INTRODUCTION

Indian English is used for original literary creation in English language by Indians. Today many of the Indian writers are using English language as the medium of their literary creation. Such type of literature is growing very rapidly and is becoming very popular and is known as Indian English formerly Indo-Anglican literature. The novel in Indian English literature has four phases of development. The works of pioneers are imitative of British models. This early phase called the phase of Imitation. The second phase is Indianisation. It began with the works of Toru Dutt in the last quarter of the 19th century. The third phase is increasing Indianisation. In this period Indian writing in English acquired a national consciousness and even become popular in the west. The fourth phase is Experimentation and individual talent. This phase is remarkable for the glowing confidence and originally in the writing of Indian English writers.

Indian English novel has a late beginning. It began to appear in nineteen twenties and gathered momentum in the following two decades. When India became free, Indian English novel had already established itself as a branch of literature. The ideals of the Indian struggle for freedom are reflected in many novels. Nineteen sixties and seventies are remarkable for a huge output of Indian English novel. V.A.Shahane in his Indo-English fiction and question of form opines that:

The Indo-Anglian novel is in many ways a haphazard growth and its fortuitous development is partly product of lack of clear objectives. An objective like the image of India (or) western reader is more often a pious platitude than a genuinely realized artistic goal (35).
Indian writing was deeply influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. The period between and after the Freedom Struggle has been the most fertile period. The credit of bringing a name and reputation to Indian writing fiction goes to a few contemporary writers such as Mulkraj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan and Nirad Chaudhari. They are the four wheels of contemporary Indian writing fiction. Other prominent writers who have enriched the Indian writing fiction are Khawaja Ahamed, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamal Markandaya, Anita Desai, R.Prawar Jhabvala, Amitav Ghosh, Nayantara Sahgal, Vimala Raina, Kushwant Singh and others. Meenakshi Mukherjee Said:

The Indo-Anglian novel made a different appearance in the nineteenth-twenties, then gradually gathered confidence and established itself in the next two decades. The momentum has yet to subside, and more novels have been published in the sixties than ever before. This increase in output is difficult to account for, especially when there were hardly half a dozen Indo-Anglian novels until the 1920. Perhaps one of the reasons is that the following of Indo-Anglian fiction coincided with the novel’s Coming of age in the regional languages of India (52).

According to Prof. C.D. Narsimhaiah, The Indian novel in English has shown a capacity to accommodate a wide range of concerns in Mulk Raj and a human concern for the under-dog.

**The development of Fiction**

India has contributed significantly to the overall world literature. This contribution of India has been chiefly through the Indian writing in English, novelists being in the forefront in this respect. An excellent number of novelists on the
contemporary scene have given appearance to their inventive urge in no other language than English and have brought credit to the Indian English fiction as a distinctive force in the world fiction. To attempt imaginative appearance on a national scale in an alien medium has seldom happened in human history, and it speaks of the prolific quality of the Indian mind to assimilate the newly confronting situations and the complex dilemmas of modern world.

There are several reasons for the popularity of recent books published by Indian writers in India and abroad. The several qualities a book needs to have, is its capacity to capture the imagination of the reader. In other words, the most pertinent question is whether a book is ‘readable.’ The fiction of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Anita Desai has caught the attention of the audience for one or the other reason. Maybe an easy entry into the comic world, a deep concern with social problems or face to face with the dilemmas of the woman’s world. At the turn of the century, however, a new trend seems to be emerging. Marketing strategies are now as important as the contents of a book or its author.

Modern technology, especially the media and the Internet, has played a significant role in promoting new books. This has been quite advantageous to the third-world writers, for their books reach the world over in no time. It is no longer uncommon to see a book on the day of its release selling at different places in different countries. Books are now being treated as revenue-generating products that need, apart from other ingredients, an author who has promotion potential and publisher with wide marketing network. This development has helped an Indian writer in English much more than a regional Indian writer. Works of new writers like Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth,
Vikram Chandra, Gita Mehta, Rohinton Mistry and Arundhati Roy have been published by international book companies.

Quality production, effective cost structure and easy mobility have given a boost to the sales: books are treated as products of a corpus culture, to be bought and sold with frenzied efforts. For example, *The Idea of India*, a diasporic book by Indian-born Oxford Professor Sunil Khilnani, has been listed by *The Guardian* among the best ten world books published in 1998. In the recent times, a great body of historical fiction has emerged on the literary scene. Many Indian English novelists have turned to the past much to trace the deepening mood of nationalism as to cherish the memories of the bygone days. A close study of the contemporary novel reveals writer’s preoccupation with our historic past and the unabated interest of the readers in the novels that depict the past or that treat some event of national import that has had wide repercussions.

