

A STUDY OF CULTURE DIMENSIONS IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH

CANDIDATE NAME = MEENAKSHI

DESIGNATION = RESEARCH SCHOLAR SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR

GUIDE NAME = DR. RAJESH KUMAR

DESIGNATION = ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

SUNRISE UNIVERSITY ALWAR RAJASTHAN

ABSTRACT

The pictures, or encodements, and their interpretations (meanings), that are passed down from one generation to the next, from one person to another, or that are made from scratch by an individual, are all part of a population's culture. The Indian culture is distinct in its profound sense of aesthetics and morals. The expression of Indian culture in living and non-living things is a detailed definition of that culture. Typical cultural norms are passed down from generation to generation. Indian culture and its ideals continue to provide life to social order and individual progress, and this flow has persisted unbroken from generation to generation. Historians and observers agree that the reason Indian culture has endured for so long is because the greatest among us have always adhered to a set of core ideals. From the 8th through the 20th century, sensitive minds like Sankara and Gandhi found fulfilment by adhering to the Bhagavad Gita's precepts. The belief in the ultimate authority of the moral and spiritual order is the first and foremost core value in our society.

KEYWORDS: Culture Dimensions, Amitav Ghosh Novels, modern society, Indian culture

INTRODUCTION

Indian culture, which has been a beacon of its principles for ages, has the same legitimacy that appeals to communities all over the globe because of its undeniable vitality and continuity. Other cultures look to the East for guidance because of the immense store of knowledge and foresight it has. Many prominent thinkers, including Arthur Schopenhauer, Max Muller, Roman Rolland, Leo Tolstoy, and others, placed great stock in India's illustrious academic history and acknowledged the wealth of knowledge contained in India's sacred texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and others. Luminaries including Sankara, Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, and the late Mahatma

Gandhi, as well as Tagore, S. Radhakrishnan, and Anand K. Kumarswamy, were cultural and spiritual representatives of India to the West. "It is already becoming clear that a chapter which had a western beginning will have to have an Indian ending if it is not to end in the self-destruction of the human race," the renowned British historian Dr. Arnold Toynbee said. According to (Mishra 14) T.S. Eliot, a Nobel Laureate and a major 20th-century poet, concludes the fifth and final canto of his epic poem *The Waste Land* with the words, "What the Thunder Said." Note on line 401 by T. S. Eliot: "Datta, dayadhvam, damyata." The phrase is "Shantih shantih shantih."

This suggests that the poet is seeking refuge from his troubled environment, and that he has found what he needs in the

Indian cultural norms, like a haven in a desert. Eliot synthesizes eastern and western teachings to demonstrate that we may only experience spiritual renewal if we listen to the voice of the thunder that is given: practice compassion and strive for self-control, and world peace will be yours. Incontrovertibly, "The Waste Land" is a social chronicle of our times, a poem that sheds light on the difficulties of Western modernism. Another prominent American poet from the nineteenth century, Walt Whitman, writes a poem called "Passage to India." It's true that India is only mentioned in passing; yet, the poem's transcendental voyage of the spirit reads like a prophetic invocation of Gurudev Rabindranath, or at least of Indian ethos and culture.

In the annals of Indian history are the names of outstanding people like Annie Besant, Mira Behan (Magdaleine Slade), and Sister Nivedita (Margaret Elizabeth Noble). Regardless, they all ended themselves on Indian territory, despite the fact that India was a completely foreign nation to them. Annie Besant was an educator, thinker, and social activist who was also an active member of the Theosophical Society and the Indian National Congress. In October 1917, she collaborated with Madan Mohan Malviya to build Benares Hindu University. The Mother, or Mirra Alfassa (1878-1973), was another key figure in Sri Aurobindo's establishment of his spiritual center in Pondicherry.

