

The Treatment of Separation and Border Crossings in the Selected Works of Amitav Ghosh: A Postcolonial Analyses

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Abstract

Amitav Ghosh's fiction is imbued with deep feelings of historical facts and public voices that seriously draw the affection of his readers as well as critics of the late 20th and 21st centuries. The four vital issues of postcolonial studies—subaltern, diaspora, separation, and border crossings—are the major discussions of his fiction. The term, 'subaltern' has come from the class difference between the masters and the subjects that has developed a binary relationship between these two groups of people. The binary relationship, on the other hand, has developed the dependence of the ruled (subjects) upon the mercy of the rulers (masters). The term 'diaspora' originates from the Greek word meaning 'to disperse'. It is a central historical fact of dislocation—the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions. It is also a result of imperial occupation or colonization that transports peoples from one country to another by slavery or imprisonment, or by invasion and settlement. The idea of separation and border crossing from either a literal homeland, or from a cultural and ethnic origin comes from the idea of exile and expatriation. The term 'exile' implies an involuntary constraint, and on the other hand, 'expatriation' implies the voluntary act or state. I am writing this paper to focus on Amitav Ghosh's dealings of separation and border crossings in his fiction. To discuss these two postcolonial issues, I have chosen two novels of Ghosh's fiction—The Shadow Lines (1988) and The Glass Palace (2000). Although the history of frontier and partition is much more older than the recent history of colonization, separation and border crossings have become significant major issues in the post-colonial studies (see Gurr 1981; Hall 1989; Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2004).

Key Words and Phrases: Separation, border crossings, partition, European colony, English East India Company, British Raj, Battle of Plassey, Battle of Buxar, British Indian Empire, exile, expatriation, place of origin, homeland, ethnicity, exotic and foreign territory, creolization and cultural diversity, binarism, subject and subjectivity, other and othering, and isolation.

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Introduction

The emergence of new ethnicities that cross the boundaries of cultural, geographical, and linguistic origins of different diasporic groups is the product of exile and expatriation. The evicted people who cannot return to the 'place of origin', even if they wish to do so, belong to exile. On the other hand, people of the first generation of free settlers of the varied colonial societies, who leave their 'home' by own choice under different colonial circumstances to make new settlements crossing the borders, belong to expatriation. Constructing a distant place as 'home' by the natives and native-born descendants of the colonizers is the postcolonial circumstance of separation and border crossings. The emergence of new ethnicities in the displaced cultural community of the newly born nation-states that cross the boundaries of cultural, geographical and linguistic origins of varied diasporic groups creates the problems of postcolonial trauma and anxiety. (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2004).

Separation and Border Crossings are the two inseparable historical facts that shake the whole history of human civilization making new frontier through partition. The British colonial rule in the Indian Subcontinent that expands towards Southeast Asia making Burma a province of British Indian Empire is the most traumatic experience in the recent history. In the wake of strikes and protests throughout the empire against the British, the subcontinent gets independence nearly after two hundred years of colonization with its split into two new nation-states—India and Pakistan in 1947. Next year in 1948 Burma also became independent. Later in 1971 Pakistan is split into two more nation-states—Bangladesh and Pakistan. These separation and partition have become the pragmatic tools of postcolonial studies (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2004; visit Company rule in India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British Raj: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; Partition of India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British Rule in Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

The related factors of Separation and Border Crossings are the creation of (a) Subaltern, (b) Diaspora, (c) Ethnicity, (d) Exotic and Foreign territory, (e) Creolization and Cultural diversity, (f) Binarism, (g) Subject and Subjectivity, (h) Other and Othering, and (i) Exile and Isolation. I have already discussed the origin and emergence of subaltern and diaspora, and their significant role in postcolonial studies in my first seminar. Ethnicity refers to human variation in terms of culture, tradition, language, social patterns and ancestry. An ethnic group is 'socially distinguished or set apart, by others and /or by itself, primarily on the basis of cultural or national characteristics'. Exotic means something 'alien, introduced from abroad, not indigenous'. Creolization is a process of intermixing and cultural change that produces cultural diversity of the migrated people in the exotic and foreign territories. Binarism refers to a simple distinction between the two opposite positions like centre and margin, colonizer and colonized, civilized and primitive, etc. Subject and subjectivity are the perceptions of the colonized peoples' exotic and foreign identities that directly link to their derogatory condition in the colonial and postcolonial circumstances. Other and othering are used in postcolonial studies to refer to the colonized subject 'through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view'. And finally, the term exile and isolation is used in postcolonial fiction to depict the alienation of the deported and expatriate people from the birth place (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2004).

