the construct of Imperialism/Colonialism to that of Nationalism, there are many myths that are associated with history of the mid-nineteenth century – among which stands large the question of the concept of ‘India’ itself. The idea and the construction of nation is a paradigm that was required for the notion of independence to take root, but recent post-historicist ideas have questioned these very schemes that have governed these discourses. One of the major challenges has come from the area of subaltern studies. Without truly engaging in the defined – perhaps not very clearly – discourse of the *subalternity* in academia, this paper proposes to look at the narrative of exclusion that Amitav Ghosh presents in *Sea of Poppies*. Taking a particular time frame that focuses on the prepolitical days of the populace, Ghosh shows how there were many Indians who were either coerced into an *other* kind of identity, or voluntarily accepted exclusion. What is most interesting is that the point that Imperialism or coloniality is not the factor that is always significant in this exclusion-oriented movement; but Tradition that is a constituent of nation-building. Therefore in the narrative of migration, something Ghosh has been dealing with constantly, we see many preconceptions crumbling, and another reality emerging. This paper aims at locating certain elements in this fabric and consider how Ghosh succeeds where traditional history fails.

Prof. Siddhartha Biswas

Assistant Professor & H.O.D., English Department
St. Paul’s Cathedral College
and Guest Lecturer, CU
e-mail : sidhubaba@gmail.com

We-ing and They-ing: Relation between Othering and Violence in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Imam and the Indian*

Othering— colonial, political, racial, national, sexual and so on— dominates our patterns of thought. Through a reading of some of the essays in Amitav Ghosh’s non-fictional work *The Imam and the Indian*, the present article traces the source of the instinct of othering and violence to the fear of indeterminacy. Locating the impulse for othering within our logocentric tradition of thought, the authors propose to find an antidote to violence in the postmodernist spirit of ‘playfulness’.

**Sisir Kumar Chatterjee,
Abhijit Gupta**

Chandannagar Govt. College
e-mail : sisirkumarchatterjee@gmail.com

Amitav’s Shadow Lines

Though Amitav Ghosh tries to capture the voices of the subalterns which were dropped out of the official historiography and in the process rewrites the colonial and nationalist history, he is undermining the voices of women who were equally marginalised and in doing so he is endorsing the official perspective about history which he professes to subvert in *The Shadow Lines*.

Biswajit Mukherjee
Part-Time Lecturer

Hooghly Mohsin College
e-mail : biswajit.mukherjee007@gmail.com

“Woman as the nationalist’s construct: Tha’mma in *The Shadow Lines*”

In his novels, Amitav Ghosh explores the ideas of nationhood and diaspora, ideas that involve relationships between individuals belonging to the same or to different communities that sometimes transgress and transcend the shadow lines of political borders. *The Shadow Lines* probably represents Ghosh’s most direct confrontation with nationalism and national identity and it is simultaneously about each character’s personal identity. This paper is an attempt to show how the narrator’s grandmother, Tha’mma, is portrayed as an embodiment of the nationalist dream.

Tha’mma rules both at home and at her workplace, a fact that is made possible by her formal education. Partha Chatterjee says that, in nineteenth century Bengal the “women’s question” was a central issue in nationalist thought and formal education became acceptable, and a requirement for the new *bhadramahila*. Bengali women were taught to believe that to achieve it was to achieve freedom. Tha’mma fits into this construct which was undeniably a product of this dominant middle-class ideology that took birth in the era of nationalism. Interestingly, education made it possible for her to go out into the world but under conditions that would not threaten her feminine self.

Tha’mma shows traits of a “militant nationalism”. Tha’mma, brought up on stories of revolutionaries, tells her grandson that she had wanted to do something for them. It is significant that she declares that she would have killed for the benefit of the nation if she were given a chance to do so.

Born in Dhaka, now a separate nation and no longer a part of India, Tha’mma fails to understand “how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality.”

Ghosh brilliantly uses the house metaphor, in order to show the moral horror associated in the mind of each refugee regarding the division of Bengal. Her mind, faces confusion when she tries to fathom the concept of the border. Amitav Ghosh said what interested him about borders “was their arbitrariness, their constructedness – the ways in which they are ‘naturalized’ by modern political mythmaking.” To Tha’mma borders remain non-existent unless they are visible and impervious.

