



## REVIEW OF RESEARCH



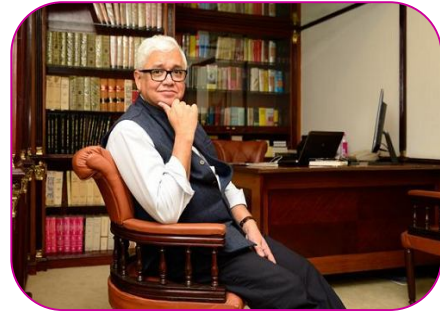
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### THE ELEMENT OF ASPIRATION FOR SUBALTERN, DIASPORA AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN THE WORKS OF AMITAV GHOSH

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#### ABSTRACT

*Identity has always been an important point of discussion in the works of Amitav Ghosh writings which is the core component of this article. In the form of culture, class, race, gender or origin of various arenas of an individual the identity relays. The author projects his characters as if they are in craving of their identity. Their apprehension for identity is allied tonational identity, cultural identity, subaltern identity and diasporic distinctiveness which are discussed as thematic deliberations. These considerations have been dispensed in the form of quest for identity, identity crisis/ transformation and colonial or postcolonial identity in the form of 'self and other'.*

*They are not totally independent but the interrelated terms and must be seen in reference to each other. On one side we experience the elements of sense of belonging in contrast to alienation, struggle for existence, dilemma of dual identity and nostalgia as the restrictions that have been exemplified through the well-defined characters of his novels. At the other side, the longing for being accepted and cultural acceptance forms core to the character sketch. They crave for a new and transformed identity by changing themselves with time and place are the attributes reflected by his characters.*

**KEYWORDS:** *identity, cultural identity, subaltern identity, expedition and alteration.*

#### INTRODUCTION :

Identity, has emerged as one of the major causes of concern for the human community at all levels. It is a culmination of cultural, ideological, psychological, and sociological aspects of an individual. Identity is still in the flux and is in the run of evolving by nature. The intended meaning given by of Hall can be better understood with the backdrop of Amitav Ghosh's concept of identity.

*'Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, with the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a "production", which is never complete, always in the process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.'* (Hall 222)

Ghosh, being an anthropologist, talks about the concept of relocation and displacement. Identity has been a constant issue in the writings of Ghosh. He deals with identity at all levels such as subaltern identity,

diasporic identity and cultural identity. These approaches of identity have been constantly discussed through his characters.

### **SUBALTERN IDENTITY:**

One of the significant forms of identity is related to subaltern identity and their quest to be identified equally, which has been a serious point of discussion and concern in the works of Amitav Ghosh. The author strongly believes that the magnificent crusade of any incident overlooks the individualistic experience during the immense searches of ancient, collective or dogmatic uproar. So, Ghosh's characters in his novels come from lower strata of society forming subaltern cluster, making them the victims of historical events on the backdrop of their struggle and sufferings and their never ending fight for the survival.

The word 'subaltern' itself reflects the issues of survival, identity or representation that has a lesser amount of access to the political, social, or cultural aspect. Along with Ghosh many writers have risen their voice for the subaltern section of society. Gayatri Spivak, a well-known writer whose works also lie on the same line of Ghosh, stands strong on the subaltern identity. Spivak asks what 'nomenclature' can resolve such a space. The notable critic of subaltern, Spivak whose crucial line '*Can the subaltern Speak?*' Questions the true place of subaltern in the society. She thinks that for the true subaltern group there is no unrepresentable subaltern subject that can know and speak itself as their identity is at stake. These unrepresented and sidelined groups were provide the center stage in the Ghosh's novels.

Amitav Ghosh works strongly follow to the notion that the subalterns can speak, if provided platform to present the unrepresented facts existing in the society. He intentionally makes the subaltern characters take the focus, especially on personal histories of these individuals. The relegated characters of his novels help us distinguish life, events and issues from their point of view. Ghosh characteristic as subaltern writer can be better understood by the remarks below,

*Ghosh reinvents paradigms in order to surmount the theoretical and philosophical problems involved in the methods of retrieving, representing, and articulating subaltern consciousness.....as a novelist with an academic background in social anthropology, He resists the urge to make visible these otherwise invisible characters, communities, consciousness at the expense of those who have traditionally been visible in dominant discourses. (De, Ghosh, and Jana 109)*

The issue of subaltern in his works to be understood in two departments: firstly, the meaning of subaltern as an abnormal run-through, a kind of equivalent preparation that existed during colonial period that reflected in his works where the author talks about the unconventional histories and practices of people. Secondly, that takes subaltern to speak and empower them to epitomise the side-lined people and their concerns.

