

Dalit Protagonists in the Novels of Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Study of Dalit Emancipation

Dr. Jai Singh^{1*}

^{1*}Associate Professor Department of English Literature, The English and Foreign Languages University Hyderabad
Orcid Id: 0000-0002-5235-7330

Abstract

In one of his interviews, Amitav Ghosh says that literature cannot be analyzed as a political act; however, this proposition itself is a political statement wherein the pressures working on the writer and their precipitation in the writing are considered part of power relations present in all texts. According to Terry Eagleton, the power of texts resides in their suppression of what might be called their modes of production. Amitav Ghosh assigned important roles to Dalit characters in his novels however, like most of the upper caste Indian writers his diagnosis of the problems of Dalit life is wrong, he also finds the root cause of the problem in the unclean work they are doing. Because of the wrong diagnosis, their elucidations help the hegemonic castes and classes instead of serving the Dalits. Amitav Ghosh proposes the solutions of untouchables problems through NGO in *The Hungry Tide*, taking the Dalit character to foreign land in *The Glass Palace*, in *Ibis Trilogy* where they are face to face with death and forget caste differences and he tries to convert a physically challenged Brahmin boy to a lower caste who is already considered an outcaste due to physical deformity in *The Circle of Reason*. However, the introduction of flush systems, televisions, and founding NGO have proved more helpful to the upper castes. This paper analyzes the novels of Amitav Ghosh by taking into consideration the complex relationship between external colonialism, internal colonialism, and life of Dalits in India and abroad along with possibilities for their emancipation.

Key Words: aestheticism and ethical concerns, modes of production, Dalit life, close local community participation, elite culture of nationalism, indentured labour, caste-based exploitation.

Amitav Ghosh, in his interview given to Chitra Sankaran, recorded under the title “Introduction: Beyond Borders and Boundaries,” Published in *History, Narrative, and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh’s Fiction* proclaims that he is against the politicizing of literature, and he foregrounds the ethical dimension of the literature when he says, I hear a lot of writers say that writing is all political. I think they’re really misusing the word “political.” I think what they really mean to say is that writing is fundamentally ethical. And it’s something that writers feel discomfort with because they don’t want to think of themselves as being moralizers or this and that. But in fact that is really what it is. I mean a writer reflects continuously on ethics, on morality, the state of things in the world. Some do it by, as it were, reflecting on the immoral [laughs]. Some do it by reflecting upon conscious ethics or conscious morality. But I think it’s really impossible for people to pretend that writing does not address issues of ethics . . . it does. It just constantly addresses the issue of “who are you,” “what is right conduct, what is wrong conduct.” (13)

When Amitav Ghosh says that literature cannot be analyzed as a political act, he adopts a position that looks at literature as a neutral entity so that the politics of caste, class, and various other types ingrained in the literature can be justified as a naturalized entity. This proposition of Amitav Ghosh itself is a political statement wherein the pressures working on the writer and the precipitation of these pressures in the writing are considered part of the power relations present in all texts. Terry Eagleton in his *Literary Theory* (1996) foregrounds that the over-emphasis on aestheticism and ethical concerns in literature is also a part of power politics as he says, power of a text lies in the fact that:

The text does not allow the reader to see how the facts it contains were selected, what was excluded, why these facts were organized in this particular way, what assumptions governed this process, . . . Part of the power of such texts thus lies in their suppression of what might be called their modes of production . . . (147-148)

Further in his *Ideology: An Introduction* he problematizes the turn towards abstract nature of literature when Terry Eagleton says, “It is much harder to grasp how they may come to do so in the name of something as apparently abstract as ideas. Yet ideas are what men and women live by and occasionally die for” (XIII). Terry Eagleton’s proposition can be applied to understand Amitav Ghosh’s depiction of Dalit characters in his novels. He assigned important roles to Dalit characters in his novels, however like most of the upper caste Indian writers his diagnosis of the problems of Dalit life is wrong, he also finds the root cause of the problem in the unclean work they are doing. Because of the wrong diagnosis, their elucidations help the hegemonic castes and classes instead of serving the Dalits. For instance, Mulk Raj Anand in his *Untouchable* tries to resolve the issue of untouchability by presenting flush toilet. Arundhati Roy attempts to resolve the issue of untouchability through the introduction of Television. In the same way, Amitav Ghosh also find the solutions of untouchables problems in the establishment of an NGO in *The Hungry Tide*, taking the Dalit character to foreign land in *The Glass Palace*, and in *Ibis Trilogy* putting them face to face with death wherein they forget caste differences and in his *The Circle of Reason* he demotes a physically challenged Brahmin boy to a lower caste who is already considered an

outcaste due to physical deformity. The introduction of flush systems, televisions, and founding NGO have proved more helpful to the upper castes.