**Novel**

The novel is the only growing genre and hence it reflects more deeply, more essentially, more sensitively and swiftly reality itself in the process of its unfolding. Only that which is itself developing can comprehend development as process. The novel has become the foremost hero in the literary development of our time exactly because it best of all reflects the tendencies of a new world still in the creating; it is after all, the only genre born of this new world and in total affinity with it. The novel is not required even assuming the task is within the realm of possibility to describe the specific historical forms of a society; that is not where the truth lies. Nor of course is it matter of saying that the author’s ideas are necessarily correct. But literature is always an attempt to reveal to “an unknown side of human existence”, and thus although it has no
privileged access to truth, it never stops searching for it. The novel has a large group of characters that are interconnected to each other either as friends or by family relationships. The novel puts to test some of the personal experiences, relations and historical processes in which the realization of the futility of metaphor on the one hand and an awareness of the illusion of knowledge created by deceptive weight of remembered detail are evidenced at many levels.

The Indian English novelists were most responsive to the call of equality, freedom and human rights, for the literary artists have an inherent quality and capability to look beyond their time. It is they who hold before the common man a lenses, as it were, through which he could see what threatened him socially, culturally or politically, and which made him aware of the precipice that lay ahead. As it was a number of novels were written during the period that portrayed the unjustness of the British rule and the grim fight the people were determined to give to get rid of it.

A historical novel is nothing but an evaluation of a segment of historical reality as projected by the novelist whose techniques of writing fiction enable him to describe his vision or world-vision. In all his writing, Amitav Ghosh’s engagement with history is not the same kind as that of a historian, but this does not in any way lessen its significance as historical fiction. The fictional frame work renders history more readable and lively and he is able to involve the reader more than what history does. Amitav Ghosh’s fiction reveals that the novelist’s involvement with history is his prime obsession. Indeed, he interjects a new dimension into his encounter with history. His fiction is imbued with both political and historical consciousness. Amitav Ghosh is a
novelist who nearly bends his novels to the needs of history; they largely originate their purpose and shape from it.

Features of fiction

Indian English fiction is the consolidation of reputations by the leading trio of Anand, Narayan and Raja Rao. The graph of Anand’s achievements has never followed a steady course, exhibition instead bewildering ups and down; and it is possible to maintain that his first novel - viz; Untouchable still remains his finest work; but his long autobiographical saga of which three volumes have so far appeared, Seven Summers (1951); Morning Face (1970); and Confession of a Lover (1979) promise to be an impressive fictional statement, when completed. In at least three major novels, all published after Independence, The Financial Expert (1952); The Guide (1958) and The Man-eater of Malgudi (1962), R.K. Narayan was finally able to enlist his good-humoured irony as a firm ally of serious moral concern, thus creating thoughtful fiction which has its centre in Malgudi but has a circumference embracing the entire human condition. All the three novels treat the theme of nemesis impressively, while raising significant questions such as the role of the cash-nexus in modern society (The Financial Expert); appearance and reality (The Guide) and the fate of evil in human life (The Man-eater of Malgudi). Raja Rao’s The Serpent and the Rope (1960) is one of the greatest of Indian English novels. As an enactment of East-West confrontation and as a philosophical novel it stands unchallenged yet in the annals of Indian English fiction.

When the momentum gained by fiction during the Gandhian age was thus sustained after Independence by these major novels, the new writers that now appeared on the scene brought not a little individual talent to the established tradition. The
exception of a solitary Independence novelists cannot on the hole, be said to match that of Anand and his two major contemporaries. Bhabani Bhattacharya, whose first novel was published within a few months of Independence continued the tradition of social realism, stressing like Anand, the necessity of social purpose in fiction.

Historical fiction continues to be as sparsely cultivated as earlier, and none of its few specimens can be termed a major achievement. Both Malgonkar’s *The Devil’s wind* (1972) which deals with the great Revolt of 1857 and Bhagvan S. Gidwani’s *The Sword of Tipu Sultan* (1976) fail to rise above the level of fictionalized ‘drum and trumpet history’; and Kamala Markandaya’s attempt to combine conventional historical fiction and a psychological study in *The Golden Honeycomb* (1977) is more ambitious than successful. In experimental fiction with a strong Indian orientation, of which Raja Rao’s *Kantahapura* is an early example and his own *The Serpent and The Rope and The Cat and Shakespeare* (1965) are later instances that the post-Independence novel scored some of its most characteristic successes.

