Chronicle of Dream in Amitav Ghosh’s Novel “Sea of Poppies”

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Abstract

Sea of Poppies is a historical novel based on human being's survive and fulfilment of dream. The novel is divided into three main parts, first one is land, second one is river and third one is sea, in which the whole novel is chronologically weave with the fulfilment of dream. The chief character in this novel is Deeti, a village married woman of India, who dreamed to travel in an ample vessel, quenched her desire in an unprecedented situation. One day, she saw a big ship sailing on the ocean, which she had never seen earlier even in her dream.

Sea of Poppies is a meditation in the guise of a novel, but such is the author's meticulousness in matters of research, and so firm is his grasp of the unexplored underbelly of the British Empire. Ghosh is the author of ten highly acclaimed works of fiction and non-
fiction which include the booker-prize shortlisted *Sea of Poppies*. The novel, *Sea of Poppies*, told the history of Indian society, opened in 1838, on the eve of first opium war, the novel divided into three parts, Land, Water and Sea. The first part narrated the condition of the protagonist that made able to reach near the ship. The first part also described the economic and social states of the Indian society. The second part invited the characters to join the ship and being ready for their voyage to abroad. The third part, allowed the characters to sail for their new life in Mauritius.

*Sea of Poppies*, shows the chronicle of dreams through the eyes of an Indian village woman, named Deeti, in a different circumstances. The novel depicted the nascent desire of female protagonist, to fulfill her dream. She lived her life as a common Indian house lady, and left her village in an unpredicted situation that visualized the 19th and 20th century’s condition of Indian society. The novel, breaks the doors of caste description and colonialism, and reveals the new way of life, seeking freedom in a different condition.

Keywords- Chronicle, Dream, Opium, Poppies.

Introduction

*Sea of Poppies* (2008), is one of the best Indian novel of Amitav Ghosh. The central figure in this novel is Deeti, who is an Indian village married women, dreamed to travel in a huge ship. Ghosh is known as the international fictional writer of history of twentieth century. He is famous for his Ibis trilogy, *Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire*. He is born in 1956, Calcutta, India. He has completed his education from Delhi University; and then he received his post-graduation in Social Anthropology from Oxford University; where he also received master of Philosophy and done Ph.D. in the year 1982. In 2008, Ghosh wrote *The Glass Palace* portrayed the rise and fall of the king Thebaw, depicted the Burmese

Ghosh was the son of lieutenant colonel of Indian Army. Although, Ghosh belongs to Indian cultural climate, but he has travelled all over the universe like United States, Iran, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Egypt United Kingdom etc. that explore his career in writing on certain genre. Cambodia is his working land, he finished several field work there. Now, Ghosh is living in New York (USA); teaching at Columbia University and Harvard University as a visiting professor. Ghosh has broken all the barriers about time space in his novels. He used time as a maximum impact of previous days, today and the next day combined as one. Ghosh has arranged the events and history through the characters. He formulated the Indian English novels and spread its branches into all over the world. Ghosh’s ability as a novelist comes in the light, while constructing plot, weaving story, setting structure, progress of thought and actions, are interconnected with each other.

The *Ibis* trilogy based on life journey of a protagonist from birth to death. Ghosh is very talented, socialist, innovative, experimentalist and an ideologist. His talent can be seen in his works that covered all social aspects. His innovative ideas made his work unique in the field of literature. His experiments in literature keep him ahead among other novelist. He had a thorough ideology. Ghosh’s ideas are universal that posit equally everywhere. Ghosh’s nascent career, his fictional writings have been interrelated with non-fictional works like academic articles, journals, criticism etc. all these bound by the equal themes and issues that beautify his fictional works. Ghosh’s works deal with other essays that ranges from political crisis in Burma and Cambodia, trade between India and Africa, and far from religious boundaries and business in local area. Many things of non-fiction has shown in his fictional
work. Ghosh’s chief concern with historical movements, events and incidents described through the characters are appeared genuine. Ghosh’s work combined with elements of different genre like history, science, social aspects anthropological research etc. In an interview, Ghosh has supported on his selection of history in his fictional writing. Eventually, the end of the novel comes with a higher level social history, the racial protect in Bangladesh and India mainly in Calcutta, which brings violence, deaths, sadness massacre etc...

Ghosh is the independent Indian novelist, who took inspiration from British novelist but it is found that Ghosh is also inspired by other novelist and culture. Ghosh is very creative novelist who used all kind of literary genre to render his work and put his contemporary novelist behind himself.