The option of socio-political and economic awareness among the Dalits to achieve social and economic upliftment, which can be termed as Dalits' effort for independence, is disregarded by most of these authors including Amitav Ghosh when he finds a solution to the problems faced by Dalits in the formation of an NGO in his *The Hungry Tide*. In this novel an NRI, Piya decides to start a conservation project in Fokir's name with apparently close local participation. This solution is quite naïve and one-dimensional because all the ventures started with neo-colonial capitalist forces talk about close local participation but destroy the locals first. For instance, Sahara India's project proposal, which was opposed by Amitav Ghosh himself, had also envisioned close local community participation to encourage tourism, which assured sustainable socio-economic development of the people. Michael Goldman in his "Constructing an Environmental State: Eco-governmentality and other Transnational Practices of a 'Green' World Bank" published in *Social Problems* foregrounds that "Constructing an Environmental State: Eco-governmentality and other Transnational Practices of a 'Green' World Bank", problematizes the terms like "sustainable development", "community participation" and propounds that these terms are used by global corporate structures "to classify, colonize, and transnationalize territory in the name of eco-governance" (499).

The *The Hungry Tide* promotes NGO culture starting from Hamilton's project, progressing to Nilima's Badabon Trust, and ending with Piya's NGO that she starts in the name of Fokir. Amitav Ghosh in this novel attempts to demonstrate that these organizations work for the Dalits; however, configuration of these organizations divulges that none of them includes any of the Dalits in the process of policymaking. Hamilton's project and Nilima's Badabon Trust are wholly undemocratic establishments and ignore Dalits from process of policymaking. The author undermines the role of the state apparatus, which is apparently a democratic establishment, and the Dalits can become policy makers if organized politically. Amitav Ghosh evades the possibility of political awareness and organization of the Dalits politically that can encounter the hegemony of upper castes in India however when his Dalit characters are outside India they make progress like Rajkumar and his illegitimate son Ilongo are successful in *The Glass Palace*. Therefore, Amitav Ghosh seems to support the organizations that are completely in the hands of the upper castes.

Amitav Ghosh neglects many historical realities foregrounded by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, "the elite culture of nationalism that participated and participates with the colonizer in various ways" (245) and he also seems to blame the nation state. The author does not highlight the particular attitude of upper castes and classes towards the lower caste people, which was reflected in both the policies of West Bengal government on the one hand and the general attitude of middle and upper caste intelligentsia towards untouchable migrants. Ghosh uses Dalit refugees migrating from Bangladesh to challenge the nation state and hides the general attitude of the upper castes towards lower castes. The ruling classes were aware that if the lower castes got the chance to organize politically they will pose a serious challenge to the power structure established only to help the upper castes therefore they dispersed most of the untouchable migrants who came from Bangladesh out of the state. By doing so, the ruling castes effectively dissolved the Namasudra Movement and, thereby enhanced the dominance of the traditional Bengali tri-caste elite. Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Hungry Tide* foregrounds only the pro-Dalit attitude of the press owned by the upper caste and class by putting down only the positive role played by media when he records,

[A] young man had somehow made his way to Kolkata where he talked at length to the newspapers....A furor broke out, citizens' groups filed petitions, questions were asked in the legislature and finally the High Court ruled that barricading the settlers was illegal; the siege would have to be lifted" (emphasis in the original). (260)

Here again, the author hides the fact that the anti-Dalit opinion was created among the masses by the same media as Nilanjana Chatterjee in her paper "Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence" foregrounds,

Cartoons that appeared in Calcutta newspapers revealing public apprehension regarding the costs of assisting a large population of East Bengali refugees....In *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, issue dated 14 January 1950; West Bengal was depicted lying in a hospital bed with various ailments including "refugee-itis....A worried visitor was shown asking the attendant doctor, Chief Minister B.C. Roy, if the case was hopeless. (6)

The powerful media associated the influx of thousands of East Bengali refugees with every malaise from overcrowding, squalor, social disintegration and soaring crime rates to unemployment and the rising cost of living and constructed an anti-Dalit-Refugee public opinion. By following Nilanjana Chatterjee's argument in her paper titled "Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence", the "government's mistrust of the refugees reflected that of the general West Bengali population's" (6).