**Amitav Ghosh the Man**

Amitav Ghosh seems to think that travel is man’s primordial quest to expand his awareness into realization. The entire world, as Shakespeare said, is a stage, and this for Ghosh is a key metaphor. In his review Homai Shroff points out that the writer explores “a colourful and warmly human picture of people and places, both medieval and modern.” Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* describes himself as a traveller interested in men, places and scenery. Perhaps this is the reason he embarks upon tracing the history (journey into the time) of a Jewish merchant, Ben Yiju from Egypt who spent two decades in Mangalore (a trade centre on Malabar Coast in India) and his
relationship with Indian slave Bomma, who worked for him as a business representative in Aden. Ghosh recedes into twelfth century in order to develop his story.

Amitav Ghosh’s Journey reminds one of Hazlitt’s “On Going a Journey” as far as the sincerity of description goes. Like Graham Greene’s priest in *Power and Glory* and Ernest Hemingway’s *Old Man and the Sea*, his spirits remain undaunted till he completes his endeavours. Ghosh like Vikram Seth believes that travel in “antique lands” is an experience for liberty, “perfect liberty, to think, feel, and do just as one pleases.” Curiosity is his first love which enthralls him to go to small villages – Lataifa and Nashawy - South of Alexandria in Egypt. Inquisitive as Ghosh is, he has, to use Samuel Johnson’s phrase, a vigorous intellect to work patiently for little more than ten years or so to weave story of his novel into a fine texturous fibre.

As a social anthropologist he introduces his readers not only to the twelfth century Aden and Mangalore but he also points out that Egypt and India unquestionably belong to a socio-cultural tradition based on the religion of hospitality. This remains a constantly operative factor in the novel, as it could be seen and felt during Ghosh’s stay in Lataifa and Nashawy. It could also be seen during Ben Yiju’s stay in Mangalore and Bomma’s stay in Aden seven hundred years ago.

Amitav Ghosh’s journey is not bed of roses, he carries out his research in the heat and dust of a Synagogue of Ben Ezra near Cairo, and it was here in the forlorn corner of Mass that memories of Abraham Ben Yiju and his slave lay preserved for more than seven hundred years. It is after the seven centuries the author records; the sweat was dribbling off his face on to his notebooks. Manuscripts he could lay his hands on were in Judaeo Arabic and that there was no accepted method of learning to read the
manuscripts except through a long apprenticeship with one of the handful of scholars who had made a lifetime’s specialty of the subject.

**Anthropology and its Branches**

The foundations of Anthropology were laid by the Greeks. Hippocrates, the founder of Anthropology, was born in 460 B.C. talks about anthropology in his “On Airs, Waters and Places”. It is about the easy-going life of the Asiatic, endowed by nature with very favorable physical environments and compares them with those of European countries, with a hard hand of nature upon them.

Although Aristotle is credited with having first coined the word anthropologist, but the use of the word was quite rudimentary. It did not appear in the Latin language vocabulary. During this period, anthropologium was used in restricted sense, relating to man’s bodily structure. The meaning of the word anthropology dwells on the understanding of the nature of man and physiology of man. In other words, anthropology is composed of two words: anthrop that is man, and ology, means science. Anthropology can be defined as “the scientific study of man’s origin, his division into different races and cultures”.

Herskovits defines anthropology as “a social science concerned with the study of man and his works.” Thus anthropology is the science of man, but man is not only biological, he is also social and cultural, and when anthropology studies man, it studies him in all his multiple aspects.
A.L. Kroeber observes that, Of all the social sciences, anthropology is Perhaps the most distinctively culture conscious. It aims to investigate human culture as such, at all times, everywhere, in all parts and aspects and workings. It looks for generalized findings as to how culture operates-literally, how human beings behave under given cultural conditions—and for the major developments of the history of culture (11).

The broader aspects of anthropology have been divided into several branches.