Sometimes borders no longer remain “shadow lines” — they become signifiers of unspeakable horrors. Tha’mma’s realization of the border comes with a lot of pain. The realization comes after her attempts to rescue her Jethamoshai fail. The violent mob kills her uncle and her nephew. The exploration of this raises other issues in the novel, specially the issue of the unique political reality existing on the Indian subcontinent, in the post-1947 era. Goodwill and innocence give way to a passionate hatred, which becomes evident in Tha’mma’s discourse. To Tha’mma, the marginal, lost and suppressed stories from the space (read as Dhaka) and time (read as past) that she had lost, come back and re-shape her sense of the nation and national identity.

Tania Chakraverty

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Shri Shikshayatan College, Kolkata,
and Guest Lecturer, Department of English,

The University of Calcutta

e-mail : taniachakraverty@yahoo.com

The 'Countdown' begins for 'The End of Imagination': Paradigms of Literary Expression of Views.

Amitav Ghosh's *Countdown* (1999) is a slim volume (a hundred and two pages) of thirteen sections of collaged material, mostly culled from interviews made by the author of people directly or indirectly concerned with the Pokhran and Chagai atom-bomb tests carried out in May 1998. Arundhati Roy's essay, 'The End of Imagination', makes a different assessment of the relevance of the nuclear tests of 1998. Read together, the pair of novelists throws ample light on the sinister reality of the dangerous power-play of politicians who are least concerned about the welfare of the people they are supposed to represent. The ways in which Ghosh and Ray treat their subject are different, but their purpose is the same: an exposure of the readers to an awareness of what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a repetition of which can bring only immeasurable disaster.

Jolly Das

Associate Professor, Dept. of English,
Raja Peary Mohan College, Uttarpara, Hooghly.
e-mail : jollydas_cgr@yahoo.com

Dancing in Cambodia: Triumph of Nativism against Western Interventions

This paper considers Ghosh's essay *Dancing in Cambodia* as a critique of the Eurocentric notion of modernity. The essay underlines the inadequacy of the Western ideologies in shaping the social and cultural life of the colonized countries in South-East Asia. Ghosh here celebrates the traditional Cambodian dance as an embodiment of the cultural identity of the entire nation – a tradition that survives alike the Cambodian King's attempt at modernizing the country, and the revolutionary leader, Pol Pot's social engineering. Ghosh's essay, I will contend, is an assertion of the nationalist culture against the Eurocentric models of progress and modernity.

Samik Dasgupta

Assistant Professor, Department of English,
Bejoy Narayan Mahavidyalaya, Hooghly.
e-mail : samik_dasgupta17@rediffmail.com

'Looking Back in Sorrow' – Representations of Ethnic Violence in the Writings of Amitav Ghosh

"It follows then that the reason why I – and many others who have written of such events – are compelled to look back in sorrow is because we cannot look ahead. It is as though the events of the immediate past have made the future even more obscure than it is usually acknowledged to be." (The Greatest Sorrow)

This paper undertakes to examine a persistent theme in the writings of Amitav Ghosh – his representations of ethnic violence. A considerable part of his oeuvre, especially non-fiction, is focused on instances of ethnic violence in South Asia and South-east Asia. As a writer, his stance is that of an intent and conscientious observer, one who is neither eager to offer interpretations nor willing to propose easy solutions. His depictions, rather, formulate questions, questions to which there are no simple and straightforward answers. Some critics have identified a quest theme in his fictional narratives, but here the author himself seems to be on a quest – journeying from one region of strife to another to grasp this elusive truth about human nature, that turns otherwise normal human beings into bloodthirsty beasts. His representations do not consist of gory violent acts. Indeed he confesses the problem of writing about violence without sensationalising it. Nonetheless, the very real undercurrent of fear and a claustrophobic atmosphere of distrust are poignantly revealed in his writing. In non-fictional works such as *Dancing in Cambodia*, *At Large in Burma*, 'The Ghosts of Mrs. Gandhi', 'The Greatest Sorrow' and in fictional works such as *The Shadow Lines* and *The Glass Palace* this bewildering madness of our 'civilization' is unerringly documented. This paper seeks to identify some of the common elements of his work and to study his ideas along with insights provided by erstwhile theorists of ethnicity like Max Weber to present-day commentators like Amartya Sen.

