

Vol. 7, No. 4: CLRI November 2020 | p 28-36

## Amitav Ghosh - Crafting on Contemporary Literature

**Anchal Bhutani**

*A MH-SLET/ SET (Maharashtra) qualified, has worked as a Teaching Associate with Raffles University.*

---

### **Abstract**

Amitav Ghosh is a writer who never followed a particular genre to create a literary exception. Perhaps that is why his work is unique, and he is an author who always takes the readers to the history and then takes to his imaginary world. He has proficiency in weaving history with imagination, and that is how he gives birth to fiction. His writing language uses ornamental English with the higher literature value. On the other hand, while imagining a plot, he never forgets about people and always incorporates people in his novel.

Coming to his literary style, he chose histories that are mostly untold to people and seamlessly blend imagination. We find colonial history to the post-emergency period, and his story travels through many countries, and readers get different

tastes each time his story changes its plot. The paper is going to talk about his work. For that, there are some summaries of some of his notable works. The paper also discusses his life and career in brief so that readers can understand his work in a better way.

**Keywords:** Indian English literature, Indian writers, India English fiction, English literary fiction, contemporary literature.

## **Introduction**

Amitabh Ghosh is a novelist who reiterates the subaltern history of Bengal. It can be said that he took the silence of subordinates to the world. Earlier several writers portrayed the post-colonial history of Bengal, but that are written in regional language. Amitav Ghosh is the one who traced the path of the silence of the people and expressed it from his vantage point but in English. His novel is a chronicle of post-colonial as well as the post-emergency period. His literary works travel into the interior part of Bengal and highlight the nuances that are happening among the people. To understand Ghosh's literary works, let's look at his life and work briefly.

## **A Brief Insight of Life and Career of Amitav Ghosh**

Amitav Ghosh was born on 11th July 1956 in Kolkata. He has done his schooling from Doon School. His childhood spent mostly in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka; he studied Economics from Delhi University. Later he moved to London and did his higher study in Social Anthropology. While living in Delhi, he worked with Indian Express before he became a writer.

Amitav Ghosh always has a knack in writing, and due to his love for writing, he contributed works to 'The Doon School Weekly' while he was studying in Doon School. Later, he also founded a magazine called 'History Times' with Ram Guha, and he did it in his school. Therefore, it is evident that he has been writing for quite a long time, and a writer in him was growing up until he published his first novel 'The Circle of Reason' in 1986. After two years of his first novel, Ghosh published his second novel named 'The Shadow Lines' in 1988. The novel earned him the most prestigious Sahitya Academy Award. Amitav Ghosh published his first medical thriller in 1995; the name of the novel is 'The Calcutta Chromosome.'

He took a break of five years after publishing his third novel, and in 2000 he published his fourth work, the 'The Glass Palace,' followed by 'The Hungry Tide,' which is in 2004 and 'Sea of Poppies' in 2008. In his fictional works, various subjects were covered from post-colonial phenomenon to communal violence. His works received numerous positive reviews because he was the one who talked about the people who are fighting for their very existence away from the metropolitan glamor.

### **A detailed discussion about some of the literary works of Amitav Ghosh**

Amitav Ghosh has written nine fiction, and most of them are novels and six non-fiction to date. To analyze his work, it is vital to look at his work and understand what kind of literary work he has created. There are few novels summarized below to get an insight into his work in general.

## **The Circle of Reason**

The first published literary works of Anitav Ghosh's 'The Circle of Reason' was published in 1986. The story revolves around a boy called Alu, who was raised by his foster father, who later sent Alu to the army. Alu fled to Goa, and he took a fishing trawler from Calcutta. The story revolves around Alu's journey through different continents, and throughout the story, the protagonist was chased by the police.

## **The Shadow Lines**

The second novel of Amitav Ghosh can capture time and events. Ghosh captures people perfectly by using his perspective in the perfect time and event and also made the characters fall apart in due course. The story itself built a conundrum of existence and non-existence. The imaginative power of the writer made the reader invent their own story so you will find a web of memories. The story is written in the context of India's fight against the British Raj, World War II, communal riots, and partition. The story flows mostly in two cities Dhaka and Calcutta.

The protagonist of the novel was a young boy born and brought up in Calcutta. He, in the course of events, went away from his homeland. The entire story is the narration of the protagonist. The readers get changes of perspective as the character grows old with time in the story. The story talks about the consequence of several events and how those events traumatize the central character. The writer tried to create an illusion about the idea behind the nation or state. The story has a pace, and it goes through numerous human emotions.

## **In an Antique Land**

The book called 'In an Antique Land' was published in 1992. It is referred to as a multi-genre book as the writer efficiently blurred out the line between fiction and non-fiction. It is a novel that finds a potent connection between two odd countries- India and Egypt. The story of the novel is the writer's partial imagination that talks about different religions; the author used numerous anecdotes to establish his perspective strongly.

## **The Glass Palace**

Amitav Ghosh ventured into history by his novel 'The Glass Palace' that was published in 2000. The story of the novel is set in Burma and Bengal and Malay. While talking about the story, you should know that the novel invoked the reference of the history of the Konbaung Dynasty and World War II. The novel portrays the struggle of some families who are in Burma and suffered due to the consequence of World War II. The story told how the struggles shaped a nation after the war. The novel also mentioned the massive trading of timber and rubber and how a country feels post-war.

The primary focus of the novel was the 20th century and how after World War II, the economy of a country has changed. The novel mentioned various issues ranging from socio-political crisis to crisis in ethnic groups. To address all the issues that were coinciding, the novel is divided into seven distinct parts. The first part of the novel talks about a boy called Rajkumar, where he encounters many things, and the second part talks about the career of Rajkumar. In that part, the protagonist comes to India for trading. For the subsequent

parts, the novel progresses with different perspectives of socio-economic changes.