**Physical Anthropology**

It examines the skulls in all its details. Physical anthropology is concerned only with limited and restricted study of the human species. Physical anthropology never moves beyond the study of humans. Bidney defines physical anthropology: “man is the concern of that branch of anthropology known as physical anthropology which takes up such problems as the evolution of man and the comparative anatomy of races.” This definition of physical anthropology reveals the characteristics of physical anthropology that it is a natural science, organic and physical in nature, it draws from the general principles of biology, zoology and other natural sciences, it utilizes the methods of laboratory and experimental conditions, it studies all varieties of men, different races, sexes, and ages, and uses predominantly comparative methods.

**Cultural Anthropology**

The socio-cultural anthropology got split into cultural anthropology and social anthropology. Cultural anthropology studies other cultures of the world. The word culture originates from the Latin word ‘Colere’ which means to cultivate. Sir Edward
Taylor describes culture as: ‘that complex whole which includes knowledge. Faith, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and behavior acquired by man as a member of society’. Which is acquired by members of society is culture. The subject matter of the cultural anthropology consists of both of social institutions and culture. The social system is the part of society, culture cannot emerge without a social system, and they are two sides of a coin.

**Ethnology**

Ethnology refers to “a group distinguished by common cultural characteristics”, that a group of people having common cultural characteristics constitutes an ethnic group. The common cultural characteristics may refer to the marriage pattern, re-marriage, divorce, agricultural practices and above all history shared by all. Today, in the European continent, a nation is considered to be an ethnic organization. Ethnicity is also applied to races. This ethnicity is concerned with shared common traits including the customs, dress and food.

**Ethnography**

Another aspect of ethnicity is the ethnography. The meaning of ethnicity refers to “scientific description of the races of the earth.” The term ethnography refers to “descriptive accounts of human societies, usually of those simpler, smaller – scale societies which anthropologist have mostly studied. In this sense ethnography is concered with social anthropology as ethnography provides the raw material to social anthropology.
Social Anthropology

Social anthropology does not enjoy a respectable status in India and other Third World countries. Among the social sciences it was social anthropology which became a tool by providing a tact fund of knowledge to the colonial powers for the suppression of the people. British administrators turned-social anthropologist such as Risley and Russell, provided clues to the British Empire for doing all kinds of injustice. Historically, all this ended in the erosion of the public trust towards social anthropology. However, the bruised reputation of social anthropology was witnessed in post-independence India also. As social anthropology is rich in its skills and studies the indigenous knowledge of the masses of people living in hills, forest and villages. Social Anthropology includes the study of all human cultures and societies. The basic idea is that it tries to find out the structure of human societies all over the world.

Literature and Anthropology

Literature is a social institution and various literary devices are primarily social in origin. Literature and anthropology are closely related with each other. Folk literature contains and carries primordial world. In tribal and rural societies literature is inseparably connected with ritual, magic, work and play. In every society, primitive or modern, literature has a social function to perform, or has certain ‘use’ which cannot be purely individual. The questions which are raised by literary study are directly or indirectly social questions. On the other hand anthropologist generally borrows the ideas from literature, literary theory and conceives his work as the construction of texts of text. Literature and anthropology share and concern with questions of cultural poetics, both the disciplines insist on the common patterns of the society such as language, myth, history and cultural practices. Most of ethnographers borrow the literary
techniques and theory of focus on textuality in anthropology in anthropology. The work of anthropologist also helps to shape contemporary criticism and reflects multiple levels of cultural experiences. So literature and anthropology share common concerns experiences. So literature and anthropology share common concerns and these disciplines appear to be inseparable.

Social Anthropology and Social Sciences

Social anthropologists study people’s customs, social institutions and values and the way in which these are interrelated. They carry out their investigation mainly in the context of living communities, and their central though not their only interest is in systems of social relations, while the objective of all the social sciences is to study the different aspects of society. There is relationship between social anthropology and some other kinds of anthropology namely physical anthropology, prehistoric archaeology or pre-history, ethnography and ethnology, and cultural anthropology. There is also considerable relationship of social anthropology with history, psychology and sociology. Moreover social anthropology has some concern with other branches of knowledge like political science, economics, human geography, agronomy, even philosophy and theology. This is not surprising, since social anthropologist claim to take at least some account of the whole social and cultural lives of the peoples they study and of all these disciplines are concerned with aspects of human culture. The similarity or close relationship between ethnology and social anthropology is simple. Both study society, that is, man and culture.
Social Anthropology and History

Most of the scholars define history as a chronological account of the past events. Here is breaking point between history and social anthropology. Social anthropology writes about prehistoric people and their traditions and institutions. The field of history is the people of society; the field of social anthropology is the society; and the masses of people who are illiterate. The relationship between social anthropology and history is of a kind of love and hate. Social anthropology has never tried to replace history. A change has come about in the relationship of social anthropology and history after the 1980s. It became obvious to Third World countries that the situation of primitive peoples can hardly be analyzed without explaining the historical processes which shaped their structure. In India also, the primitive peoples were dominated by the colonial rule. Though empiricism all over the world has emerged as a reaction to historicism, in India, empiricism and historicism go together. Empiricism and history are both integrated. It could be safely said that in the Indian context social anthropology cannot be properly understood without reference to its history.