Abhijit Ghosh

Assistant Prof. of English,
Balagarh B.K. Mahavidyalaya, Balagarh, Hooghly.
e-mail : abghosh2002@yahoo.co.in

**TRAPPED IN THE CIRCLE: A POSTCOLONIAL
CRITIQUE OF 'REASON' IN AMITAV GHOSH'S
*THE CIRCLE OF REASON***

Amitav Ghosh's first novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986) is a densely textured work — addressing multiple concerns, from reconstruction of history to cosmopolitan multiculturalism, from science to pseudo-science, from imagination to reality. The novel though can be studied, as its title suggests, as Ghosh's critique of the concept of Reason. Since the Enlightenment, Reason emerged as the hallowed philosophy in Western consciousness, relegating irrationality as the undesired 'Other'. This often leads to such simplistic associations where Western philosophy is equated with the desired rationality, while Oriental philosophy becomes inevitably fanciful, irrational and false. In *The Circle of Reason*, Amitav Ghosh makes a critique of these hastily drawn binaries; in stead, he investigates the paradox inherent in the concept of Reason, 'which is both liberating and oppressive; linear and straightforward, and circular and convoluted; reasonable and unreasonable.' (Mondal 8) The inadequacy of Reason is presented through the characters of Balaram, whose craze for Reason almost borders on insanity and his grotesque nephew/protégé Alu. Ghosh suggests that Balaram's partially ignorant assimilation of Western discourse of rationality is the source of his failure. Reason is never the ultimate truth, it needs to be balanced and countered by emotions that were earlier rejected as (Oriental) irrationalities. Even Balaram realizes '[h]ow tortuous...is the path of reason.' (Ghosh 83)— a realization which sums up the moral of the novel in a way.

Samrat Laskar
Assistant Professor of English (W.B.E.S)
Krishnagar Government College.
e-mail : samlaso@gmail.com

The Notion of the Nation: Reading *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh has undoubtedly earned his position in the canon of Indian English fiction. For a category that has as its marker a particular nation and its culture, Indian Writing in English cannot but concern itself with the idea of India and what it means to be Indian. One of the most striking things about such post colonial and/or multicultural literature is the many Indias they represent. For example, the India that Raja Rao or Mulk Raj Anand engaged with has changed in the works of contemporary writers such as Arvind Adiga or Pankaj Mishra; moreover, the huge amount of diasporic fiction that has so become a part of Indian English fiction today has further complicated the idea of the nation in narrative representation so much that at many points, as Benedict Andersen and Salman Rushdie have pointed out, the nation is 'imagined' rather than real. In this context, the works of Amitav Ghosh become vital, not only because they use personal narratives and memories to create an alternate history for the postcolonial subject, but also because they broaden the scope of the 'nation' beyond its immediate political boundaries, and in so doing invites us to take a look at the multiple Indias that emerge. This paper concerns itself with the idea of the nation that emerges from the works of Amitav Ghosh, with special focus on *The Shadow Lines*. It charts the collective journey of memory, history and personal narrative as they gradually become 'truths' for the living subject (like the narrator of *The Shadow Lines*) and also asks the vital question— Which India is being represented?

Rijula Das
Jawaharlal Nehru University , New Delhi
e-mail : rijula.das@gmail.com

**In Search Of An “Antique Land”:
Tracing History within the Framework of a Traveller’s
Tale and an Ultimate Merging Arising from a
Sense of Continuity**

Amitav Ghosh’s *In An Antique Land* maybe regarded as the story of two Indians in Egypt, but its simplicity ends there, for, the narrative soon turns out to be an account of a 20th c. Indian anthropologist’s quest to re-discover an “antique land”, whose trap-door had been covered up with centuries-old dust but a trail was left behind by another Indian- the “slave” of “MS.H.6” – Bomma : the 12th c. Indian slave to the Tunisian Jew, Abraham Ben Yiju. While shaping up Bomma’s tale, from historical fragments, Ghosh blends in his own story as a traveller in the ancient land, covering up a span of 800 years, without a gap.