The Chronicle of Dream

Amitav Ghosh is beautifully described the chronicle of dreams through the novel, *Sea of Poppies*. The novel is based on an Indian village married woman Deeti, who dreamed to sail in a huge ship, sailing on the ocean, but she knew that she has never seen such type of ship even in her dream. How she fulfilled her dream in a different circumstances is the suspense of the novel, *Sea of Poppies*. The clear vision of dream has been seen in the opening line of the novel. Deeti the main female protagonist of the novel, lived in the village of Bihar in India; it is situated four hundred miles away from its costal area, the place is known as black water; where holy river Ganga met in it and lost its originality and mixed into Bay of Bengal.

The vision of tall-masted ship, at sail on the ocean, came to Deeti on an otherwise ordinary day, but she knew instantly that the apparition was a sign of destiny for she had never seen such a vessel before, not even in a dream: how could she have, living as she did in northern Bihar, four
hundred miles from the coast? Her village was so far inland that the sea seemed as distant as the netherworld: it was the chasm of darkness where the holy Ganga disappeared into the Kala-Pani, ‘the Black Water’ (Ghosh3).

Deeti lived with her husband Hukam Singh who, worked in an opium factory and a six years old daughter, Kabutri. Deeti was happy for her daughter; her life was as simple as other Indian women’s life. Deeti’s vision had appeared when her daughter Kabutri raised a question about a huge ship. Deeti wanted to travel in a ship; yet she had never seen a ship even in her dream, meanwhile her eyes suddenly evoked up a picture of an ample ship, the ship appeared into a figurehead with a long bill, from the masts were great sailing in sea. Deeti was lived her life in her village, she never went out from her district headquarters and never knew any other language except her native language Bhojpuri. Except all these exceptions, she had dreamed about to travel in a ship. Although some news terrified her, to fulfil he dream.

Deeti had explained uncommon views about ship to her daughter; Kabutri thought that there is something strange had happened with her mother: “Deeti’s face was a mask of fear and foreboding as she said, in a shaky voice: Beti- I saw a jahaj-ship. Do you mean that boat over there? No, beti: it was a ship like I’ve never seen before. It was like a great bird, with sails like wings and a long beak.”(8)

A ship had been appeared on Bay of Bengal; pilot Zachary Reid was steered it and turned it towards Calcutta, that would happened in the second week of March 1838, and the Ibis anchor off there. The river had shown the way to Deeti, in which she can fulfilled her vision. Zachery was an experienced sailor who became the link between his duties and friends, fortunately discovered actual steering of the ship that never left from his hands. Life was continue in its routine form, but one day, an unexpected incidents happened in the life of
Deeti, when she heard a news about her husband’s illness. One day, Deeti and her daughter were eating their midday meal when Chandan Singh had stopped his ox-cart near her home and informed her about Deeti’s husband Hukam Singh’s illness, in the factory, and should go there and bring him home, when Deeti heard about her husband’s illness she became unconscious, she was unaware about this unusual incidents. Deeti prepared for her husband’s bringing from factory to her home. In the way, she was discussing about her harvest with her daughter Kabutri.

Zachary had discussed the further planning about ship’s progress with his colleague Elokeshi, Parimal and Neel; and then Parimal addressed Neel and said always kept our eyes carefully on ship and averted from unexpected danger. Kalua was an ox-cart driver lived in Deeti’s village. Deeti came to contact with Kalua. One day, Deeti told to Kalua that her headband was not well in factory and you have to bring him home, Deeti also offered payment for this work to Kalua in the form of Afeem (Opium).

Deeti’s daughter Kabutri had understood her mother’s vision; Deeti hugged her daughter indicating her last bid to her daughter. Meanwhile, there was announcement of captain Zachery’s coming. Captain Zachery had prepared for their coming voyage to Mauritius with his colleague Mr. Burnham, Neel and Parimal.

In the other side, Deeti’s husband’s condition was not well, one day, Deeti got a message from factory. Without spending time, immediately she rushed towards factory. When she reached to the factory, she asked a man to show the way, where her husband was working. She reached in her husband’s factory with poppy-flower’s roti; when she was walking towards there, she was murmuring a prayer and taking slow steps like ant. She stopped there when someone raised a question. Deeti was stuck, when she listen a question about her husband. In the evening, Deeti was taking her sick husband to her house on Kalua’s cart, on the way, she was thinking about her future and family expenses. How would she
manage her family’s expenses without her husband’s salary? All these questions were wondering in her mind.

