

MIGRATION IN AMITAV GHOSH'S 'THE CIRCLE OF REASON'

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Abstract

Migration means permanent moving away of collectivity from one geographical location to another. It occurs because of certain reasons, natural urge for survival, "nation" and "border" are easily marginalized in the minds of the people who have received continuous threats to their existence from persecution and discrimination in their country. It has become a communal phenomenon in India – Bangladesh relation. There are many social, economical, political, environmental and ethnic reasons that are responsible behind this migration from Bangladesh. It also means displacement. Before the partition people have been moving from one part of country to the other part for social, economical, culture and ethnic reasons. But it was temporary after their purpose they return to their native place. Ghosh in 'The Circle of Reason' talks about the migration of the people and their oppression in their journey.

Key Words: Migration, discrimination, political, displacement etc.

Amitav Ghosh's novel 'The Circle of Reason' is the story of the victims of history who are forced into exile by incidents beyond their control. This novel is divided into three parts and it tells the protagonist's relation with the people he meets and the places he visits. The three parts- Satwa, Rajas, and Tamas are Reason, Passion, and Death respectively centers on Alu (Nachiketa Bose), and his multiple migrations from Lalpukur in Bengal to Kolkata, Kerala, al-Ghazir Algeria until he plans to return home. This novel displays migration and displacement of different people and the challenges in their journey of life.

The first part of the story centers on, lalpukur, in west Bengal. The novel begins with a description of Alu, who is present in all the three sections of the novel. Alu, whose real name is Nachiketha Bose, loses his mother and father in a car accident. He comes to stay with Balaram, his uncle and Torudebi, his aunt. They live in Lalpukur. He does not know them at all. He looks somewhat odd. It is a kind of unusual event in that village, for only rarely new people come to Lalpukur: Years later – thirteen to be exact – when people talked about all

that had happened sitting under the great banyan tree in the centre of the village (where Bhudeb Roy's life-size portrait had once fallen with such a crash), it was generally reckoned that the boy's arrival was the 31 real beginning. Some said they knew the moment they set eyes on that head. That was little difficult to believe. Nachiketa Bose comes to be known as Alu because of his head: "...it was an extraordinary head – huge, several times too large for an eight-year-old and curiously uneven, bulging all over with knots and bumps" (3).

People begin to talk about his head differently but Bolai-da says Nachiketa Bose's head resembles a potato also known as Alu in Bengali: "He said at once: Potato."(4). From that day onwards, he is named Alu, and his original name is almost forgotten. He looks neither ugly nor handsome, neither short nor tall, not even dark or fair. Alu displays an amazing ability to pick up various languages. Yet, paradoxically, he cannot speak properly. Balaram decides to teach him the art of weaving instead of sending him to a school for formal education. Thus Alu settles in Lalpukur, but his troubles do not. Shombhu Debnath, who teaches Alu the art of weaving, is a low cast man in Lalpukur. It is, therefore, not respectable to learn weaving from him. But Alu not only learns weaving from Shombhu, but also becomes perfect in the art of weaving. The novelist here gives a historical perspective to the skill of weaving. Ghosh exemplifies the past value of weaving: Man at the loom is the finest example of Mechanical man; a creature who makes his own world as no other can, with his mind. The machine is man's curse and his salvation, and no machine has created man as much as the loom. It has created not separate worlds but one, for it has never permitted the division of the world. The loom recognizes no continents and no countries. It has tied the world together with its bloody ironies from the beginning of human time. (59) Indian cloth was found in the graves of the Pharaohs. Indian soil is strewn with cloth from China. The whole of the ancient world hummed with the cloth trade. The Silk Route from China, running through Central Asia and Persia to the ports of the Mediterranean and from there to the markets of Africa and Europe, bound continents together for more centuries than we can count. It spawned empires and epics, cities and romances. Ibn- Battuta and Marco polo were just journeymen following paths that had been made safe and tame over centuries by unknown, unsung, traders armed with nothing more than bundles of cloth. It was the hunger for Indian chintzes and calicos, brocades and muslins that led to the foundation of the first European settlements in India. All through those centuries cloth, in its richness and variety, bound the Mediterranean to Asia, India to Africa, the Arab world to Europe, in equal bountiful trade. (59-60)

A Landlord and Politician Budded Roy establishes his control over the management of school in lalpukar. The story begins with his child hood. Balaram wants to study science and surpass great scientists like Jagadish Bose and Pasteur. But, he is directed to Dr. Radha Krishnan, the teacher of philosophy, by Balaram's teachers as they think that he is good for history. At Calcutta, Baralam's favourite habit is to study heads. He has a compulsive habit of