Among the various threads that have been woven together by Ghosh in this complex texture of the work— a unique fusion of fact supported by verifiable history and a traveller’s tale stimulated by exalted imaginative brilliance, which enable it to enjoy the status of a travel narrative, ethnographic record, history and fiction, at the same time- my concern in this paper would be to highlight the journey across time and space that the author undertakes as a traveller, in search of a 12th c. world that still exists, in spite of the alterations brought in by changing times over the centuries. Ghosh very artfully manages to deconstruct the typically western linearity of narration by allowing himself to become enmeshed in the concept of circularity of time which influences the narrative in such a way that past and present often intersect at different points beginning , perhaps, with the 12th c. Bomma’s providing a sense of belonging to the 20th c. Ghosh, as he enters Egypt, in order to trace the essence of the “antique land”.

Durba Raychaudhury

Part-time Lecturer, Naihati Rishi Bankimn College
e-mail : durbarc2004@yahoo.co.in

**Identity Politics in Colonial Times: An Analysis of
Arjun’s Character in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace***

Colonial time was a really difficult period to live in; especially for the politically conscious people. Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Glass Palace* is remarkable for its meticulous portrait of the colonial period in India and South East Asia. Its pages are populated by people from royalty, government civil servants and soldiers and commoners who have made it big. The days were characterized by a topsyturbydom, a muddle that also affects the lives of the people etched out in the pages of this novel. Amidst this colonial atmosphere a queer phenomenon was the British army seen on the South and South East Asian thoroughfares. Though called British they had nothing British about them. At the very beginning of the saga we have an encounter with the British army. Later one of the major characters, if not a central one, Arjun, is seen to enlist into the Army. Within a few days of his enlistment the World War- II breaks out which unsettles his composure as the questions of his nationality engulfs him in a terrible crisis of identity. He becomes a victim of a terrifying identity politics that finally proves to be his nemesis.

The aim of the proposed paper is to study and analyse the character of Arjun who chose a very uncommon profession in those colonial times as a colonized subject. The aim of such a study is to understand some of the various issues regarding our national identity; particularly the identity politics that can fully submerge a colonized individual under its gigantic confusion. The author’s humble hope out of such a study is to have an iota of insight into Amitav Ghosh’s stance on nation identity.

Dolon Ray

Assistant Professor and H.O.D., Deptt. of English
Chhatna Chandidas Mahavidyalaya
PO- Chhatna, Dist-Bankura (W.B.) Pin- 722132
e-mail : dolon.ray@gmail.com

**‘Subversive history in the guise of a traveller’s tale’
Postcolonial anthropology, Travel-writing,
Nostalgia of Old world Orders**

A Postmodernist’s assignation of *In an Antique Land*

Written as a “history in the guise of a traveller’s tale”, *In an Antique Land* melds many genres. The modes of intellectual or narrative expression that Ghosh deploys produce a work that challenges the categories he explores and forces a contemplation of forms, shapes and contours usually associated with distinct genres. It is not a text that is immune from slippages of what we now commonly consider as the Orientalist imaginary, but its participation in that discursive economy is calculated, ironic as Ali Behdad might put it, self consciously belated. I would intend to look at the political and aesthetic tensions in Ghosh’s imaginative reconstruction of this older world and his attempts to link it with our contemporary times. We should not criticize Ghosh’s fidelity to the historical record but rather to understand the dynamics of the “production of history” in a nostalgic mode and thereby becomes associated with postcolonial writing. *In an Antique Land* challenges the boundaries of the many genres on which it relies upon, besides highlighting the use of nostalgia to flatten out the micropolitics of the world before what he assumes as the intrusive arrival of the Western powers. Ghosh’s D. Phil. forces us to re-think traditional disciplinary forms from a postcolonial perspective.