By seeing, Hukam Singh’s condition, Deeti thought her husband would not be able to go back on his work, and she badly managed the family’s expenses own her selves. She had sold all his ornaments like her gold ring and bangles for her husband’s treatments, but day by day, Hukam Singh’s condition had become worse, he neither able to eat nor to sleep. Deeti’s economic condition had declined badly, she can hardly afforded her daily needs. Deeti bought wheat, oil and gurh from local shopkeeper, he was also a prominent moneylender and well known seth, by mortgaged of her own land and agreed to place her thumb impression on moneylender’s account book. The shopkeeper told her that the interest rate of debt would be double in every six month; and in a few years, all her land would be transferred to the shopkeeper. One day, Deeti’s brother-in-law Chandan Singh told her that a worthless woman like her had died as a Sati. (Sati system was an old Indian tradition, in which a married women had to lied down on her husbands pier and burned herself with her dead husband).

The Sati system was banned in India by Raja Ram Mohan Rai (a social reformer).

After a few days, Hukam Singh’s condition became worse. Deeti left her daughter, Kabutri in care of her brother. After twenty days Hukam Singh had died, since he brought home from opium factory. Kalua asked about Hukam Singh’s cremation from a nearby old man. He had also inquired about Deeti’s where about. Kalua knew that Deeti would laid for ‘Sati’ on his her husband’s pyre. Then, he left his cart in a field, some distance away from the pyre. Kalua saw Hukam Singh’s pyre that was, big mound of wood, on the banks of the river Ganga. The pyre was larger than required for the cremation of a single person. Soon Kalua heard the whispered sound of ‘Sati’ among the people, who gathered there. Kalua understood everything, what will be happened there. At this moment, he exactly knew what he had to do. He made balanced whirling bamboo platform upon his head and tried to create panic among
the crowd. When the crowd saw it, in the darkness they became scared and fled from the spot.

In this way, Kalua succeed in his plan. Finally, in a few second Kalua dramatically saved Deeti from ‘Sati ritual’ and both of them eloped from the spot.

Chandan Singh and his colleague were search out for Deeti. But in the darkness the waves of the river carried out both Kalua and Deeti away from the death into the form of new life. After this life saving incidents, she managed herself and found herself on a river and there was also a man Kalua beside her. Deeti was so scared of this horrible incidents, even she was unable to open her eyes. With every coming waves, Deeti imagined about death. But now, she was alive with the company of Kalua. This was her rebirth for her new life. Now, Deeti was ready to start her new life with Kalua. Suddenly, when Kalua asked about marriage, Deeti accepted his proposal without spending time. Captain Zachery and Serang Ali had been checked the Ibis berth in the account books. They prepared for Ibis transformed into vessel. The Ibis was ready with different types of religious people. For example, Babloo-tindal who was a Cooringhee Hindu, Mamdoo-tibdal, was Siya Muslim, both were from Lucknow, next one was Cornelius Pinto, a Catholic from Goa, and Cassem meah, now he shifted to London.

Deeti and Kalua had spent their ten days journey in nearby places of Patna (India), they wanted to hide their identity from others. Both thought, they may be recognized if they travelled through road and if they captured by their kin; they could not get mercy from their kin. Deeti was also thinking about her daughter Kabutri, Deeti had left her daughter on her brother’s house. Deeti had started search out for her daughter. In the night, she had raised her steps in search of her daughter, but the days were passed without trashing her daughter. One day, fortunately, she had search out her daughter, when her daughter was walking alone on the bank of the river Ganga, with a pitcher. Deeti reached near her daughter and hold her daughter’s hand and called her daughter in her native language, but her daughter didn’t
recognize Deeti. She thought her mother had been become a ghost, because villagers had told her that her mother had died. Then Deeti had explained everything to her daughter, what had happened with her.