### **The Calcutta Chromosome**

Amitav Ghosh launched the book in 1995, and the book is a medical thriller that is set in the backdrop of Kolkata. The specialty of the novel is that the author seamlessly brought facts with imagination. The story also travels to New York City in search of the mystery. The protagonist of the novel called Antar, lives in New York City and works at the International water Council. The existence of Antar is not present time in the story as he belongs to the future. With the course of the event, the protagonist comes to Calcutta and involves with Ronald Ross's work on Malaria.

The novel is a perfect work of incorporating past and future. The enigma of the story is lying behind its narration of time when the Victorian era and contemporary era.

### **The Hungry Tide**

The novel called 'The Hungry Tide' was published in 2004, and it is a novel that talks about the post-emergency period. The plot revolves around Sundarban, and the central character of the novel is Piyali Roy, who was born and brought in America and came to West Bengal. The author took the character to the interior part of Bengal. It is a novel that describes how life flows at the shore of the Bay of Bengal. The readers will find the struggle of the people who live there and how they try hard to meet their daily needs.

The most important of the novel is that the novel is a short document of Morichjhapi massacre. The story talks about the

socio-political scenario of West Bengal. The novel intricately describes the financial condition of the people who live there. It is a novel that deals with fiction but in the true context. The novel also mentions the existence of Fokir in Bengal and their movement to restore the art.

Amitav Ghosh's most notable work is his historical fiction, and that is called Ibis trilogy. There are three books under the trilogy- Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke, and Flood of Fire.

### **Sea of Poppies**

The 'Sea of Poppies' is the first part of Ghosh's Ibis trilogy that is set in the Opium War. The war happened in the bank of the Ganges, and the central character of the story is a woman. The name of the protagonist is Deeti, and she is a married woman, and with the due course, we get to know how women are exploiting women. The story also invokes the notorious practice of Sati when the protagonist is asked to be Sati by force. Apart from that, the story also portrays a picture of feudal Bengal when the presence of Zamindars is pervasive.

The specialty of the novel lies in the comparison of river Ganges and the river Nile. And there is a comparison drawn between two civilizations that are nurtured by these two holy rivers, and the common element is poppy seed. The author very skillfully weaves the stories that travel from one country to another and never lets the reader feel anything odd.

### **River of Smoke**

The second part of the Ibis trilogy was published in 2011. The story was set in the 19th century, and it was an account of the voyage. The author talked about the people who are traveling

to a different country on ships and how their fortune changes in due course of time.

## **Flood of Fire**

The third and last book of the ibis trilogy is 'Flood of Fire,' and it was launched in 2015, and it is also set in the historical background. The plot of the story is 1839, and the story tells about the ban on Opium that was put by the British. It was the time when British settlers were thinking of invading China, and the war situation was arising. Then the story takes to West Bengal, and this is how the story converges with fiction from a true historical context.

## **Different aspects of Amitav Ghosh's literary works**

While discussing Amitav Ghosh's work, the one thing that comes to mind is that he is a man of creating a brilliant imaginary plot. He is someone who looks at Bengal and its people very carefully. Readers will find historical context in every novel, and his story is dynamic, as his characters and story always travel through a different country, even different continents. He is an author who can skillfully draw a comparison between two very different civilizations or different times by a simple metaphorical element. While talking about 20th century Bengal he brings the context of communal violence and Fokir movement. On the other hand, his immense love for history gave birth to some untold historical context where people were being suppressed.

## Reference link

1. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/books/photo-stories/books-by-amitav-ghosh-that-prove-he-is-a-master-storyteller/photostory/67114200.cms?picid=67114421>
2. <https://core.ac.uk/display/11822200>
3. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amitav\\_Ghosh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amitav_Ghosh)
4. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea\\_of\\_Poppies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Poppies)
5. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Hungry\\_Tide](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hungry_Tide)
6. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Calcutta\\_Chromosome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Calcutta_Chromosome)
7. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Glass\\_Palace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Glass_Palace)



## Anchal Bhutani

---

Anchal Bhutani has received her bachelor's degree in B. Com (Honors) from Gargi College, Delhi University and Masters in English from MGSU, Bikaner. She has qualified MH-SLET/ SET (Maharashtra). She has worked as a Teaching Associate with Raffles University and as a Content Writer for Zomato.

---

An advertisement banner for Amazon Prime. It features a light blue background. In the top left, a white starburst shape contains the text "PRIME AT ₹ 999 PER YEAR\*". In the top center, the "amazonprime" logo is displayed in white on a dark blue rectangular background. Below the logo, three white boxes with blue borders contain the text "Original Shows", "1-day delivery\*", and "Ad-free Music". At the bottom center, a yellow button with a black border says "Join now". In the bottom right corner, the text "\*T&C Apply" is written in a small, dark font.

PRIME AT  
₹ 999  
PER YEAR\*

amazonprime

Original Shows 1-day delivery\* Ad-free Music

Join now

\*T&C Apply

## [Get Your Book Reviewed](#)

If you have got any book published and are looking for a book review, contact us. We provide book review writing service for a fee. We (1) write book review (2) publish review in CLRI (3) conduct an interview with the author (4) publish interview in CLRI. [Know more here](#).

## [Authors & Books](#)

We publish book releases, Press Release about books and authors, book reviews, blurbs, author interviews, and any news related to authors and books for free. We welcomes authors, publishers, and literary agents to send their press releases. Visit our website <https://authornbook.com>.