Saptarshi Mallick

Fellow, DRS, CU

e-mail : saptarshieng@gmail.com

**The Tides of History: Changing currents of History
and Identity in *The Hungry Tide***

This short paper intends to delve into the troubled contours of land, and of human emotions, as depicted by Amitav Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide*. Ghosh’s narrative focuses a magnifying lens on what might be called a micro-culture within the Sundarbans or “tide country,” the islets of the Ganges delta that lie south of Kolkata and just east of the West Bengal/Bangladesh frontier. However, the micro-culture, as often in Amitav Ghosh, refuses to remain micro and encompasses a much greater human experience. The complex interaction of the land and the people who assemble there lie at the core of this paper. The Economist reviewer took the view that “it is its sense of place that dominates the novel,” and Ghosh himself might seem almost to vindicate such a view in his remark of 1998: “A novel ... must always be set somewhere: it must have its setting, and within the evolution of the narrative this setting must, classically, play a part almost as important as those of the characters themselves.” *The Hungry Tide* highlights not only place but, crucially, dynamically evolving human relationships, cross-cultural barriers and communication, and the relationship between past and present. History as noted by Brinda Bose (2001) is always a means to study the present, and *The Hungry Tide* is no exception: “Ghosh’s fiction takes upon itself the responsibility of re-assessing its troubled antecedents, using history as a tool by which we can begin to make sense of - or at least come to terms with - our troubling present.” While the literal meaning of *The Hungry Tide* refers to the fury of wild nature in the tidal country, the metaphorical or symbolic connotation of the same carries a lot of psychological and philosophical weight. Metaphorically, the title of the novel refers to the emotional tide, in which the characters of the novel are caught. This paper is an effort to work through this complex web of associations to arrive at a greater understanding of Ghosh’s vision.

Piyas Chakrabarti

Assistant Professor in English, Bagnan College.

e-mail : payas.chakrabarti@gmail.com

Crime, Punishment, and Discipline in Amitav Ghosh's Sea of Poppies.

The novel **Sea of Poppies**, set in the backdrop of the 19th century Opium Wars, depicts the East India Company's imperial designs. The motive of the East India Company was not limited to trade and commerce; rather it expands the Empire's monopoly on the economic policies and then establish themselves as the rulers. At the centre of the novel there is a metaphor of journey of a slaving schooner **Ibis** set to travel across the 'black water' to transport the opium, coolies, convicts and indentured labourers. Infact, the East India Company's trade and commerce turns out to be a new form of penal system for the British. In this paper I intend to study the British sense of laws and the legal institution that claimed to dispense justice to the natives. How was Neel Rattan, the Zamindar from Bengal, accused of forgery trapped into imprisonment? Why was the Raja unable to put up a dissent? The sub-text of the novel gives an obvious sense of the colonial law that proved to be an effective machinery in exercising authority and control on the natives. Also the Orientalists had translated the Hindu sacred religious texts like the Vedas and the Dharmashastras for the rulers to interpret and manipulate the laws for their purpose. Drawing from Foucault's idea of **Discipline and Punishment**, I wish to analyse the role of corporeal punishment and its display as a new form of British imperialism. Neel's unceremonious journey in the **Ibis** with other convicts and coolies exemplified the disciplinary power of the British rulers. However apart from the prisoners like Affat and Neel, the natives like Kalua and the widow Deeti are subject to corporeal punishment inflicted on them by their own people.

Why do these people seem to be indifferent to any of the laws that would protect them? These are some questions I wish to look into in my paper.

Mohua Ahiri
Research Scholar
Rabindra Bharati University
e-mail : ahiri.abmohua@gmail.com

IN SEARCH OF A HOMELAND THROUGH THE SHADOW LINES.

Both in Political Science and Geography there is a specific definition of a country or a state. However the word 'Country' bears a specific meaning to a man. A man's entire entity of present, past as well as future is associated with his own country or native land or homeland. In general, the part of land where one is born becomes one's homeland, nativelyland or motherland. Within the parliamentary system it is a rule that a country will keep up the rights of people of that country but when the state is unable to bear the responsibility of a man, his whole entity is at stake. On the background of that crisis Amitav Ghosh writes an invaluable novel *The Shadow Lines* (1998).

Dr Sutanuka Ghosh Roy
Asst Prof in English
Tarakeswar Degree College
Tarakeswar, Hooghly, 712410
e-mail : sutanuka_ghoshroy@hotmail.com

Rodin Among Tigers: A Fugitive Anthropology of Europe

This paper seeks to look at Amitav Ghosh's *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma*, as an instance of postcolonial mediation and hermeneutics pertaining to the thresholds of western civilization and its capacity for responding to non-European reality.