In his *The Circle of Reason*, he attempts a reversal in caste, an upper caste moves down the social ladder. The novel is divided into three sections- Satwa, Rajas and Tamas taken from Hindu scriptures and incorporated the pseudo-sciences like phrenology along with the real science. Julius Lipner in his *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* foregrounds the meaning and significance of these concepts in Hindu life when he says:

sattva [this spelling in original] [...I produce[s] experiences and dispositions which we characterise as serenity, peace, compassion, benevolence, kindness, forgiveness, awareness, intelligence, insight, clarity of mind, etc. Likewise, rajas produces passionate mental and moral activity (a mercurial temperament, volubility, wrath, lust, etc.) [...], while the modifications of tamas give rise to such things as sloth, stupidity, mental confusion, cowardice, and so on. (243)

These concepts, as part of socio-cultural and philosophical discourses, are used in discriminatory practices, and their projection into medical discourse further naturalizes the discrimination. Apparently, the novel starts a debate about India's modernization and focuses on issues of caste, science, secularism, etc. However, a socio-cultural reading of the novel reveals that Amitav Ghosh uses Alu's movement to the level of the untouchables to underscore tragedy. Furthermore, the author's treatment of all these issues shows Indians as irrational, unscientific, and incapable of managing life on their own. The way Ghosh tries to abolish caste is quite fanciful and irrational because caste cannot be abolished in the real life of India. In his *The Circle of Reason*, Amitav Ghosh takes the help of phrenology to abolish caste of Alu, an upper-caste by birth and degraded to a weaver caste, a lower caste and ironically he ends up in confirming the caste, "His intuition was proved right in every detail: Alu's body, his hands, his legs, his arms, not to speak of the Organ, corresponded exactly to his calculations of the proportions ideal for a weaver" (59). The origin of caste has nothing to do with astrology or phrenology; rather, economic and social exploitation is the root cause of caste-based discrimination. The author himself, from an upper-caste society, does not opt for practical solutions based on social and economic equality, as suggested by Jyotirao Phule, B. R. Ambedkar, and many others; rather, he turns to phrenology, which is only a substitute for astrology as a means to eradicate caste-based discrimination.

In his novel *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh represents Dalits in very derogatory terms. Throughout the novel, the nation, nationalism, and transnationalism discussed belong to the middle and upper-middle classes and upper castes. The people of lower strata have never been part of the nation; rather, they are victims of nationalism that provides full security and legal support to the rich and the privileged so that they can exploit them. The author, instead of finding fault with the upper caste people, who have hijacked the nation and state, finds fault with Dalits as if they have all the facilities at their disposal but are too timid and lazy to use them. Moreover, he does not investigate the reasons for their poverty; rather, through his child narrator, he constructs a scene that evokes disgust and shame towards them. Even a cursory look into the caste-based discrimination and exploitation in India will show that the writer is partial in the depiction of Dalits. He also neglects the vital fact that when the upper caste people migrated from East Pakistan, they were provided with all facilities, they got jobs, and their colonies were regularized. On the other hand, when the lower caste people migrated, they were treated like intruders, and the state and society both behaved like antagonists towards them. Amitav Ghosh neglects all these facts in his novel *The Shadow Lines* and portrays the lower caste people as worms in filth by choice when he says:

I could see women squatting at the edges of the pools, splashing with both hands to drive back the layers of sludge, scooping up the cleaner water underneath to scrub their babies and wash their clothes and cooking utensils... they had sacks slung over their shoulders. They were picking bits of rubble off the slopes and dropping them into their sacks. I could only see them when they moved; when they were still they disappeared completely – they were perfectly camouflaged, like chameleons, because everything on them, their clothes, their sacks, their skins, was the uniform matt black of the sludge in the pools. (147)