Social Anthropology and Psychology

Psychology is concerned with the behavior of man and social anthropology focuses on interrelationship among different institutions of society. There is basic contradiction regarding the approach adopted by the two disciplines. Psychologists begin by taking the tribal culture for granted, as if it were uniform and universal, with this assumption they study psychic behavior in tribe. On the other hand the same approach is taken by social anthropology. It tends to take human nature for granted, as if it were uniform and studies the diverse cultures of the tribe. Therefore, in any study of primitive constitutes a relevant point. This also explains the relationship between social
anthropology and psychology: the former is concerned with a variable of culture and the latter with the mind.

**Social Anthropology and Sociology**

Social anthropology is considered to be a branch of sociology. But they both differ on certain levels. Social anthropology focuses on primitive societies whereas sociology concerns itself with civilized society. M.P. Sinha defines sociology as “the scientific study of the development of different social groups and their interactions and structure of society.” Social anthropology employs field works as dependable source of data generation. Sociology on the other hand, depends on the collection of documents and generation of statistical data, social anthropology believes in making holistic studies of the primitive community. Different institutions of the community are functionally interrelated. Quite contrariety, sociology dwells on specific problems of the society. Social anthropology makes a general body of information about primitive social life. In anthropology studies theoretical input is relatively less; the sociological approach, on the other hand, has a heavy dose of social philosophy and theoretical approach.

**Social Anthropology and Political Science**

The only difference is that political science is concerned with the political behavior of the modern societies, whereas social anthropology studies the political behavior of the modern societies, whereas social anthropology studies the political behavior of primitive people. Thus in the domain of approach and perspective, both the disciplines are quite close. The differences arise when their perspectives are discussed.

Social Anthropology and Economics
Both are concerned with the study of production, distribution, exchange and consumption. But the understanding of these processes in social anthropology and economics is altogether different. The differences are as such: social anthropology is empirical where as general economic is importantly macro. Social anthropology considers economics as a part of the whole society. It cannot be studied separately. Economics, on the other hand, is separate and has a distinct existence in society.

Social anthropology has its relations with other social sciences. These relations stem from the fact that as a social science, social anthropology shares some of the common aspects of theory, data and methods of other social sciences. On a broader plane, it could be safely said that social anthropology is different from other social sciences on many counts. However, its distinctness is largely upheld by the study of indigenous people, holistic study and network of interrelationships in the primitive society.

**Social Anthropology in Postcolonial Context**

Social anthropology is one of a number of cultural practices that participates in the colonial domination of other peoples through the manipulation and representation of their images and lives, sustained by discourses about truth and objectivity. Certainly from a variety of marginalized positions-tribal, minority, feminist, postcolonial other, subaltern, migrant, diaspora, refugees and so on, a theory is being required to name, or at least reflexively problematise, the voice that speaks through its discourse. Social anthropology is the discourse in the particular dialogical relation that its practice constructs and likewise produces subject as well as object positions. The subject that establishes within its gaze a field of object to be observed, questioned, translated and
represented in another place at another time. It always occupies intersection of privilege at once epistemological, political, and geographical.

**Short Biography of Amitav Ghosh**

Amitav Ghosh is arguably the most cosmopolitan of contemporary Indian English writers. His significance has its roots in his cosmopolitanism, for he is a writer who travels and re-maps the world drawing connections across the boundaries of modern nation states. It is in this inventive engagement with historical and political realities and truths, it is in this clearheaded erasure and redrawing of cultural and political outline that split and unite that Amitav Ghosh finds his mission as a writer.