Debashis Lahiri
Assistant Professor, Lalbaba College, Belur
and Guest Lecturer, Barasat State University.
e-mail : debasish.lahiri@gmail.com

PROGRAMME

Date : 25.03.2011

- 10 A.M. onwards : Registration
10.30 A.M. : Inaugural Session
 ■ Welcome address by
 Dr Amal Kanta Hati, Principal, Tarakeswar Degree College
 ■ Address by **Dr Tarun Kumar Mondal**
 Principal, Rabindra Mahavidyalaya
 ■ Inauguration by
 Srimati Sripriya Rangarajan, I.A.S., District Magistrate, Hooghly.
- 11.05 A.M. : Keynote Address by
 Professor Makarand Paranjape
 Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.
- 12.05 P.M. : Tea Break
12.15 P.M. : **First Academic Session :**
 Chairperson : **Dr Sumit Chakraborty**
- Paper Presentation : **Prof. Sajal Kumar Bhattacharya**
 Title : "Live my prince; hold on to your life": Issues of transnational life and identity in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*
- Paper Presentation : **Prof. Siddhartha Giswa**
 Title : *The Sea of Poppies* and the Narrative of Migration
- Paper Presentation : **Dr. Tania Chakraverty**
 Title : "Woman as the nationalist's construct: Tha'mma in *The Shadow Lines*"
- Paper Presentation : **Dr. Debashis Lahiri**
 Title : Rodin Among Tigers: A Fugitive Anthropology of Europe
- Paper Presentation : **Prof. Piyas Chakrabarti**
 Title : The Tides of History: Changing currents of History and Identity in *The Hungry Tide*
- 1.30-2.10 P.M. : Lunch Break
2.15 P.M. : Second Academic Session
 Chairperson: **Prof. Anjali Gera Roy**
 Speaker : **Dr Sumit Chakraborty**
 Dept. of English, Rabindra Bharati University.
- 3.15 P.M. : Tea Break
3.30-4.30 P.M. : Paper Presentation.
Paper Presentation : **Dr. Sisir Kumar Chatterjee & Mr. Abhijit Gupta**
 Title : We-ing and They-ing: Relation between Othering and Violence in Amitav Ghosh's *The Imam and the Indian*
- Paper Presentation : **Prof. Samik Dasgupta**
 Title : *Dancing in Cambodia*: Triumph of Nativism against Western Interventions
- Paper Presentation : **Rijula Das**
 Title : The Notion of the Nation: Reading *The Shadow Lines*
- Paper Presentation : **Durba Raychaudhury**
 Title : The 'Countdown' begins for 'The End of Imagination': Paradigms of Literary Expression of Views.

PROGRAMME

Date : 26.03.2011

- 10.30 P.M. : **Third Academic Session**
 Chairperson : **Sri Samik Bandyopadhyay**
 Speaker : **Prof. Anjali Gera Roy**
 Humanities Department, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur.
- 11.30 P.M. : Tea Break
11.45-1.15 P.M. : Paper Presentation
Paper Presentation : **Dr. Jolly Das**
 Title : The 'Countdown' begins for 'The End of Imagination': Paradigms of Literary Expression of Views.
- Paper Presentation : **Mr. Saptarshi Mallick**
 Title : '*Subversive history in the guise of a traveller's tale*' Postcolonial anthropology, Travel-writing, Nostalgia of Old world Orders A Postmodernist's assignation of *In an Antic Land*
- Paper Presentation : **Prof. Samrat Laskar**
 Title : TRAPPED IN THE CIRCLE: A POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF 'REASON' IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE CIRCLE OF REASON*
- Paper Presentation : **Prof. Dolon Ray**
 Title : Identity Politics in Colonial Times: An Analysis of Arjun's Character in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*
- Paper Presentation : **Mr. Biswajit Mukherjee**
 Title : Amitav's Shadow Lines
- 1.15-2.00P.M. : Lunch Break
2.00 P.M. : Fourth Academic Session
 Chairperson : **Professor Makarand Paranjape**
 Speaker : **Sri Samik Bandyopadhyay**
 Eminent Scholar and Critic
- 3.00P.M. : Tea Break
3.00-3.30P.M. : Valedictory Session