He compares them to chameleons, creatures that change color with their surroundings and are very difficult to detect. The metaphor is very important here because it puts all responsibility on the lower caste people for their backwardness and poverty. The nation cannot help them out of this situation because they hide themselves from the nation. However, the situation is just opposite; there is no nation for the lower caste. Whatever nation is there, it is in the grip of the upper caste upper class only, which is evident from the resources at the disposal of Ila's family. It is the same nation Tha'mma and her family want to get through various means like education, violent nationalism, etc. Very cleverly, the author associates the inability to work hard in the field of education with poverty and untouchability, when in his novel *The Shadow Lines*, he says, "I had grown up with it. It was that landscape that lent the note of hysteria to my mother's voice when she drilled me for my examinations; it was to those slopes she pointed when she told me that if I didn't study hard I would end up over *there*, that the only weapon people like us had was our brains and if we didn't use them like claws to cling to what we'd got, that was where we'd end up, marooned in that landscape" (emphasis in the original) (148). It is contrary to the facts because the rich people are rich even without any great success in education for instance Tridib is just ordinary student but has all the resources, similarly Ila has no success stories to tell as far as her education is concerned but again enjoying the life to full extent. It is the nation as an apparatus that provides for their luxurious life by exploiting its own lower caste and class people.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, he depicts two Dalits: Mangala and Lutchman doing experiments in a colonial laboratory and they play an important role the discovery of Anopheles Mosquitoes as carriers of malarial parasites; however, they practice witchcraft side by side. Their depiction is suitable more for witch doctors than scientists. A Dalit can become a scientist after proper education and training; even a witch doctor may use various principles of natural sciences consciously or unconsciously, it is scientific temperament that matters, Mangala and Lutchman as representatives of Dalits are shown lacking scientific temperament.

In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh deals with Dalits as first wave of India Diaspora or rather indentured labor. However, he is partial in his depiction of lower caste Diaspora and Upper caste Diaspora. He depicts the lower caste Diaspora as a part of British colonial system, victimizer and inhumane and upper caste Diaspora as nationalist and humane. However, the upper caste Diaspora nationalists projected by Ghosh, as Indian Nationalists are only supporters of orthodox religion based nationalism.

The Indian diaspora belonging to lower caste and lower class played an important part in pre-British period as well as during British period. Ghosh singles out poor Indians who migrated during British colonial period to show how they helped the British capitalist ventures in the colonies. Usha Mahajani quotes H. N. Kunzru in her *The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya* to foreground that the picture was not rosy rather the migrant labour were put in the inhuman conditions in which they were forced to live and the role of British Government in their migration when he says, “No Indian can read the story of Indian labour emigration in different parts of the world without a deep humiliation. Its emigration was favoured and supported by the Government of India” (Mahajani: v). Even the colonial records also indicate the hard life of Indian migrants to other British colonies as indicated by a colonial officer H. L. Stevenson quoted in Narayana A. Rao’s *Indian Labour in Burma* quotes wherein he describes the life of a lower caste Indian migrant as “a victim, from the time he leaves his home in Madras, to the day when broken, debilitated, a moral and physical wreck, he is thrown aside . . . to die in the gutter” (12). However, the situation in India was no better, as Jotirao Phule pointed out in his writings, in which he blamed both Brahmanical internal colonization and British colonization. Under such circumstances, migration was the only way left for poor Indians.

Once the lower caste Indians migrated as indentured labor, the future that awaits them is the same that they could expect in India, or rather better, in no case worse than the future they can expect in India. Not all indentured laborers are successful like Rajkumar, however, the best thing is that they are participants in the competition for social, economic, and political upliftment, which is denied to them in India due to caste hierarchies, as the canonical book of Hindu legislature, *Laws of Manu* translated by Georg Buhler, foregrounds, “No collection of wealth must be made by a Sudra, even though he be able (to do it); for a Sudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brahmanas” (430).

The hegemonic position of this canonical text in India and the way it is followed by various rulers make it clear that the situation of lower-caste Indians cannot be improved in India; going abroad is risky, but it also provides an opportunity. The upward movement for indentured labor is scarce, and many of them end up in a situation similar to what awaits them in India, as pointed out in George Orwell’s, *Burmese Days*:

Old Mattu, the Hindu *durwan* . . . was an old fever-stricken creature, more like a grasshopper than a human being, and dressed in a few square inches of dingy rag. . . . Behold there the degeneracy of the East, . . . Look at the wretchedness of his limbs. The calves of his legs are not so thick as an Englishman’s wrists. Look at his abjectness and servility. Look at his ignorance—such ignorance as his not known in Europe outside a home for mental defectives (emphasis in the original) (41).