Amitav Ghosh was born on 11 July 1956, in Kolkata in a middle class family, and he spent his childhood days in its streets. His father was a lieutenant colonel. Hence, he spent much of his childhood traveling around the globe, right from India, to Sri Lanka, to Iran, Egypt, United Kingdom and Bangladesh. He moved to England for higher studies and in the year 1982. Amitav Ghosh received his doctorate degree in social anthropology from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford. He graduated from Delhi University and took his D.Phil. degree in Social Anthropology at Oxford. He has been a teacher in Delhi School of Economics and has also been Visiting Professor at Columbia and Virginia University in the United States of America. He has been a winner of Sahitya Akademi Award in 1989 and the prestigious Prix Medicis Extranegere award.

In Ghosh’s worldview all such borders that hem us, in an attempt to define us should be challenged be they political, cultural, linguistic, racial, communal, spatial or temporal. All these borders are constructs and meant for crossing… Travel is a spiritual quest, a quest for narrative design, for personal significance in a meaningful world. His
writing is at pains to foreground the cultural syncretism of the Indian subcontinent in strategic opposition to the historicism of nationalistic discourse. Ghosh’s quest for an alternative history and anthropology has led him to emphasize the importance of the narrative.

The Calcutta born but New York-based author, now a visiting professor at Hardware University has an international reputation for lucent prose, his work is often complex and always deeply researched, yet his six novels and three nonfiction books are compassionate if unflinching investigations of the human conditions. Which is why he is amazed that so many novelists. Now, limit them to writing only about interpersonal relationships – that’s fundamental to a novel, certainly but life is not just that. So many seem afraid to deal with anything other than who is seeing whom in the suburbs – it’s sad really to have such an impoverished idea of fiction.

Amitav Ghosh’s work has been translated into more than twenty languages and he has served on the Jury of the Locarno Film Festival (Switzerland) and the Venice Film Festival (2001). Amitav Ghosh’s essays have been published in The New Yorker, The New Republic and The New York Times. Amitav Ghosh’s essays have been published by Penguin India (The Imam and the Indian) and Houghton Mifflin USA (Incendiary Circumstances). He has taught in many universities in India and the USA, including Delhi University, Columbia, Queens College and Harvard. In January 2007 he was awarded the Padma Shri, one of India’s highest honours, by the President of India. In 2010, Amitav Ghosh was awarded honorary doctorates by Queens College, New York, and the Sorbonne, Paris. Along with Margaret Atwood, he was also a joint
winner of a Dan David Award for 2010. In 2011 he was awarded the International Grand Prix of the Blue Metropolis Festival in Montreal.

The new Indian writing, published in 1980s and 1990s, has ushered in literary renaissance. Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Arundhati Roy and Amitav Ghosh are the foremost novelists; They have made a distinctive mark on the world literary scene with their and skilled language control. The present book, comprising critical essays by eminent scholars, is a pioneering attempt at the evaluation of the entire range of fiction written by Amitav Ghosh. His first novel *The Circle of Reason* marks a definite break with the traditional themes of Indian -English novel and form and structure of well novel. The two novels that follow, *The Shadow Lines* and *In an Antique Land* - deal with history; the history-fiction interface is fascinating as well as culturally significant. *The Calcutta Chromosome*, his latest novel, a gothic science detective story, is about the quest for the cure of malaria. His recently published travelogue *Dancing in Cambodia*, at Large In Burma imaginatively renders the evolving of a nation for two South Asian countries Cambodia and Burma in their postcolonial phase. While as the volume offers a spectrum of critical views on fiction of Amitav Ghosh, it adds immensely to our awareness of the intrinsic value of Indian literature and culture. The list of finest contemporary Indian-English writers remain incomplete without the name of Amitav Ghosh, the 'author extraordinaire' of bestsellers like *The Shadow Lines*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies*. Amitav Ghosh noted novelist, an essayist and a nonfiction writer.

Amitav Ghosh's standing in the realms of literature is truly unparalleled. Amitav's feat in both fiction and nonfiction literature is laudable. His quintessential
style of weaving riveting narratives with a bit of pedagogy is what lends his writings their unmistakable appeal. Although, he is Ph.D., in anthropology, Ghosh's love for history is well evident from his writings. Apart from authoring a slew of books, Ghosh has been actively involved in writing columns for magazines and has even taught in universities of Delhi, Columbia, Queens College and Harvard. He was conferred an honorary doctorate by Queens College, New York, and the Sorbonne, Paris. With so many feats and deeds to his name, it wouldn't be any exaggeration to say that Amitav Ghosh is indeed a living legend.