Madeleine Slade, a British citizen, was profoundly influenced by Gandhiji to go to India. The news of Mahatma Gandhi's fast for Hindu-Muslim harmony reached London shortly after her return from

Paris. His health was deteriorating rapidly. Madeleine's fast lasted for twenty-one days, which seemed like an eternity. She felt compelled to express her gratitude in writing. However, she had sold her piano and exhausted her savings from performing in orchestras. Her sole possession was a little diamond brooch that her grandpa had given her for her 21st birthday. She made twenty pounds from the sale and gave them to Gandhi. This was the first time the two people had met each other. This kind act moved Gandhi, and he expressed his appreciation.

CULTURE AS A TOOL

This event gave Madeleine the confidence to write him a letter asking for permission to join him at Sabarmati Ashram. The following is his reply from August 1925, sent from Calcutta: Dear Friend, 24 July 1925.

I appreciated receiving your kind note. You are always welcome to visit at your convenience. From what I understand about the steamer, you will be met and shown to the train that will take you to Sabarmati. Just keep in mind that things aren't quite rosey at the Ashram. It's quite challenging. Every detainee is expected to provide physical labor. The weather in this nation is also an important factor. I don't want to scare you, but rather, I want to warn you about these things.

Yours Sincerely,

(Selected Works of Mahatma
Gandhi Books Online)

Gandhiji gave her the name Mira Behn when he initiated her into the Sabarmati Ashram. She became culturally Indian and devotedly Gandhian throughout her

life. Since her arrival at Sabarmati Ashram, she had been a regular part of Gandhiji's personal staff. Including her in Babu's plan to liberate India would be only fair. She was there when Babu was killed on 30 January 1948, therefore she saw a lot of important things happen throughout the nonviolent battle. She lived in India for almost 30 years, becoming immersed in the Indian cause and culture. Humanity is not the pinnacle of creation on Earth, according to The Mother, a well-known Aurobindo devotee. Mankind will eventually be superseded as evolution proceeds. Each person must decide for himself whether he is interested in helping usher in this new species. Those who are content with the status quo would likely see no use in a place like Auroville.

The Mother, or Mirra Alfassa, was born on February 21, 1878, in Paris. She excelled as a musician and a writer in her own right. After meeting Sri Aurobindo in 1914, she quickly adopted him as her spiritual leader. After moving to Pondicherry to serve her lord in April of 1920, the Mother remained there for the remainder of her life. She established her mettle as a brilliant visionary and spiritual leader like her teacher Sri Aurobindo, who entrusted her with all Ashram operations. Mother's vision of Auroville, recognized by UNESCO as a symbol of international harmony and collaboration, is yet another shining example of Mother's worldwide vision. The essential tenets of Indian society are openness, integration, and harmony. (Pratap

Auroville, India) "Vasudaiva Kutumbakam" is a popular Indian concept that has gained popularity across the globe. Indian culture and the guiding principles underlying this statement are remarkable due to the singularity and humanity of the meaning imbued in the word uttered in Indian texts. Magnanimous people see the whole world as one big happy family. There is a position beyond old age and death where all mental creations are annihilated and all attachments find lodging; this is the one to which one should aspire. (Sections VI.72 and 73 of the Maha-Upaya). The statement's universality and magnanimity serve to both affirm and highlight a basic tenet of Indian culture: the importance of service to others. A.L. Basham, a renowned historian and expert on ancient India, once said, "...in no other area of the ancient world were the ties of man to man, and of the individual to the state, so decent and compassionate. The Arthashastra is the only ancient legal book that explicitly protects the rights of slaves, something that can't be said of any other early culture. India was a happy place where individuals, working out their own identities within a dynamic and ever-changing social order, developed a more peaceful and harmonious way of relating to one another than any other ancient civilization. Mishra 15 says.

Noting that "the ancient wisdom of the human race will not be supplanted by the events in Galilee," the great German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) makes the following observation on Indian religion and philosophy. Instead, information and ideas will undergo a

radical shift as Indian wisdom makes its way back to Europe.

Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the second President of India, was also a famous philosopher and outstanding scholar, earning him widespread acclaim among the most powerful people in the world at the time. Dr. Radhakrishnan told the graduates of Banaras Hindu University, "Wherever minds are sensitive, hearts are generous, and spirits are free, there is your country." He went on to describe the ideal country as one in which people "love reason, shun darkness, turn over towards light, praise virtue, despise meanness, hate vulgarity, kindle sheer beauty." Instead of favoring one group of people over another, how about we embrace this universal sense of loyalty?