Objectives of the study

The principal objective for writing this paper is to discuss the derogatory and suffocating condition of the deported and expatriate peoples through separation and border crossings as a result of the British colonization of India and Burma. The secondary objective is to promote the two vital issues of postcolonial studies—separation and border crossings—to the postcolonial literature taught in the Department of English at the university.

Research Methodology

In this article I have followed MLA method. I have gone through the two books of Amitav Ghosh which I have chosen for the primary source. For the secondary source of the substantial discussion and analyses, I have gone through the books of criticism on Amitav Ghosh's fiction, relevant websites, and the history of British Indian Empire.

The Sub-Continental History of Separation and Border Crossings

Separation and border crossings are the two inseparable historical facts that have started from the time immemorial and that have thwarted the whole history of human civilization. In the recent past, the British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent and, its split into several independent states were the most traumatic experiences of the history. Several imperial entities of India gave us a long history of separation and new settlements. Before the arrival of British, India was periodically ruled by the Portuguese, Dutch, Danish and French. This subcontinent became partly a European Colony with the Portuguese invasion in 1505, and got a long traumatic experience of colonial rule through the policy of suppression and oppression. Through the formation of the English East India Company in 1600, which gained a foothold in India in 1612 after Mughal emperor Jahangir granted it the rights to establish a trading post in the port of Surat on the western coast, the British started exercising their colonial policy in India. In the lame excuse of doing trade and business, this witty but brutal exercise of colonial policy of the British East India Company made a safe passage to consolidate its colonial power in the entire subcontinent. Especially, through the victory in the Battle of Plassey in 1757 in Bengal and another victory in the Battle of Buxar in 1764 in Bihar, the Company dominated its full administrative power in the large areas of the subcontinent. By the passage of time, the whole subcontinent went under the control of the Company which continued till the formation of the British Raj in 1858. With the inception of the British Raj, the system of colonial governance instituted through the transfer of the rule of the British East India Company to the British Crown. The colonial rule under the Crown lasted until 1947, when the British Indian Empire was partitioned into two sovereign dominion states, the Union of India (later the Republic of India) and the Dominion of Pakistan (later the Islamic Republic of Pakistan). Earlier in 1937 the British separated Burma province from the Indian Empire (visit Company rule in India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British Raj: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; Partition of India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British Rule in Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

The partition of India was set forth in the Indian Independence Act 1947 that resulted in the dissolution of the British Indian Empire and the end of the British Raj. The partition also resulted in a struggle between the newly constituted states of India and Pakistan that displaced up to 12.5 million people with estimates of loss of life varying from several hundred thousand to a million. The violent nature of the partition created an atmosphere of mutual hostility and suspicion between India and Pakistan that plagues their relationship to this day. The partition included the geographical division of the Bengal province into East Bengal and West Bengal, and the Punjab province into East Punjab and West Punjab. East Bengal and West Punjab became parts of the Dominion of Pakistan. From 1955, East Bengal became East Pakistan which became, later in 1971, the People's Republic of Bangladesh, a new independent country in South Asia. West Punjab became later the Pakistani Punjab and the territory of Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. West Bengal and East Punjab became parts of India. East Punjab became later the Indian Punjab--Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The two self-governing countries of India and Pakistan came into existence at the stroke of midnight on 14 and 15 August 1947. Pakistan's Independence Day is celebrated on 14 August and India's on 15 August (visit Company rule in India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British Raj: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; Partition of India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