Amitav followed his passion for writing by taking up a job in a print media company. His first job was for a local tabloid called the Indian Express. In 1986, he published his first book 'The Circle of Reason'. Over the years, Amitav wrote several books such as 'The Shadow Lines' (1988), 'In an Antique Land', (1992), 'The Calcutta Chromosome' (1995), 'Dancing in Cambodia' (1998), 'Countdown' (1999), 'The Glass Palace' (2000), 'The Imam and the Indian' (2002), 'The Hungry Tide' (2005), 'Sea Of Poppies' (2008), and 'River of Smoke' (2011) that won him great adulation. His books not only earned him the distinction of writer par excellence, but also won him great laurels for his unconventional themes. His books are loaded with indo-nostalgic rudiments accompanied with an interesting mix of his personal philosophy and strong post-colonialism themes. 'Sea of Poppies' won a nomination at the Booker's Prize and got much appreciation from his admirers for his brilliant plot and story line.

Amitav Ghosh has received several awards and recognition for his excellent contribution in the domain of literature and writing. Some of the awards he has won are Prix Medicis Estranger, France's top literary award, for the book 'The Circle of Reason',
the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Ananda Puraskar for *The Shadow Lines*, Arthur C. Clarke Award for *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Frankfurt International e-Book Award for *The Glass Palace* and Crossword Book Prize for *The Hungry Tide*. Apart from these, he has also received other noted distinctions like Grinzane Cavour Award in Italy and the Padma Shri by the Indian government. His book *Sea of Poppies* received the Crossword Book Award in 2009 and was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Because of his distinguished contributions towards literature and his expertise towards teaching, Amitav was granted fellowship in Royal Society of Literature and at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. He also received Dan David Prize for his innovative interdisciplinary research across traditional bounds and prototypes. Amitav Ghosh is married to Deborah Baker, who is a writer and senior editor at the Little, Brown and Company, a publishing house located in the U.S.A. The couple has two children named Lila and Nayan.

*The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh is a novel of its own kind in which his diasporic imagination finds its best expression. The novel discusses the themes of nationalism, multiculturalism, communal violence and diaspora. This novel has been regarded as a meta-text with a number of plots in its fold where the reader is introduced to the fictional world of Amitav Ghosh through the unnamed narrator. The present study is a humble attempt to study the novel *The Shadow Lines* in its different aspect.

Amitav Ghosh presents in this novel a realistic but shocking picture of communal riots in Calcutta in 1964. These riots spread up to East Pakistan. A number of Hindus and Muslims were killed on both the sides. The novel also shows the vulnerability of people and the impact of rumours. In his narrative, he uses the old
newspaper reports as supplements. It is a very recent novel on the problem of communal violence.

All the while private upheavals are mirrored by public turmoil – the Blitz in war – time London, civil strife in post – partition Dhaka, a riot in Calcutta. This novel focuses on the meaning of political freedom in the modern world and the force of the nationalism, *The ShadowLines* is both an absurd illusion and a source of terrifying violence (299).

As observed in *The Shadow Lines*, Amiav Ghosh has this tendency to make the narrator relate his story absent mindedly; often digressing into seemingly unimportant details across spatiotemporal coordinates, with a hurried return to the narration. Matters of heart, love and relationships form a major part of this story. Keen insights are provided into these affairs. The Indian middle class and its defensive mentality are also described. The author is somehow on the reader’s side. He does not disappoint at all. The book meets our expectations.

*The Glass Palace* is fundamentally a book about European greed and the cruelty of colonization. It is an intricate novel that covers approximately three generations. It has many driving ideas. The British came to rich lands like India and Burma with an unsatiable greed and drained them of all resources. The royal families suffered most. The kings and queens were reduced to puppets. With the end of the royal way of life, a whole idea of sumptuousness died. Luxury, connoisseurship and profusion ended. An alluring face of human existence was damaged. The ruthless cutting of jungles through systematized, mechanical ways feels so cruel.
In this novel is also a book about human contradiction. Any human being cannot be fully explained. No one’s behavior can be totally predicted, no matter how sharp your perceptions may be. The characters take a U-turn in this novel. The element of surprise keeps the reader hooked. Raj kumar is fascinated by Dolly. But he also ditches her. Uma mourns her husband’s death but she also behaves in a loose manner. Queen Supayalat is a terrible dictator but she punishes herself with a life of exile for the love for her husband.