(Agrawal, 1888-1988, Volume 54)

In an effort to redress the wrongs done by colonialism and restore the nation's cultural and political standing, the postcolonial mentality drabs indigenous norms and practices in favor of a return to their origins. Reversing the effects of colonization on a person's mindset requires extensive damage control measures and careful monitoring.

The Theosophical Society was founded in the United States in 1875, although it has its origins in India, the home of Mahatma Koot Hoomi. Madame H.P. Blavatsky, a founder member, was a significant figure. The Masters of the organization all hail from the Indian subcontinent, for reasons that are unclear but which must be explained based on the descriptions given by Madame Blavatsky and other well-known occultists. The Theosophical Society of India has a number of notable

alumni, including A.O. Hume, the founder of the Indian National Congress, Annie Besant, and Rukhmani Devi Arundale. Each of these individuals made significant contributions to preserving and advancing Indian culture and ideals in their own right. The Theosophical Society was established in New York and then relocated to Adyar, India. (Madam 401)

The Circle of Reason boosts the reversal process. The characters are all derived from different sources and are similar to the procedure in some manner. Balaram's preoccupation with western education and his interest in the life of scientist Louis Pasteur are two cases in which the legacy of the colonial mentality is evident. Balaram represents Amitav's dual will to remain a part of his original town and his growing estrangement from his heritage and culture (the colonized and the colonizer: a love/hate connection). Balaram is a teacher in Lalpukur, but his unconventional lifestyle and behavior are unfitting for the laid-back villagers that live there. Since he is a proponent of the western educational model and thinks that scientific explanations can be found for all sorts of logical difficulties, he starts a logic and reasoning club in the hamlet. He is a phrenologist who seeks to unite the villagers' physical and spiritual selves. The author succeeds in making the reader believe that rural communities may be just as interesting and disapproving as any other social unit. Balaram's existence in Lalpukur is a showcase for the eccentricities and self-conviction he thinks are authentic to him.

Weavers have been a traditional occupation for members of certain castes in the rural regions of India for ages. The

novel's protagonist, Alu, abandons formal education in favor of an apprenticeship in weaving. Alu is the polar opposite of his uncle Balaram, who has little interest in education but instead aspires to build a successful career as a weaver. Before the industrial revolution, weavers were a prosperous and long-standing part of American society. Our country's once-proud weaving tradition was almost extinguished by technological advancements in the industry.

There was a lot of historical and cultural significance to traditional Indian clothing. It left behind a rich cultural heritage. These garments represent the imaginative efforts of skilled hands. Yarns created by the ordinary man are a colorful representation of India's unique and lovely culture.

Throughout India, people honor Ma Saraswati, the goddess of knowledge. A six-foot picture of Ma Saraswati, with spinning electric lights behind the eyes and a silver-foil halo, was commissioned in Naboganj, the closest significant town in Bengal, to preside over the Puja, which is celebrated with tremendous fervor and excitement. The school yard was transformed into a colorful festival by the installation of a huge tent and a modest stage upon which the most erudite pandit in all of Naboganj presided. (TCR 32)

Every year, the Saraswati Puja is held on the grounds of every school and university in India. Since Lalpukur is a tiny hamlet with a school, the picture of Saraswati and the pujari necessary to worship her must be transported there from the larger city of Naboganj.

For the simple reason that horoscope prophecies so much and so many events of life, worth sometimes not sharing, and that becomes the source of humiliation to parents, Balaram's parents have never revealed the exact time or day of his birth. In Indian culture, the astrologer's horoscope is highly valued.

The author included the following astrological commentary in his work: "Nobody knew precisely Balaram's birthdate. After the family astrologer analyzed the newborn's horoscope, his parents kept the news to themselves. Balaram only had his birth year of 1914 to go on. (TCR 41)

On the eve of a child's birth, an astrologer in a Hindu household would draft the horoscope that will follow that kid throughout his or her whole life. This is a vital piece of paper that must be kept safe for the rest of one's life, or at least until marriage.