This depiction of the Indian lower caste in Burma indicates that they have been exploited by the Indian society for centuries and then taken by the British colonial authorities to their colonies as cheap labor. However, Ghosh is different from Orwell in the depiction of lower caste Indians because in Ghosh, they struggle and make a place for themselves in the world. However, Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Glass Palace* makes it clear that by the success of a few Indian poor abroad, “we must *not* be deceived by the idea that imperialism is an enterprise of reform” (emphasis in the original) (294). Hugh Tinker in his *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920* foregrounds that primarily the colonial capitalist forces treated Indian poor people as “units of production, not people, were exported across the seas to supply the demand [for labor]” (38), however “somehow they remained people all the same” (38), as in case of Rajkumar. This transformation is possible because the colonial system was not caste-based exploitation that is why it allowed at least a few to move upwards however; however, Ghosh in this novel does not depict the conflict in the life of untouchables and the subalterns between attraction to develop proximity with colonial masters and the difficulty to come out of Brahmanical colonialism.

Ghosh in his novel *The Glass Palace* portrays Rajkumar, a social out-caste as an ambitious person but instead of locating the source of transformation in his self he locates it in his being a tool in the hands of British colonial forces when he decides to accompany Baburao, an experienced Indian coolie recruiter, to earn money so that he can enter into business something rare for a lower caste in India. If looked as a reaction to Brahmanical colonization as opposed to a reaction to the British colonialism it is an achievement on the part of British colonialism to make an entrepreneur out of an outcaste who is not allowed to save money as per the *Laws of Manu*, the canonical text of rules and regulations for orthodox Hindus.

Shanthini Pillai in the essay titled “Resignifying “Coolie”: Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*.” Published in *History, Narrative, and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh’s Fiction* does not take into consideration the real life problems of the untouchables and therefore does not consider the Indian caste system as a suffocating system for the marginal sections; they see only Rajkumar and Baburao’s complicity with the colonizers and describe it as an ill effect of British colonialism. Yet, this ironically leads recruiters like Baburao (and later Rajkumar himself) to share in the burden of imperial culpability in selling the myth of the “Promised Land” to the peasants in India and by so doing, share the spaces on board the stage of colonialist expansion in the Far East. They are not nameless stagehands or extras but have their own names and their own individualities, thus creatively resignified in the forefront of the stage. (56-57)

These critics are either unaware or do not want to acknowledge the fact that these peasants were actually lower caste agricultural laborers without land of their own and the upper caste landlords used to be very cruel to them. Most of them used to be bonded laborers and their condition was worse than that of slaves. Therefore moving out of India for them was like an escape from the worst slavery to a bad one. Baburao, a character in Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Glass Palace* explains his own upward movement to the poor people and gives them money to pay off their debts to their landlords

which they will not be able to pay off even after generations, “The economic condition of marginal sections in the villages is so bad that people “rushed eagerly forward, some were pushed on by their relatives and some had their hands held forcibly to the paper by their fathers and brothers” (126).

The colonial machinery here seems to provide the marginal sections an opportunity so that their next generation will not be bonded laborers, and if lucky, they will be rich. Therefore, the British colonialism is less dangerous for Indians than the Brahmanical colonialism whose complicity with colonialism was not questioned by Amitav Ghosh. The colonial authorities were strengthening the religious orthodoxy in India by translating, printing and canonizing the religious texts that mostly validate the exploitation of lower caste Indians. Macaulay in his “Babington Minutes on Education in India” recorded in *The Complete Works of The Complete Works of Baron Macaulay* hints at this investment when he says, The Committee have thought fit to lay out above a lac of rupees in printing Arabic and Sanscrit books. Those books find no purchasers. It is very rarely that a single copy is disposed of. Twenty-three thousand volumes, most of them folios and quartos, fill the libraries, or rather the lumber-rooms, of this body. The Committee contrive to get rid of some portion of their vast stock of oriental literature by giving books away. But they cannot give so fast as they print. About twenty thousand rupees a year are spent in adding fresh masses of waste paper to a hoard which, I should think, is already sufficiently ample. During the last three years, about sixty thousand rupees have been expended in this manner. The sale of Arabic and Sanscrit books, during those three years, has not yielded quite one thousand rupees. In the mean time the School-book Society is selling seven or eight thousand English volumes every year, and not only pays the expenses of printing, but realises a profit of 20 per cent, on its outlay. (127)