The British expanded the Indian Empire towards the Southeast Asia. They made Myanmar (Burma) a Province of British India after the successful end of three Anglo-Burmese wars periodically held from 1824 to 1885. The British took the opportunity to invade the whole country, when a conflict began between Myanmar and the British over the political decision of the ruling Konbaung Dynasty to expand into Arakan in the state of Assam, close to the British possessions in India. Before the British invasion of Myanmar, Assam was a northern state of that country. The conflict, however, led to the First Anglo-Burmese War held from 1824 to 1826. The British won the battle with the help of the Siamese, and Myanmar had to give up Assam and other northern provinces. In 1852, the Second Anglo-Burmese War was held, and it was provoked by the British who wanted the teak forests in lower areas of Myanmar as well as a port between Calcutta and Singapore. The British won the war also for the second time. But they were still not satisfied, as they wanted access to the teak, oil and rubies of northern areas of the country. This thirst for grabbing land and wealth of the entire country prompted the British to begin the Third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885, and they won it. The British government justified their actions by claiming that the last independent king of Myanmar, Thibaw, was a tyrant and that he was conspiring to give France more influence in the country. Thus, through the victory in the Third Anglo-Burmese war in 1885, the British finally occupied all of Myanmar, and the following year, renamed it Burma, and made it a Province of British India. Rangoon (also known as Yangon) was made its capital. Quite later, the government of independent Burma again renamed it Myanmar keeping Yangon its capital. Now its capital is Naypyidaw. Although the Third Anglo-Burmese war officially ended after only a couple of weeks, resistance continued in northern Burma until 1890, when the British resorted to a systematic destruction of villages and appointed new officials to finally halt all guerrilla activities. To build up European community in the colony, the British imported European people, and arranged intermarriage between Europeans and Burmese. This gave birth to an indigenous Eurasian community known as the Anglo-Burmese who

would come to dominate the colonial society, hovering above the Burmese but below the British. Traditional Burmese society was drastically altered by the demise of the monarchy and the separation of religion and state. With the destruction of traditional local administration, the British government brought their new province under their direct rule, and made many changes to the previous governmental structure. The monarchy was abolished, King Thibaw was sent into exile at Ratnagiri in Madras of South India along with his whole family. Church and state were separated. The colonial government established a secular education system, and founded secular schools teaching in both English and Burmese to bring the new colony under intellectual control. To implement the colonial education system, the government invited the Christian missionaries to visit the colony and found missionary schools. In both of these types of schools, Buddhism and traditional Burmese culture were frowned upon in an attempt to rid the Burmese people of a cultural unity separate from the British. In order to control the country at the village level, the British implemented a 'Strategic Hamlet' policy in which they burned villages and uprooted families who had supplied villages with their headmen, sending them to lower Burma. Once these troublesome or disloyal Burmese were forced out, the British replaced them with strangers they approved of. If the British considered any Burmese to be criminals, they would act as both judge and jury, giving the Burmese no chance to a fair trial (visit British Rule in Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; see Charney 2009; Desai 1968; Harvey 1992; Myint-U 2008; Newell: *Burma, 1942*; Hogan: *India-Burma*; MacGarrigle: *Central Burma*; Chew 1969; Marshall 2002; Tucker 2001; Guyot 2004; Taylor 1987; Smith 1991; Encyclopaedia Britannica 2005).

In the wake of the strikes and protests throughout the country, the British government separated Burma Province from British India in 1937, and granted the colony a new constitution calling for a fully elected assembly, with many powers given to the Burmese. Dr Ba Maw served as the first Prime Minister of Burma, but he was forced out by U Saw in 1939, who served as Prime Minister from 1940 until he was arrested on 19 January 1942 by the British for communicating with Japan. A wave of strikes and protests that started from the oilfields of central Burma in 1938 became a general strike with far-reaching consequences. The Second World War began in 1939, and in the same year, Aung San with other Thakins founded the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). Aung San also co-founded the People's Revolutionary Party (PRP), and renamed it the Socialist Party after World War II. With the outbreak of World War II, the anti-British movement got a new momentum when the Burmese leaders of the nationalist movement (Thakin Movement) sought the assistance of the Empire of Japan to resist the British. The Burmese hoped to gain support of the Japanese in expelling the British, so that Burma could become independent. In response to the Burmese request, the Japanese had given political and military support to the Burmese, and trained thirty young nationalists. They came to be known as the 'Thirty Comrades', who were the founders of the modern Armed Forces of Burma (AFB). The 'Thirty Comrades' were Aung San and twenty nine other young nationalists who went to Japan to receive military training, and later formed the Burma Independence Army (BIA) in anticipation of the Japanese invasion of Burma in 1942. The BIA had grown in an uncontrolled manner, and so it was reorganized as the Burma Defence Army (BDA) under the Japanese but still headed by Aung San. While the BIA had been an irregular force, the BDA was recruited by selection and trained as a conventional army by Japanese instructors. In 1943 Japan declared Burma an

independent country as the State of Burma, and BDA was renamed the Burma National Army (BNA). A puppet government was formed declaring Dr Ba Maw Head of the State who chose Aung San, Ko Nu and some other nationalists as his cabinet members (visit Japanese occupation of Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British rule in Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; see Charney 2009; Desai 1968; Harvey 1992; Myint-U 2008; Newell: *Burma, 1942*; Hogan: *India-Burma*; MacGarrigle: *Central Burma*; Chew 1969; Marshall 2002; Tucker 2001; Guyot 2004; Taylor 1987; Smith 1991; Encyclopaedia Britannica 2005).