Observing Indian traditions and customs may be challenging in unusual settings, creating uncomfortable situations for the diaspora. Dr. Mishra's dogmatic attitude is challenged by Mrs. Uma Verma's more reasonable stance. Dr. Mishra has a problem with how Kulfi died in Algeria. He points out that Kulfi's status as a Hindu adulteress merits a particular kind of cremation according to the guidelines laid down in Indian scriptures. Dr. Uma Verma, a secular Hindu with a progressive worldview, disagrees strongly.

CONCLUSION

The historical, social, and cultural predicament of once colonial countries like India, Burma, and Bangladesh are explored in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass*

Palace and The Shadow Lines. Ghosh did extensive study to compile this narrative of India's past. His country's social and political unrest, as well as the repercussions of its past, continued to trouble him. He is quite aware of India's postcolonial history and the need of speaking out for the oppressed. As a social anthropologist, he had traveled extensively and studied local cultures. Ghosh highlights the nation's and people's past, while also focusing on the ways in which the nation's myths, beliefs, cultural practices, and traditions have merged to form a new hybrid culture. Class, caste, race, and division have been established, dividing the people physically but not mentally. This idea is shown in the works of Amitav Ghosh. The Shadow Lines, Ghosh's second book, is one of his finest works because of the way in which it explores questions of borders and confines. Past and present, public and private, all collide in this tale. The author uses postcolonial philosophy as a means of connecting the past and the present. The book chronicles the everyday people's cross-cultural experiences in other lands. His writings are emblematic of the forgotten history of people and nations devastated by division, conflict, and colonialism. There is nothing else like his writing. His works thrive on this fusion of history and the present. The work is also grounded in reality by including key historical events such as the two world wars, the battle for independence, colonialism, the Hazratbal episode in Jammu and Kashmir, and communal riots in Bangladesh. At the same time, he emphasizes setting, which

helps the narrator recall and comprehend his formative years.

REFERENCES

- Barry, P. (2017), '*Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*'. Oxford University Press, London.
- Bertens, H. (2001), '*Literary Theory: The Basics*'. Routledge, New York.
- Bhabha, H.K. (2012), '*The Location of Culture*', Routledge, London.
- Bharucha, N. (1998), 'When old Tracks are Lost: Rohinton Mistry's Fiction as Diasporic Discourse' in *The Fiction of Rohinton Mistry: Critical Studies*. ed. Jaydipsinh Dodiya, Prestige Books, New Delhi.
- Bharucha, N. E. (2003), '*Family Matter: About Happiness and Unhappiness; Writers of Indian Diasporas*', Rawat publication, Jaipur.
- Boehmer, E. (2005). '*Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors*'. Oxford
- Bose, B. (2002). 'Footnoting History: The Diasporic Imagination of Amitav Ghosh' in *In Diaspora: Theories, Histories, Texts*, ed. Makarand Paranjape, India logs publications, New Delhi.
- Bose, B. (2003a). '*Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspective*', Pencraft International, New Delhi.
- Bose, B. (2003b). '*Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives*'. Pencraft International. New Delhi.

- Bran, R.A. (2014). *Immigration: 'A Lifelong Pregnancy'? An Analysis of Jhumpa*
- *Lahiri's Fiction*. Doctoral Dissertation, Der Technischen Universität Dortmund. Cassirer, (2006). *'An Essay on Man: An Introduction to a Philosophy of Human Culture'*, Meiner Publishers, Hamburg.
- Caswell, M (2011), Asia Society Interview, Amitav Ghosh: *The Glass Palace*, 13 February, 2011 <http://aslasociety.org/arts-culture/literature/Amitav-ghosh-glass-palace>.
- Chibber, K. (2005) *'Amitav Ghosh: The Writer of Truth'*. Available at www.kavitachibber.com/main/main.jsp?id=amitavghosh.
- Christina, P. (2007). *'Indian Women Writers'*. Omega. New Delhi.
- Counihan, C. (1999), *'The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning, and Power'*. Psychology Press. New York.