On the one hand, the British colonial rulers were strengthening the internal colonization and at another level, they were destroying the economic structures necessary for the sustenance of life of lower and middle caste and class people in India. However, the outward movement held some hope as Baburao is not wrong in his promise because at least a few lower caste people move upwards such as Rajkumar and Ilongo. With money in his pocket Rajkumar, moves up the social ladder and his caste becomes immaterial to the upper caste Indians living in Burma, as evident from the letter sent by Uma’s relative to her. Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace* foregrounds that, “At home in India a man like Rajkumar-babu would stand little chance of gaining acceptance in the society of people like ourselves. But here in Burma our standards are a little more lax” (135). This letter also hints at the nexus between money, religion, caste and culture. Rajkumar’s acceptance among the upper caste society of Burma shows that money is the only thing that can lessen the stigmas related to caste. The untouchables who are not allowed in the temples in India because they do not have money are welcomed in the temples once they have money to donate in the temples. Ghosh *The Glass Palace* is different from the others writing on the issues related to lower castes for him religion is an economic and political issue first and a religious and cultural one later on, as he says:

It turned out that Mr. Raha was in the timber trade. He was planning to make a bid for a major contract and had come to ask the purohit to pray for him. Like all of his kind the purohit had the intuition of a famished tiger when it came to the judging of potential prey. He did much more than offer a blessing. At the temple there were several employees of the big European banks and timber companies; the purohit made it his business to introduce Rajkumar-babu to all these men. (134)

Here, the author shows how colonial intervention helps a lower caste move upward economically as well as caste-wise; however, at the same time, the upper-caste part of the author blames only the lower-caste people for being close to colonial authorities. He is silent about the close association between British colonialism and Brahmanism and the help rendered by upper caste Indians in colonial expansion. Amitav Ghosh, in his bid to criticize the colonial machinery, highlights the inhuman conditions in *The Glass Palace* wherein the migrant people are forced to live on the ship when he says:

The passage was rough and the floor of the holding area was soon covered with vomit and urine. This foul-smelling layer of slime welled back and forth with the rolling of the ship, rising inches high against the walls. The recruits sat huddled on their tin boxes and cloth bundles. (127).

However, the caste-based internal colonization is far worse than the British colonization and circumstances back home are worse than they get on the ship. Mulk Raj Anand describes a colony of lower caste people in his novel *Untouchable* and this description shows that the life of lower castes is harder in India than on ships or in Burma, soiled by the dirt and filth of the public latrines situated about it, the odour of the hides and skins of dead carcasses left to dry on its banks....The absence of a drainage system had, through the rains of various seasons, made of the quarter a marsh which gave out the most offensive stink...made it an ‘uncongenial’ place to live in. (18-19)

This passage from Anand clearly shows that the British colonialism is not worse than the internal colonialism of India, which is not directly questioned by Amitav Ghosh though through Arjun’s contemplation in *The Glass Palace* he gives a brief glimpse in the caste based discrimination when he enlists the support of plantation workers to fight British Indian Army. He is confused if independence of India for which the plantation workers are fighting will bring any freedom to their castes when he asks himself, “Did they know of the poverty, of the hunger their parents and grandparents had left behind? Did they know about the customs that would prevent them from drinking at high-caste wells” (522)? He hints at the blinding influence of nationalist discourse that enlist the support of underprivileged sections without offering them any freedom and equality that wherein Arjun expresses his fears in *The Glass Palace*, “What would they find...wondered, when they crossed the horizon” (522)? Therefore, the British colonialism is not that bad for the lower caste because its intervention reterritorialize the nation for the lower caste diaspora as Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan foregrounds in his

Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Locations, “the diasporic self seeks to reterritorialize itself” (175) in the new space. This reterritorialization helps Rajkumar in his new location as a part of colonial machinery and transforms him from an orphan lower caste boy to Mr. Raha. The author is aware that the colonial intervention is transforming the life of Dalits positively but only for a few, for the rest of them life is not much different.