It soon became apparent that the Japanese promises of independence were merely a sham, and they had no intention of giving independence to Burma in actual sense. Being triggered by Japanese intrigue, Aung San and other nationalist leaders formed the Anti-Fascist Organization (AFO), which was later renamed the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). This organization roundly opposed the Japanese fascism, and made a strong campaign against Japan. Having no way out, the Burmese leaders made a contact with the exiled colonial government in India. As the war turned against Japan, the Burmese nationalists asked the British to form a coalition with other Allies against the Japanese. By 1945, the Allies drove out the Japanese from Burma, and British troops regained control over most of the colony. Subsequently, the Burmese began negotiations with the British for their independence and finally, they got it. The Burmese got back their independence from the British, but they had to pay heavily. During less than six months before the independence, the Burmese lost some of their bright revolutionary sons through the brutal assassination of Aung San and several other nationalists on 19 July 1947. It has been alleged that U Saw, the conservative leader of Burma, engineered the assassination. Aung San might be compared with the great Indian nationalist Mahatma Gandhi, who created a vacuum in the then Indian politics through his own assassination. With the same vacuum throughout the nation, Burma became independent on 4 January 1948. Ko Nu, the Socialist leader and Aung San's close associate, formed a new cabinet of independent Burma. Anti-British popular sentiment was so strong at the time that Burma opted not to join the Commonwealth of Nations, unlike India (visit Japanese occupation of Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; British rule in Burma: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; see Charney 2009; Desai 1968; Harvey 1992; Myint-U 2008; Newell: *Burma, 1942*; Hogan: *India-Burma*; MacGarrigle: *Central Burma*; Chew 1969; Marshall 2002; Tucker 2001; Guyot 2004; Taylor 1987; Smith 1991; Encyclopaedia Britannica 2005).

In the aftermath of partition, a huge population exchange occurred between the two newly formed states. About 14.5 million people crossed the borders, including 7,226,000 Muslims who came to Pakistan from India while 7,295,000 Hindus and Sikhs moved to India from Pakistan. Of the 6.5 million Muslims that came to West Pakistan (now Pakistan), about 5.3 million settled in Punjab of Pakistan and around 1.2 million settled in Sindh. The other 0.7 million Muslims went to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Most of those migrants who settled in Punjab of Pakistan came from the neighbouring Indian regions of Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh while others were from Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan. On the other hand, most of those migrants who arrived in Sindh were primarily of Urdu-speaking background (termed as Muhajir people) and came from the northern and central urban centres of India, such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan via

the Wahgah and Munabao borders; however a limited number of Muhajirs also arrived by air and on ships. People who wished to go to India from all over Sindh awaited their departure to India by ship at the Swaminarayan temple in Karachi and were visited by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan. Later in 1950s, the majority of Urdu speaking refugees who migrated after the independence were settled in the port city of Karachi in southern Sindh and in the metropolitan cities of Hyderabad, Sukkur, Nawabshah and Mirpurkhas. In addition, some Urdu-speakers settled in the cities of Punjab, mainly in Lahore, Multan, Bahawalpur and Rawalpindi. The number of migrants in Sindh was placed at over 1,167,000 of whom 617,000 went to Karachi alone. Karachi grew from a population of around 400,000 in 1947 into more than 1.3 million in 1953 (visit Partition of India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; see Bandyopadhyaya 2004; Brown 1994; Markovits 2004; Robb 2011; Wolpert 2008).