commenting on others' heads. This habit lands him in trouble many times. Gopal is Balaram's most trusted friend. This friendship lasts lifelong but Gopal senses something wrong in Balaram's attitude: As he watched Balaram go, Gopal had a premonition: a premonition of the disaster he would call upon himself and all of them, if ever he was allowed to take charge of society. He decided then, with an uncharacteristic determination, that he would do everything in his power to keep that from happening. (53-54) Balaram's wife, unable to tolerate, puts his books on fire. Alu is able to save just one book – Life of Pasteur. Life of Pasteur is a significant symbol in this book. Balaram is obsessed with Phrenology and carbolic acid. His great mistake is that he fails to treat people as full humans. For him human beings are bumps to be studied or lives to be cleansed. Alu's world of cotton weaving is projected as a kind of alternate ethos to Balaram's new science. Yet even Alu loses his world to violence, commerce, and destruction. At the end, he remains with his limbs withered, unable to weave. Balaram is a follower of "Louis poster devoted by national ideas right from his college days. He works for to eliminate germs from public life. He opposed Bhudeo Roy for corruption in the school management and he is dismissed from his job of a teacher in the school. Balaram was a different man. He has more interest in phrenology and locational temperament when his nephew Alu expresses his desire to marry the low class sambhau's daughter his reply is that we must set about it scientifically, We have to think about the right personality types and thinks like that crossing beyond the caste restrictions he apprentices his nephew under the guidance of an expert were, sambhu Debnath, a man of low caste leading Marginalized life. Education, in Balaram's opinion, can be received through work experience. His perception is that modern life is polluted with the rapid spread of germs and he want to make society free from germs by sprinkling carbolic acid.

Balaram is a product of western education and, despite his fervent Indian nationalism, he has internalized the notion that western science transcends national boundaries in its search for truths. This is because the British administrators consistently strove to demonstrate that the discourse of reason was – in the Foucaultian sense – their exclusive property. In India, for example, "natives" were stereotyped as illogical dreamy creatures of instinct, while Britain's technological and scientific practices were presented as proof of their superior faculty of reasoning – western science was also portrayed as being objective, culturally neutral, benevolent in intention, and allowing access to "truth." Ghosh makes the important point that India did not receive the benefits of science, technology and medicine entirely from the British as in a one-day process of transfer, but as a result of cross-cultural exchanges, translations, and mutations. Balaram's fascination with science generates much of the novel's debate about the materialistic scientific reason of the west: is it tethered to its cultural origin or is it possessed by a universal validity? Balaram takes the latter position, arguing that "Science doesn't belong to countries. Reason doesn't belong to any nation. They belong to history – to the world" (57).

The second part of the novel tells the tale of a trader trying to bring together the community of Indians in the Middle East. But these efforts also prove to be unrealistic. The third part is the story of Mrs. Verma, who rejects rational thinking. She tries to create Indian model of community life in the desert. But she is deserted by others. In this part we find the trio on the northeastern edge of Algerian Sahara. All the pandemonium created at the end of the section "Rajas: Passion" prepares us for the denouement. Tamas has been described by S. Radhakrishnan as "darkness and inertia." Besides this, Tamas also indicates a tendency to decay, to die. Dr. Uma Verma helps the trio – Zindi, Alu and Kulfi – the same way she helped Jyothidas. In Dr. Uma Verma's library, Alu finds the book *Life of Pasteur* given to her by her father Dantu who was a friend of Balaram's. Zindi and Alu meet metaphoric deaths as Zindi is no more the same powerful and dominant woman. Alu, for whom weaving has been an expression of his self, is not able to weave as his thumb has gone stiff. Kulfi, who is acting as Chitragada in Tagore's play against Jyothidas as Arjun, collapses and dies. There is a mockery of Hindu death rituals as carbolic acid is considered as pure as Gangajal, and put in Kulfi's mouth. Throughout the novel, Ghosh makes fun of the so-called scientific attitude, rationalism, and Hindu philosophy and rituals. However, at the end of the third section, there are hints of restoration of life of reason. There comes a new realization, a new life as Mrs. Verma says, "If there's one thing people learn from their past it is that every consummated death is another beginning" (447). Having experienced many crises, Alu, accompanied by Zindi and Boss, returns to reason, and suggesting the completion of the circle. But this time, it is Satwa – the light of consciousness.

To conclude, in *The Circle of Reason* there is an exploration of oppressions of migrants where the reason and capital become metonymic, circulating forces in the world focusing on a group of migrant drawn from various parts of India on an imaginary island of al- Ghazira, and then Algeria. The novel marks the search for meaning fullness of those lives is displaced by globalization. We get a sense of different lives and motives and aspiration of passengers of the boat "Mariamma". Mariamma's migrant women's condition is the most illustrative of oppression and loss. Migration for these women entails a loss of home, domestic, civil private and public life. Krauthammer wants to kill her body in her womb, because she says that her child won't be given a house or car or anything at all if she doesn't sign the form. It will be sent back to India, she says, and she would rather kill it than to happen, kill it right now with a bottle while it's still in her womb. The novel also presents a journey from Satwa to Rasjas to Tamas, the three parts of the novel. There is a reversal of journey in the novel. Normally one is supposed to travel from Tamas (darkness) to Satwa (purity). But in this novel the protagonist travels in the reverse direction.

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