Uma, who becomes a self-proclaimed nationalist in *The Glass Palace* who also assumes herself a representative of Indian marginal sections on foreign, questions Rajkumar, “Did you ever think of the consequences when you were transporting people here? What you and your people have done is far worse than the worst deeds of the Europeans” (247). Through Uma, the author shows Rajkumar as an agent of colonialism moving freely between India, Burma and Malaya in the pursuit of business. Melita Glasgow and Don Fletcher in “Palimpsest and Seduction: *The Glass Palace* and *White Teeth*” published in *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing* highlight Rajkumar’s complicity with the British Empire when they say he “does not oppose but actively attempts to conform and participate” (76) and confirm him a “mimic men” (81). D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, in “J.G. Farrell’s Indian Works: His Majesty’s Subjects?” published in *Modern Asian Studies* hints at the relationship between the success of colonialism and contribution of local people in its success when he says, “there was, and can be, no colonialism without collusion, at least in this part of the world” (416). In one of his interviews titled “Amitav Ghosh: Einmal Indien und zurück” given to Johannes Kaiser aired on *Schweizer Radio DRS* confirms this idea of aspiring Indian lower caste diaspora when he says that one of the major themes of the novel is the “complicity between Indians and the colonising power” (n.a.). However, his complicity with the internal colonialism comes to forefront when he does not question the complicity of upper caste and upper class Indians with the Empire rather he projects them as the only characters who question the Empire. Most of the Indian Diaspora literature is produced by upper caste Indians who are quite detached from the life and sufferings of lower caste people and when they go abroad the detachment further increases. In their depiction of Dalit life either they are romantic or they are disgusted even at the slightest glimpse of their life. Their solutions to the problems faced by Dalits are equally unrealistic and fancy.

Works Cited

1. Anand, Mulk Raj. *Untouchable*. 1935. Delhi: Orient PB, 1970. Print.
2. Buhler, Georg. Trans. *The Laws of Manu*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1886. Print.
3. Chatterjee, Nilanjana. Unpublished research paper “Interrogating Victimhood: East Bengali Refugee Narratives of Communal Violence.” Department of Anthropology University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. <http://www.swadhinata.org.uk/document/chatterjeeEastBengal%20Refugee.pdf>. Web.
4. Eagleton T. *Ideology: An Introduction*. London: Verso; 1991.
5. Eagleton T. *Literary Theory*. Delhi: Blackwell; 1996.
6. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. New Delhi: Penguin, 1988. Print.
7. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Glass Palace*. New Delhi: HarperCollins Publishers, 2000. Print.
8. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. New Delhi: HarperCollins, 2004. Print.
9. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Circle of Reason*. 1986. New Delhi: Penguin, 2008. Print.
10. Glasgow, Melita and Don Fletcher. “Palimpsest and Seduction: *The Glass Palace* and *White Teeth*.” *Kunapipi: Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 27:1 (2005): 75-87. Print.
11. Goldman, Michael. “Constructing an Environmental State: Eco-governmentality and other Transnational Practices of a ‘Green’ World Bank.” *Social Problems* 48.4 (2004): 499-523. Print.
12. Goonetilleke, D.C.R.A. “J.G. Farrell’s Indian Works: His Majesty’s Subjects?” *Modern Asian Studies* 37:2 (2003): 407-427. Print.
13. Kaiser, Johannes. “Amitav Ghosh: Einmal Indien und zurück.” *Schweizer Radio DRS* 2 (8 June 2001).
14. Lipner, Julius. *Hindus: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. London: Routledge, 1994.
15. Macaulay, Thomas “Babington Minutes on Education in India” (11-130). *The Complete Works of The Complete Works of Baron Macaulay*. Delphi Classics, 2016. Pp. 11-130.
16. Mahajani, Usha. *The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya*. Bombay: Vora, 1960. Print.
17. Orwell, George. *Burmese Days*. 1934. London: Secker and Warburg, 1951. Print.
18. Pillai, Shanthini. “Resignifying ‘Coolie’: Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace*.” *History, Narrative, and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh’s Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. 47-65. Print.
19. Radhakrishnan, Rajagopalan. *Diasporic Mediations: Between Home and Locations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Print.
20. Rao, Narayana A. *Indian Labour in Burma*. Madras: Keshari Press, 1933. Print.
21. Sankaran, Chitra. “Introduction: Beyond Borders and Boundaries.” *History, Narrative, and Testimony in Amitav Ghosh’s Fiction*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012. xii- xxxii. Print.
22. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London: Routledge, 1988. Print.
23. Tinker, Hugh. *A New System of Slavery: The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920*. London: Oxford University Press, 1974. Print.