The Partition was a highly controversial arrangement, and remains a cause of much tension on the Indian Subcontinent today. The British Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten of Burma has not only been accused of rushing the process through, but also is alleged to have influenced the Radcliffe Line in India's favour. However, the commission took so long to decide on a final boundary that the two nations were granted their independence even before there was a defined boundary between them. Even then, the members were so distraught at their handiwork (and its results) that they refused compensation for their time on the commission. Some critics allege that British haste led to the cruelties of the Partition. Because independence was declared prior to the actual Partition, it was up to the new governments of India and Pakistan to keep public order. No large population movements were contemplated; the plan called for safeguards for minorities on both sides of the new border. It was a task at which both states failed. There was a complete breakdown of law and order; many died in riots, massacre, or just from the hardships of their flight to safety. What ensued was one of the largest population movements in recorded history. According to Richard Symonds, at the lowest estimate, half a million people perished and twelve million became homeless. However, many argue that the British were forced to expedite the Partition by events on the ground. Once in office, Mountbatten quickly became aware if Britain were to avoid involvement in a civil war, which seemed increasingly likely, there was no alternative to partition and a hasty exit from India. Law and order had broken down many times before Partition, with much bloodshed on both sides. A massive civil war was looming by the time Mountbatten became Viceroy. After the Second World War, Britain had limited resources, perhaps insufficient to the task of keeping order. Another viewpoint is that while Mountbatten may have been too hasty he had no real options left, and achieved the best he could under difficult circumstances. The historian Lawrence James concurs that in 1947 Mountbatten was left with no option but to cut and run. The alternative seemed to be involvement in a potentially bloody civil war from which it would be difficult to get out. Conservative elements in England consider the partition of India to be the moment that the British Empire ceased to be a world power, following Curzon's dictum: "the loss of India would mean that Britain drop straight away to a third rate power" (visit Partition of India: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; see Bandyopadhyaya 2004; Brown 1994; Markovits 2004; Robb 2011; Wolpert 2008).

Separation and Border Crossings in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction

More than 65 years after the independence, works of fiction are being made on the gruesome incidents of separation and border crossings of the British colonization of India and Burma, and their aftermath effects. Literature describing the human cost of independence and partition comprises the fiction, among others, Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and *The Glass Palace*. The independence and separation are the aftermath feedback of the independence movements of both Burma and India that take long years of devastation and bloodshed. While *The Shadow Lines* is set against the backdrop of historical events such as Swadeshi Movement, Second World War, Partition of India, and Communal Riots of 1963-64 in Dhaka and Calcutta; *The Glass Palace* is set in Burma, Bengal, India, and Malay, spanning through a century from the fall of Konbaung Dynasty in Mandalay to modern times through the Second World War. The factors of postcolonial studies related to separation and border crossings are clearly found in these two works of Amitav Ghosh (visit *The Shadow Lines*: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; *The Glass Palace*: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

In *The shadow Lines*, Ghosh wants to expose the futility of sub-continental politics that intends to erase the truth of human lives by imposing 'shadow lines' of divisions. He goes behind the facade of history and political events through the complexities of personal and social interactions. In this book, Ghosh complicates the classical mapping of the world into East and West by dividing his novel into two parts, 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home'. The irony is that his characters come and go in so many directions that the narrator is obliged to pose the question, what is home, and is there such a thing as a discrete homeland separable from one's experiences elsewhere? The shifting of the narrator's family from Dhaka to Calcutta after the formation of East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) is the major traumatic experience of separation and border crossings, which we find also in *The Glass Palace* when the Burmese royal family is deported from their palace in Burma. The mutual understanding and relationship of the narrator's family with an English family in London shows the web of complex series of cultural crossings beyond the borders. The narrator's cousin, Ila's dwelling in borderless space, and her ultimate settling in London gives us another trauma of cultural diversity. The lives of three generations of the narrator's family are woven together in the cities such as Dhaka, Calcutta and London. The members of this diasporic family do not inhabit a culture rooted in a single place, but a discursive space that flows across political and national boundaries, and even across generations in time (see Dixon 1996).

The formation of nation is a major tool in the process of colonization. This nation-formation involves a poignant dispersal and scattering of people across man-made borders. The wide movement of people in the recent history of human race in the wake of imperialist and expansionist programmes across Africa and eastward in Asia bear adequate testimony to this. *The Shadow Lines* and *The Glass Palace* record the experiences of such races inhabiting British occupied territories in South East Asia, who are dying to make their own nation. Ghosh thinks that nations are both 'real' and 'imaginary', material and immaterial, and the borders that separate them are 'shadow lines'. That is why the narrator's grandmother (Tha'mma) 'wanted to know whether she would be able to see the border between India and

East Pakistan from the plane' (151). Ghosh realizes that distance is as much a figurative concept as it is a physical one. So, the physical space of the nation, and the location of its borders, - as represented by the map- may not necessarily coincide with the 'imagined community' that is brought into being through the language of nationhood, to the perplexity of the grandmother who "had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality" (152). The arbitrariness of borders, and the gap between maps and reality, could have been personally vouched for by millions of people during the partition of 1947 as they found themselves on the wrong side of a border hastily drawn up by Cyril Radcliffe and his Boundary Commission, which partitioned an entire subcontinent without leaving its offices in Delhi by using out-of-date and inaccurate maps (see Mondal 2010).

