

**Globalisation: Gleeful Gain of Interaction between the Conventional and the Contemporary as Witnessed in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason***

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**Abstract**

Literature, being an authentic universal reflection of reality, has been a fine source to visualize our image in it and thereby enhance and enrich the quality and quantity of real life. Naturally, it has sincerely shaped and reshaped the taste and turn of every straight soul and soil. Due to the glass of globalization, willingly or unwillingly the motif of journey undertaken by every sensitive soul has authentically and unanimously unveiled the tussle of thoughts in terms of realistic reason on the one hand humanitarian approach on the other. Amitav Ghosh, being the persistent preacher and valorous postmodern voyager has strenuously provided a platform to churn our thoughts and look at life from a new perspective. Almost all his novels have been successfully proved to be a powerful platform for the innate interaction of attentive arenas. The present paper will bring into lime light the blissful gain of optimistic and cyclical approach to life.

**Key Words :** Globalization, journey, reason, passion, optimism

Life has been always proved to be flowing and fluid due to literature too has been undergoing a sea change incessantly. Naturally, various isms and ideals, twists and turns, cuttings and under cuttings have been observed in the literature all over the world. With the advent of globalization, the local came into contact with the general that resulted into interactions and encounters of the local with the general and vice versa. The age old perseverance of limiting life to stereotyped conservative reliability underwent acute alteration due to the upsurge of idea of exchanging good for the better and better for the best.

Globalization has many meanings depending on the context and on the person who is talking about. It means the process by which

developments in one region can shape the lifestyles of people in other regions. Hence, it carefully compelled the local approaches to come on one platform where the age old conventions are questioned, requisitioned and in the end replaced by the new and the novel realizing the need of the hour. The effects of globalization on literature are numerous, with both positive and negative assets. To some extent these impacts are contentious which have been realistically revealed in the novels of the postmodern writers like Amitav Ghosh. Globalization has uncovered scientific reason which is made easy by the motif of journey undertaken by the writers like Amitav Ghosh. *The Circle of Reason*, his debut

novel has characters migrating from the local to the general.

Through the experiences of the migrant female Ghosh critiques both globalization and post-colonial nationalism. The chapter entitled *Becalmed* reveals and articulates Ghosh's vision of globalization as well as the plight of the migrating women. A miscellaneous group of migrants

includes Alu who's trying to escape the charge of an absurdly exaggerated village conflict; Zindi, who is the mastermind of this illegal migration and who, after being banished from her matrimonial home because of her barrenness, runs a house of prostitution. Karthamma in her last stage of pregnancy and Kulfi who have been picked by Zindi, Rakesh, an ex-travelling salesman of Ayurvedic laxatives which he could never sell; and Professor Samuel, forever obsessed with his theory of queues.

Robert Dixon suitably remarks:

"The characters in Ghosh's novels do not occupy discrete cultures, but dwell in travel in cultural spaces that flow across borders, the 'shadow lines' drawn around modern nation states." (1)

The characters of his novels are grouped into contemporary and customary contingents fighting for their own dogmatism. They are all aboard the multicultural boat on their way to al-Ghazira. The motley migrant group that travels from Mahe to al-Ghazira on the boat 'Mariamma' with their eclectic backgrounds, is a perfect illustration of the futility of divisions based on caste, race or

religion which has been the direct or indirect impact of globalization.

The main protagonist is Alu, whose picaresque adventures in the course of his journey from Lalpukur, across the Indian Ocean to the oil town of al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf, form both the setting and the chief concern of the novel. With Alu's entry in al-Ghazira, *Rajas* (passion) begins. To Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "Rajas has an outward movement-----Rajas is impurity which leads to activity." (2) Balram is a realistic rationalist to a great extent influenced by the French microbiologist Louis Pasteur. Being inhuman he regards people as mere objects of observation and, bumps to be studied and lives to be cleansed. This same cynical bent of mind literally leads him to his self destruction. Only Alu, his nephew survives in the family.