Deeti asked her daughter’s well beings; Kabutri told her mother about herself as well as Chandan Singh’s behavior towards her. Then, Deeti informed her daughter about Kalua, who saved her mother from ‘sati ritual’. Kabutri asked questions from her mother about her mother’s future; she asked; where she will go? She also expressed her desire and she wanted to go with her mother. Then Deeti refused to take with her. Deeti and Kalua’s journey was not easy; both had spent many weeks nearby the riverside township of Chhapra. They had tried to find job, but it was difficult to get work in Chhapra. Fortunately, Kalua got work as a porter on the riverside. Chhapra was known as the city of ghats that was the destination of many ships. Deeti and Kalua had spent most of their time at the temple; but Deeti wanted to stay in a permanent shelter. Kalua called Deeti for taking food, while taking food Kalua told Deeti that he wanted to go with girmitiyas in a boat, was ready at shore. But Deeti was not interested in Kalua’s decision.

Captain Chillingworth and Mr. Crowle visited the Ibis for inspection. Where Serang Ali and Jodu was also present there. Meanwhile, two officers had started argument with each other for ships arrangement. When they left the place, Mr. Steward Pinto knew the both officers, Mr. Burra Malum and Mr. Crowle respectively. They worked with him on a ship earlier. Deeti had concealed her identity along with Kalua and introduced themselves as Aditi and Madhu respectively.

Kalua had become a popular crew member among all the migrants of the vessel, he was permitted to change the direction of the ship, if the weather was not in their favor. Deeti was busy in discussing with Munia, a local girl, who became friend with Deeti very earlier on the ship. Munia had shared some important information about her life with Deeti. Mr.
Burnham was discussing to stop the opium trade because six opium merchants were beheaded at the Macao. He narrated that Patna’s opium price has declined and the prize reached near four hundred and fifty dollars. Mr. Burnham explained the possibility of the war and also told that war is unhuman, and there is no need of opium war. Mr. Doughty explained his views and narrated the opium business across the China. Justice Kendalbushe was scared of opium war and also said that if China disclosed the opium trade, the war is required.

Deeti was called to everyone as children of the ship. “From now on, and forever afterwards, we will all be ship-siblings -jahaz-bhais and jahaj-bahens-to each other. There’ll be no differences between us.” (356) Deeti was the woman who, came at the last on the ship, then she peeped out from her sari’s veil and looked out over the way; she enjoyed all the journey with full of excitement. The next destination of the Ibis was Bay of Bengal and it will take three days to reach there. In between Hooghly was another harbor of the Ibis that was the first destination of the voyage. With the twinkling of the light the journey became the symbol of dream. The Ibis had loaded with six small boats.

All the fellow passengers were dreamed to shift in a new island to start a new life; full of adventure, enthusiasm and liveliness. Now, the Ibis moves towards Ganga Sagar, The Island situated between the Bay of Bengal and Holy River Ganga. The island is famous for its sacredness among Indian pilgrims, who went there for their religious reason. Deeti has recaptured her past memory and remembered her daughter, Kabutri. Deeti sang a wedding song in Bhojpuri language, when a daughter is going to depart from her mother after marriage. She was feeling solitary and start weeping in her parting. Neel and other fellow passengers were also listening: “Talwa jharaile Kawal kumhlaile Hanse roye Biraha biyog. (The pond is dry The lotus withered The swan weeps For its absent love)” (397-398).

Captain Chillingworth and Zachary were discussing about “white ladrone” the pirates of the South China. The captain had been focused on watchful eye of the ship’s every passing
with his crew members. The Ibis has crossed its eleventh days adventurous journey under the open sea and the climate of the ship had signaled its progress towards the destination. The captain seemed some gravity forced on ship, he sat on the chair and lie down his finger and watched his fingers travelling and then pushed himself up and these experienced discussed with his colleagues and reached on conclusion that they were safe on Ibis.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh’s writings proved the milestone for his nascent career that improved his stature in the field of English fiction. His *Ibis* trilogy described the Indian history about opium business, opium addiction, opium trafficking and life struggle of a female protagonist. His most of the novels are postulated by deep research, personal identity, and famous themes on the nature and issues of modernism, and postmodernism, pre-colonialism, colonialism and post-colonialism. His fiction and nonfiction are framed with homogeneous, blend with different cultures, languages, and traditions, and his chief thematic writings are based upon effective themes of opium battle, chronicle of dream, chronicle of rise and fall, travelogue, history, political turbulence, caste politics, love, migration, diaspora, struggle for life and existence. His *Ibis* trilogy based on life journey of a protagonist from birth to death. Through the novel, *Sea of Poppies* Ghosh portrayed a journey of thought, fulfilling of dream, progress of ideas, visits of conscience, history of human movement across time and place. Ghosh’s writings became famous during the early twentieth century and the nascent continuity remained up till now.
References