The return visit of the narrator's family to the old family home in Dhaka in 1964 gives a trauma of separation and anxiety with variety of ironies. The grandmother wants to bring her old uncle (Jethamoshai) back from Dhaka to Calcutta. She is still very much nostalgic for the 'classical' conception of cultures, and Dhaka is the goal of her ritual homecoming. Though East Pakistan was their real home, now it has become a foreign land, and its people have become the foreigners. She believes that her children should not be mixing with English people, who were their merciless and hated colonizers, and who were sole responsible for their separation and anxiety. That is why she is particularly critical of her sister, Mayadebi's granddaughter, Ila for living in England and hoarsely points out: "Ila has no right to live there...She doesn't belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, years and years of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood...War is their religion. That's what it takes to make a country" (77-78). Expressing her deep anguish for separation and border crossings the grandmother becomes surprised to see, when she looks down from the plane as they pass from India into East Pakistan, that there is no visible border on the ground, and asks, "if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same; it'll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then—partition and all the killing and everything—if there isn't something in between?" (151). Her old uncle in Dhaka gives the final blow to her view of the world when he refuses to go back to Calcutta, even denying the existence of borders and separation in reality. Posing a panel of bitter questions he says, "I don't believe in this India-Shindia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they (the colonizers and the so-called native elites) decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I'll die here" (215) (see Dixon 1996; Swain 1999).

The 'reality' is the complex web of relationships between people that cut across nations and across generations. In his critique of nationalism, Ghosh's narrator celebrates 'that indivisible sanity that binds people to each other independently of their governments' (230). After the trip to East Pakistan, he looks at Tridib's 'old Bartholomew's Atlas', measuring the distances

between nations with the 'rusty old compass', and reflects on the disjunction between memory, human experience and national boundaries. He realizes that the Euclidean space of the atlas has nothing to do with the cognitive and cultural space: "I was struck with wonder that there had really been a time, not so long ago, when people, sensible people, of good intention, had thought that all maps were the same, that there was a special enchantment in lines; I had to remind myself that they were not to be blamed for believing that there was something admirable in moving violence to the borders and dealing with it through science and factories, for that was the pattern of the world. They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of the prehistoric Gondwanaland. What had they felt, I wondered, when they discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet-undiscovered irony—the irony that killed Tridib: the simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines—so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free—our looking-glass border" (233). Thus *The Shadow Lines* builds up its critique of cultural borders upon the notion of a universal humanity. The final act of the book, the biological union between May Price and the narrator at his last night in London, gives us 'the glimpse...of a final redemptive mystery' (252)—the mystery of lived human experience that transcends the artificial borders of nation and race. Ghosh seems to suggest that there can only be a 'shadow line' between imagination and reality, since reality is too vast and complex a concept to be circumscribed within historical chronology or geographical contours. A place is more than its geographical and historical features. It carries a deep imaginative meaning (see Dixon 1996; Swain 1999).

Being a great humanist, Amitav Ghosh raises his sharp voices against the oppression and tyranny of the imperialists upon the conquered nations in *The Glass Palace*. The novel is divided into seven parts and each section highlights the various important aspects of Ghosh's postcolonial stance that rests upon reliably old-fashioned narrative foundations. The opening section of the novel is called "Mandalay" that deals with the British invasion of Burma, and the surrender of the Burmese royal couple, King Thebaw and Queen Supalayay, along with their family members after the Anglo-Burmese war of 1885. Before their shifting to the ship that is waiting to take them into exile, the common Burmese public with the help of the British soldiers loot the precious goods of the royal family, and ransack the palace. The plunder described in this section in the large frame of the novel transcends its literal significance to become a metaphor for the raw and naked greed of the colonizers that sets the tone of gruesome experience of separation and border crossings (visit Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in; www.the-criterion.com).