Balram's wife, unable to put up with, puts his books on fire. Alu succeeds in saving just one book –Life of Pasteur. Alu's world of cotton, an alternate ethos to Balram's *satwa*, too is found incompetent before the world of violence, commerce and destruction. The novel uncovers how something is achieved at the cost of something else which has been the direct impact of globalization. Alu loses his copy of Life of Pasteur-given by Balram on his death bed-but gets another one from Uma Verma. He sends this copy to the funeral pyre lit to cremate Kulfi, the servant maid which underlines that in the modern migrant world of strange and sudden connections and situations, wholeness and purity have to be abandoned. It is the human concern behind the action that gives it value.

Mrs Uma Verma counteracts rational thinking and tries to create Indian model of community life in the desert. When she fails to get cow dung for the ritual of the ground, she uses carbolic acid instead of Gangajal at the funeral of Kulfi. When Mishra objects to this, Uma Verma retorts, “All you ever talk about is rules. That’s how you and your kind have destroyed everything –science, religion, socialism- with your rules and orthodoxies. That’s the difference between us: you worry about rules and I worry about being human” (442). Through Mrs. Verma the author celebrates love that endures and nurtures humanity. To the remarks of Dr. Mishra, “The world has come full circle, he groaned. Carbolic acid has become holy water. (444).

Mrs. Verma utters: “What does it matter? She cried. What does it matter it’s Ganga-Jal or carbolic acid? It’s just a question of cleansing the place, isn’t it? People thought something was clean once, now they think something else is clean. What difference does it make to the dead, Dr. Mishra? (445).

This is a brutal blow on the blind belief of millions of Indians in Gangajal even though the water which was once so pure and germ-free is now very badly polluted. The Very advent of globalization furnished an opportunity for many authors to inspect and investigate the age old traditions accepted and admired in a particular region. In the same manner, the contemporary too realized their limitations. Hence, both Balram and Alu with their power of reason fail to save kulfi which unveils the fact that the course of action does not follow the path of reason always. The book Life of Pasteur itself

states, “.....without the germ ‘life would become impossible because death would be incomplete.” (428)

Through the novel Amitav Ghosh has given a blow to the unhealthy surroundings in India. All the Indian devotees are most concerned with the purity of their soul and body but are less concerned with the waste and filth in their holy places and rivers. Hence, Alu devotes to overcome germ and disease by using carbolic acid the cleansing agent. He tries to remove the ills of present day society. When he finally comes out, he declares that money is the enemy of mankind for “it travels on every man and every woman, silently preparing them for their defeat, turning one against the other” (3012). Money, the means of trade and tariff which has been the gain of globalization has totally transformed rational holy creatures into beasts.

Though Balram starts a school he fails to educate the youth to think rationally. The youth of the village are interested in learning practical skills essential for their regular survival. It underlines that Balram’s western science and reason without practical learning are failures in real life situations. This is a blow to the belief that science is a signifier of civilization. Naturally, non-scientific countries are not inferiors and need nothing from the advanced west. Thus, Balram haunted by the west finally relies on the 19<sup>th</sup> century pseudoscience Phrenology, which is close to Indian superstition of popular region and astrology that he opposes. All these things have unveiled that real life situations and basic qualities of the heart always supersede classroom

instructions. The death of Reason (Satwa) has been clearly visualized when Mrs. Verma utters, ““What does it matter whether it is Gangajal to be used for cleaning the place where kulfi’s dead body is to be placed of carbolic acid? It is just a question of cleaning the place, isn’t it? People thought something else is clean what difference does it make to the dead?” (411).

In a way, Mrs. Verma has some logic in it and the above view has been put forth in the following way by Shubha Tiwari:

“Ghosh is of course pointing out to the blind faith of millions of Indians in Ganga Jal even though the water of the life-giving river is so badly polluted. (3)

Kavita Dahiya has rightly assessed the gem of globalization found in the novel as:

“In *The Circle of Reason* through the experiences of poor and middle class female migrants, Ghosh makes visible the bodily and psychic violence done to those who are minor to the hegemonic languages of the nation and of globalization - by their class, gender, race or ethnicity ...he reveals how the much celebrated global flow of human bodies and its associated tropes of empowerment can also be differently, and violently objecting processes – processes that disempower by stripping away the realization of equal citizenship for those marked other by their race, ethnicity, gender and class belonging.”(4)

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