Conclusion

Post-colonial theory involves discussion about experiences of various kinds: migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to the influential master discourses of imperial Europe such as history, philosophy and linguistics, and the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being. None of these is essentially post-colonial, but together they form the complex fabric of the field. Like the description of any other field, the term has come to mean many things. However one would argue that post-colonial studies are based in the “historical fact” of European colonialism, and the diverse material effect to which this phenomenon gave rise. We need to keep this fact of colonization firmly in mind because of the increasingly unfocused use of the term ‘post-colonial’ over the last ten years to describe an astonishing variety of cultural, economic and political practices. There is a danger of it losing its effective meaning altogether. Indeed the diffusion of that the term is now so extreme that it is used to refer to not only vastly different but even opposed activities. In particular the tendency to employ the term ‘post-colonial’ to refer to any kind of marginality at all the risk of denying its basis in the historical process of colonialism.

South Asian novelists writing in English have arrived on the international literary scene on a grand scale. This reference includes, for the most part, novelists who were born in South Asia specifically, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Although there are several novelists who have written and continue to write about situations and issues relevant to South Asia such as G.V.Desani, Pico Iyer, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Hanif Kureishi, Sashi Tharoor, Gita Hariharan, Anita Nair, Taslima Nasreen and a host of writers. Most obviously, the language in which these novels are written
English is of paramount importance. The beginning of South Asian literature in English may be traced back to the early days of English education in India. Since then novel writing has matured and more and more writers found it comfortable to give expression to their creative excursions and literary profusions through English.

The twentieth century was known both for its colonial and post-colonial writing and altered sensibilities. Colonial writing was mostly in praise of the British way of life and Anglophiles took it upon themselves to write colonial rhapsodies. Nationalist Indians, on the other hand, wrote patriotic novels, highlighting Indian culture and its ethos. Postcolonial writing, however, differed in content and style. Experimental writing became the order of the day. If Salman Rushdie’s work like *Midnight’s Children* could be termed as magical realist text, then Sashi Tharoor’s *The Great Indian Novel* qualified itself to be called postmodern parody. Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate* bended the genre form and the sonnet sequence became a verse novel. Writers of different hues found English to be a vehicle of literary imagination and they spliced genres to create new fictional worlds.

Amitav Ghosh belongs to this long line of literary pundits who made writing their vocation and avocation. After Rabindranath Tagore and Nirad C. Chauduri, Amitav Ghosh becomes their rightful successor from Bengal. Weaving tales of the united Bengal, he recreates seamlessly the lifestyle and social mores of a bygone era. In this Bengal, ideologies and identities converge and diverge; the humans and the Nature confront with antagonism and confabulate with intimacy; the nativist comes into close encounters with internationalist. Amitav Ghosh, himself being a globe trotter and social anthropologist, brings alive the different worlds and juxtapose them with clarity and
profoundity. History and geography and both time and space coalesce with extreme ease and intelligibility in his novels.

In this study an attempt has been made to analyse his characters that are varied and come from different social background. The transnational characters as such are governed by the exigencies of history. Whereas, the transitional characters are either nomadic or have no sense of place. The transgressive characters are full of thoughts which are violative and far ahead of their times. In creating such characters and studying certain real life characters, Amitav Ghosh is simply a writer nonpareil. His novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988) tells the story of the three generations of the narrator’s family spread over Dhaka, Calcutta and London and lines up characters from different nationalities, religions and cultures in a close-knit, palpable fictive world. The historical baggage shouldered by the novel includes the freedom movement in Bengal, the Second World War, the partition of India and the miasma of communal hatred breaking out into riots in East Pakistan (now Bangla Desh) following the Hazratbal incident in Srinagar in 1964. The materiality of Ghosh's novel constituted by the web of material relations at a certain time in a certain location binds the narratives and authenticates the nexus between the historical moment and the fictive world. On the other hand, *The Glass Palace* quite obviously reflects on the situation in the former colonies from the points of view of the colonized. In a sense, it is about the deconstruction of the history of the nations and re-formation of the same.

Being a writer from South Asia, Amitav Ghosh finds it difficult to ignore other South Asian nations because of their geographical contiguity and cultural proximity. The epic sweep provided him the space necessary to unravel the processes of colonization and of revolt against the colonization across countries. If at micro level he
shows the modus operandi of colonization in Mandalay, he skips that in India to focus on other things like how colonialism unified the country or on the evolution and efflorescence of the anti-colonialist psyche. Amitav Ghosh too creates in his novel a discourse that dramatizes the evolution of colonialist antithesis. He explores the anti-colonial consciousness and eventual revolt.

In *An Antique Land* has been seen as a successful example of an ethnographic fiction seeking to sever ties with the “classic” anthropographic traditions. To a large extent, the narratives are based on history. Thus, the historical dimension of the book excels all the others. Characters and events are viewed from the perspective of historical research minutely. With a remarkable single-mindedness, Amitav Ghosh has unveiled the multiple states of the interrelationship between the Indian, Egyptian, Jewish, and Islamic culture and their histories.

*The Hungry Tide* (2004) is set in the extensive archipelago of tiny islands and labyrinthian waterways known as the Sundarbans. Stretching from India to Bangladesh, this little known tide country offers no visible borders between the river and the Sea, and sometimes not even between land and water. *The Hungry Tide* is to shine light on this area that is little known within India and elsewhere.

Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies* (2008), was listed for the Booker Prize soon after its publication. The postcolonial novelist has dealt with modern postcolonial themes like migration, existential crises like alienation, loss of identity, rootlessness, displacement and hybridity with a historical vision. *Sea of Poppies* depicts nineteenth century India. It was the time when East India Company connected India to the wider world by transporting convicts and indentured labourers to the Island of Mauritius. The theme of imperialism permeates the novel as the author speaks about the past from his
memory. The reality of slavery and opium trade is being recorded through the perception of the historian of the imperial age. The exploitation was passively faced by the diasporic communities because of the policies of the British over Asian countries. The East India Company’s policies of commerce greatly influenced and governed their action. To increase their profits and to develop their trade, they forcefully marketed their refined opium to the Chinese. The characters involved in the story are the subalterns, the ordinary lumpen elements in the then society. Amitav Ghosh’s fascination with ordinary people takes him to the alleys of towns and galleys on the high seas.

*Sea of Poppies* is a social discourse. Ghosh handles the theme of migrations and depicts the psychological impact of losing one’s country, language and culture. Cross-cultural interactions of various characters, crossing the cultural and geographical borders makes multiculturalism and transculturalism a reality. This novel with its postcolonial discourse, describes quite realistically the characters’ worldwide migrations and their immigrant experiences which force them to undergo identity crisis as they encounter doubleness of identity or simply identity diffusion. The migrants face the reality of coming to terms with another place, another way of speaking and thinking. Ghosh questions the homogenizing logic of the colonizers by celebrating cultural harmony and hybridity of different classes and races of people that inevitably lead to multiculturalism.

*The Glass Palace* is about geographical entities, space, distance and time. Many stories have been woven together. There are many characters. It is a saga of many families, their lives and their connection with each other. *The Glass Palace* is the story of an Indian orphan Rajkumar who is transported to Burma by accident. Here the
present and the past are juxtaposed and the glass palace itself becomes a metaphor for our dreams.

_The Calcutta Chromosome_, furthermore, makes considerable use of techniques of crosscut and dissolves so popular in the thriller, in fact structured entirely on these two devices. They have always formed Ghosh’s favorite narrative method, from _The Circle of Reason_ (1986) onwards, employed in order to convey the sense of the interpenetration of past and present and all time and all space. The constant cuts and displacements contribute to the fear and suspense, to the feeling of inexorability, so integral to the thriller, the constant shifts in points of view and time-sequence erase the boundaries and make them equally part of the same mystery, the same conspiracy, the same quest; the constant juxtaposition of different times, places, characters and kinds of pursuit extend the scope of each from the specified and the particular to the universal. The deliberate rejection of the conventional narrative line of the thriller here, moreover, indicates both its greater complexity of scope and meaning and its rejection of the world of this characteristically Western genre. The traditional thriller or detective-story moves through a well-worn pattern of discovery of the crime or statement of the problem and builds up the chase through clues, ratiocination and climactic action finally to unravel the mystery.

_Countdown_ (1999) a small book of 106 pages with 13 unmarked chapters exposes the nuclear test in India as well as in Pakistan. It is a spontaneously written book. It is more of a political commentary than of a treatise. It sounds like a critique on Indian Foreign Policy. It questions India’s failure to adhere to nuclear non-proliferation policy. Sounding like a peacenik, Ghosh subjects the state players to moral quizzing on the whole idea of possessing a nuclear weapon. He contempuously dismisses the advantages of
nuclear weapons and how geographical proximity renders such weapons useless. Amitav Ghosh takes to task the policy makers, muftis and army officials for their nuclear sabre rattling. Unmindful of people’s welfare and physical safety, these men gloat over nuclear weapons’ capacity to wreak incalculable damage.

Amitav Ghosh with all his knowledge of Indian history and Middle East reconstructs past for the consumption of modern readers. History could be found in texts. The new archaeological research has shifted to libraries. Yet he travels and visits sites of historical importance to learn more about the rich cultural past, but avoids at all cost a repeat of cultural atavism. His novels are wonderful documents of a nation’s cultural history, subaltern history to be precise. In the process, he interrogates the truth claims and colonial practices. Being a postcolonial reader and writer himself, Amitav Ghosh knows the pitfalls that await him in the course of his narration. But by cleverly steering clear of them he presents a near authentic representation of history in his fictional works.

To Amitav Ghosh, historicizing fiction comes naturally as he is deeply rooted not only in history but also in anthropology and sociology. Each novel is well researched and all these three (history, sociology and anthropology) act as backdrops for the fictionalised world that he creates. Moreover, his firsthand experience as the native of the land gives him intuitive and intimate knowledge of the local. This mastery of local knowledge makes his novels teem with even the flora and the fauna of the land. Particularly, the estuaries and the mangrove forests come to life. Characters too, very often, make references to historical figures that amplify the historical content in the text. To call his novels historiographic metafiction is just a reductionist approach to his world of fiction. To call them docufiction is just being complementary. To call them postcolonial or postmodern fiction is just a way of bracketing him as a writer. But to think of him as a writer of a
nation’s cultural history and narrator of its subaltern stories is to place him properly in the annals of our literary history.

The fictional works by Amitav Ghosh offer scope for further study as they are found to be a reservoir of information written in a unique style. Any reader who wants to read the texts in the light of sociological study or cultural study or from the point of economic condition of a particular period will find the reading a rewarding experience. At the same time it must be acknowledged that this study has its own limitations as its focus is only on the identities of the characters and their social positionings.