The novel's second section, "Ratnagiri" depicts the calamitous effects of imperialism in a fictional way. With the expulsion of the deposed King Thebaw and his family, monarchy comes to an abrupt end, and Burma becomes a part of the British Empire in India. Ratnagiri is depicted as a place of exile and isolation. King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat of Konbaung

Dynasty of Burma along with their children were exiled to a relatively secluded place called Ratnagiri in Maharashtra of India. Ghosh talks about the alienation associated with loss of one's native place and the role of memory in appropriating such feeling of isolation, what exactly we find in the expatriate characters in *The Shadow Lines* who have migrated from East Pakistan to West Bengal after the partition. King Thebaw, along with all the members of the royal family is deported from Mandalay not to any big cities like Calcutta or Madras, but to a remote place like Ratnagiri. The family along with few servants like Dolly is kept under house arrest with prohibition even on the prospect of their children getting married and continuing their lineage in future. The figure of King Thebaw appears in Ghosh's narrative as that of a survivor who has remained alive but has been robbed off the essence of living. He shrinks back into his own isolated state of existence and never proactively thinks any kind of resistance to the colonial masters. The kind of alienation that Thebaw draws through his isolated state is one of an oppressed native who is helplessly committed in remaining silent and withdrawn in face of his imposed exile. The following sections deal with the Japanese occupation of Burma and the subsequent departure of the British as well as the Japanese from Burma along with the suppressed and oppressed livelihood of the postcolonial elites and commoners beyond borders through a few generations (visit Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in; www.the-criterion.com).

King Thebaw is one of the many examples on whom colonialism has the worst effect. However, on the other hand, Queen Supayalat is a proud bearer of the royal blood who refuses to be controlled and even goes to the extent of allowing her eldest daughter give birth to a child conceived by her after an illicit affair with Mohan Sawant, one of the servants in the palace. She lashes out at the English officer and declares that she would not let the colonizers have the privilege of seeing them perish without leaving a mark, instead makes it clear that no one except her is allowed to control her house at least if not her kingdom, and groans: "We were the first to be imprisoned in the name of their progress; millions more will follow. This is what awaits us all: this is how we will all end – as prisoners, in shantytowns born of the plague. A hundred years hence you will read the indictment of Europe's greed in the difference between the Kingdom of Siam and the state of our own enslaved realm" (88). Ghosh depicts the effects of colonialism giving a picture of these horrifying incidents that were rampant in the South Asian region. Not only were the native rulers deported far away from their kingdom, but also they were kept isolated in such obscure places that life almost came to a standstill and there was nothing left to, but to keep on waiting for death. Through King Thebaw's life, Ghosh draws the ugly face of colonization which banks its existence on capitalism and extreme economic exploitation of the colonies (visit Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in; www.the-criterion.com).

The Glass Place is the author's attempt to remap the history of three South Asian countries-- Myanmar, India and Malaysia. The turbulent cultural crossovers, conflicts, histories and nations as a metaphor of loss make up the central concern of Ghosh. Rajkumar Raha, the chief protagonist of the novel, epitomizes the lost, exiled and homeless native whose family is further scattered in the course of the novel through post imperialist dislocation in various parts of the Asian continent. The novel contains a proliferation of characters which include the privileged as well as the subaltern. The royal family-King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat and

the Burmese princesses; and the commoners like Dolly, Rajkumar, Saya John and Uma are united ironically by the gales of colonial displacement. Rajkumar is initially a Bengali subaltern who comes out as a true transnational post-colonial subject firstly by being a Kalaa, a derogatory term used for foreigners in an alien territory, then by being subjected to colonization of a more severe kind in participating in the great national upheaval that the British occupation of Burma entails, followed by another turbulent experience in imperial India and his foray into the Malayan forest resources. He, like Ila in *The Shadow Lines*, inhabits a truly borderless post-colonial space beyond the interstices of race, class and nation in which his life is enmeshed. The hybrid nature of the colonized-subaltern who evolves himself into an affluent businessman and comes to resemble the colonizer is revealed through the character of Rajkumar, who grows up from a petty immigrant lad, through his apprenticeship as a luga lei under Saya John, to a merchant who is revered in the timber trading circles of Burma. Saya John, his mentor, is another transnational from China who evolves himself into a semblance of Europeans in his garb and manner. Saya John instructs Rajkumar in the life of young Europeans who taught them how 'to bend the work of nature to your will' (75). Saya John's conception that the whole enterprise of logging timber from the forests could not have been possible without the Europeans' ingenuity; his knowledge of this and his imitation of the white Sahib's lifestyle, involves a compromise between the complete separation from the empire and complete dependence upon the empire for its existence (visit Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in; www.the-criterion.com).