To sum up, his depiction of the concept subaltern engenders resulting opinions have come to a conclusion that intricacy of the nucleus shift, the query of and outset of groundwork, an engrossing conformation of center and margins, to touch their civilizations and personalities to their inborn situation, and involving of cultural identities, a belief of the fact that the subaltern can speak and stand for themselves or for their rightly deserving position can be demonstrated either through making them speak their stories or by generating stories around them in his novels. Thus, his writings are a demonstration of implications and manifestations of the term subaltern in contemporary writings.

### **DIASPORIC IDENTITY:**

Diasporic identity can be understood as the fluctuating and acclimatising depending upon the circumstances and the situation an individual faces while displaced from his native land resulting the globalization in the fields of arts and writing and many more. Trying to maintain the balance between the new scenario and the place as well as the life behind, resulting diasporic identity always in flux. Hall quotes: '*Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew through transformation and difference*' (Rutherford 235).

As discussed earlier displacement has been a serious issue of concern in the novels of Ghosh,

whether it be migration, diaspora or exile. The difficulties connected to the displacement occupy the center stage in the story line along with subaltern identity and cultural identity. While being banished and disheartened they come across identity crisis. Alienation, predicament of dual identity, ambivalence, belonging nowhere, nostalgia, and identity regain are some of the issues that are associated with diasporic identity. His novels also have the story of the people who are colonial and founding the diasporic identity.

Works of Ghosh emphasize on the diasporic familiarities on land far from home, where they try to copy the new settings and make themselves embroil in an earnest chase of identity. His novel focus on the predicament of his characters forming an inimitable diasporic identity. The writer himself was identified as diasporic and is on the run for diasporic identity his novels had the narration of the stories of those individuals bumping into different cultures and indulge in intercession of a diasporic cultural identity.

## CULTURAL IDENTITY

The word 'culture' is a very massive and multifaceted singularity. It can be defined as the consistent system of valuing, judicious, and thoughtful communication that enterprises a people's way of life. The basic fundamentals of culture come from symbols, values, norms, language and knowledge (facts, beliefs, and skills). Culture is a social group in which one lives and this group determines the role of individual which is the root of identity. Cultural identity is shaped by a complex set of factors which are associated with the process of evolution and beliefs of people. In the words of Homi Bhabha on culture and its significance related to identity,

*Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement ... The transnational dimension of cultural transformation—migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation -makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification. (172)*

*More or less, Said also inscribed that the origin is not that important as the continuity because a person in displacement takes an adaptive approach and try to adjust with the new situation. According to him, it is 'continuities' that matter and not beginnings, or origins, because 'continuities ... go cheerfully forward with their beginnings obediently affixed.' (77) Said himself belongs to the hyphenated identity as a Palestinian-American that in-between space which celebrated heterogeneity of cultural identity. In his own words, 'No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian ... or American are no more than starting-points, which if followed into actual experience for only a moment are quickly left behind.' (407)*

Cultural identity has been identified by Ghosh as something that can be questioned, which is dynamic, arbitrated and receptive in relation to power, through regular practices and involvements. For a person like Ghosh, whose life has always been manifested by multiple movements across national and cultural boundaries geographic, linguistic, diaspora offers a valuable 'transnational' perspective from cultural boundaries, diaspora offers a valuable 'transnational' perspective to destabilize the standardized conceptions of culture and identity. He stated, *'my formulation of diaspora, then, as a hybrid, transnational space offers a framework in and through which to view cultural identity as always moving, never arrived at, as existing in tension and mediation between roots and routes'.*

Taking the above points or views into consideration, it can be manifested that Amitav Ghosh's sense of identity is guided by the mentioned thematic considerations of identity in all respective departments of human upliftment. His characters not only reveal the anguish or pain of separation but they are more and more adoptive and adaptive who aspire to achieve the unachievable according to the typical approaches of making a mark in the society. They easily adjust with the new situations and new places making themselves flexible enough to get what deserve rather than what they need. .

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