The colonized subject's empathy with the fellow colonized, though of separate nationality, is apparent when Rajkumar expresses surprise at his own involvement with the general mourning at the sudden occupation of Burma and the loss of the king: "Rajkumar was at a loss to understand his greed. He was in a way, a feral creature, unaware that there exist invisible bonds linking people to one another through personifications of their commonality. In the Bengal of his birth those ties had been sundered by a century of conquests and no longer existed even as a memory....But that, there should exist a universe of loyalties that was unrelated to himself and his own immediate needs--this was very nearly incomprehensible" (47). The Burmese royal maid, Dolly too shares her predicament with Rajkumar. She feels the same incomprehensible loyalty to the royal family's deportment to India. She began to notice odd little changes around her, of the servants' impudence, their refusal to shiko and her own ambivalent position. She was free, she was told for she was a slave not a prisoner, but in her heart she knew she was bound with the princesses, who she had been enslaved to look after. Dolly, like the narrator's grandmother in *The Shadow Lines*, represents the colonized victim of the breaking of a nation. She embodies the quiet and subliminal aggression of dislocated subjects. Dolly's most haunting concern is that Burma, the place of her birth, is lost to her forever, what exactly Tha'mma does after her dislocation from Dhaka to Calcutta. Dolly's displacement from her roots and her discomfort with her changed identity is clear when she confides her predicament to Uma, the wife of newly appointed District Collector in Ratnagiri, Beni Prasad Dey, a Bengali-born British official of the Indian Civil Service who is responsible for looking after the Burmese Royal Family: "If I went to Burma now I would be a foreigner – they would call me a Kalaa like they do Indians – a trespasser, an outsider from across the sea. I'd find that very hard I think. I'd never be

able to rid myself of the idea that I would have to leave again one day, just as I had to before. You would understand if you knew what it was like when we left" (113). Tha'mma exactly thinks the same with a deep shock before making a return visit to Dhaka. Even the sharp reactions of Queen Supayalat against the colonizers remind us of the same reactions Tha'mma has made after her dislocation. The colonial subjects, thus, suffer from a sense of imaginary homeland having to suffer most of their lives in displaced locations. Dolly and Rajkumar both ironically have an allegiance to the nation of their exile or displacement which they have appropriated as home. For Dolly, her life in Outram House is the only life she knows and surprisingly she is the most assertive, in her place of exile. She asks Uma, "And where would I go? ...This is the only place I know. This is home"(119). Both Dolly and Uma are victims of the same colonial force and share a deep understanding and respect for each other's predicament. Dolly however, bears the burden of slavery also at the hands of the Burmese royalty (visit Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in; www.the-criterion.com).

The experience of these exiled victims of the breaking of nations is peculiar in the sense that they slide easily into alien cultures, at the same time triggering off the spirit of alienation, national longing and transnationalism in their divided identities. Ghosh's characterization of Rajkumar, the petty *luga lei* turned timber tycoon is a way of voicing the problematics of settling and resettling of communities and individuals amid the confluence of nations and nationalities. He is a true multicultural, a reinvented migrant, who, by dint of his enterprise, carves a niche for himself and escapes, landing in underclass ethnic ghettos. Uma, another Bengali-born Indian national like Rajkumar, like most of Ghosh's other characters such as Mayabedi and her granddaughter, Ila in *The Shadow Lines*, is a citizen of the world away from delimiting boundaries. Her sojourns to Europe and America after her husband's demise lead her to the Indian Nationalist movement. She subsequently brings her struggle to the subcontinent. The hybridity and adaptability of characters like Rajkumar and Uma robs exile of its derogatory connotations like suppression and oppression, and significantly mellows the binary relationship between colonized and colonizer (visit Shodhganga.Inflibnet.ac.in; www.the-criterion.com).

Conclusion

We find all of the related factors of separation and border crossings in the two books of Amitav Ghosh. His characters in these books are depicted based on the traumatic incidents of the British colonization of India and Burma. The voluntary and forced movements of Ghosh's characters from their homelands depict separation and anxiety of the colonial and postcolonial circumstances. Either eviction or expatriation produces worldwide diaspora through which come out some creole societies of diversified cultures. These cultural diversities in the exotic territories beyond borders create the sense of othering in the broken hearts of the settlers. Being alienated from the touch of their birth place, these migrated people are always in search of their roots in their new ethnicity.

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