Alison loves Dinu but she also goes with Arjun. Characters take you by surprise. In this sense, this novel is more life-like, more practical. The ability of an adult to change her/his behavior has been accepted here. The mediocrity, meanness and weakness of human nature have been acknowledged. For a regular reader, the books by Amitav Ghosh provide a delicious feast. Together they present a way of looking at the world. They provide a perspective. Many things are clarified. Many matters are thought out. So many intricacies of human life have been revealed. As readers, we cannot help admiring the immense capacity of this man to create his own world.

*The Circle of Reason* as the name suggests is a book written in defense of reason, logic and rationality. In practical situations, logic hardly works. Cause and effect is not a practical theory. In a laboratory, it may be that the reaction of mixing two substances can be predicted. But it is not so in real life. Especially, India is a place where irrationality is pursued almost like a religion. Superstitions blind beliefs, prejudices, the dominance of the supernatural in the collective psyche hardly allow any fresh thinking. As a child born slowly but surely she/he is taken into the cult of the illogical. Investigation, first hand exposure and experience are not allowed.
This novel is a revolt against this trend. He is saying even at the risk of oversimplifying matters. To a new reader, it may not look so at the first reading. In this novel also the monopoly of England over cloth market is pointed out. India and her spirit have been crushed by British domination.

A new kind of thinking order is required which assimilates both traditional Indian views with western sense of rationality. But then traditional Indian view may not prove to be a very simple thing. So many folds exist within the Indian view that to take the Sanskrit Brahminical cult as the authentic representative of it will lead to new wrongs. This plurality is also the richness of Indian thought.

A saga of flight and pursuit this novel chronicles the adventures of Alu a young master weaver who is wrongly suspected of being a terrorist. Chased from Bengal to Bombay and on through the Persian Gulf to North Africa by a bird watching police inspector, Alu encounters along the way a cast of characters. The reader is strained into their lives by incidents tender and extreme and all forcefully told. Amitav Ghosh is as natural a weaver of words as Alu of cloth deftly interlacing humor and wisdom to produce a narrative tapestry of surpassing beauty.

*In an Antique Land* contains two narratives. An anthropological narrative revolves around two visits made by Ghosh to two villages in the Nile Delta, while he was writing his doctoral dissertation 1980-81 and again a few years later1988. In the second tale offered similar to the first one in the book, Ghosh constructs a fictionalized history of a 12th century Jewish merchant, Abraham Ben Yiju and his slave Ashu and Bomma using documents from the Cairo Geniza. This novel is written to recall the spirit of a world that no longer exists. The love that once existed between a Tunician Jewish
merchant and an Indian tribal is overwhelming. It makes sorry for our world of terrorism, riots and communal discord. This is a well researched book based on old records and the author’s tireless investigation.

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Calcutta Chromosome* has tried to given an answer to West’s monopoly over scientific discoveries and inventions. He has tried to deconstruct the aura around Ronald Ross the British scientist who found the cause of malaria. This is perhaps the most daring work by this author. He breaks literary traditions. At times it looks like science fiction. But the driving logic remains to undo the Western sense of superiority. The story for the most part set in Calcutta at some not mentioned time in the future is a medical thriller that dramatizes the adventures of obviously cut off people who are bring together by a mystifying turn of events. The narrative is loosely based on the life and times of Sir Ronald Ross, the Nobel Prize winning scientist who achieved a get through in malaria research in 1898.

This novel begins with the story of Antar a member of staff in the Life Watch organization, who recounts an encounter with L.Murugan a member of staff in Life Watch who has disappeared in Calcutta. The plan is quite difficult and its timelines are intentionally mixed up. Antar begins to trail Murugan’s disappearance in Calcutta many years back. Murugan has asked to be transferred to Calcutta since of his fascination with the life of Sir Ronald Ross.

This novel protagonist Ronald Ross did not find out the mysteries of the malaria parasite. It was a group of underground practitioners of an unusual mystical science, but the nation of India who helped to Ronald Ross to the conclusions for which he is famous. Ronald Ross with clues in the belief that in the moment Ronald made his
discovery the parasite would change its nature. At this point a new alternative of malaria would appear and the group’s research using the chromosome-transfer method would advance even further.

*The Calcutta Chromosome* also reflects a post-colonial understanding of the scientific machinery at work. That malaria is conceded by the anopheles mosquito. Though the fantastical position, Murugan uncovers in the novel are not factual, the underlying estimation of the position of medical exploration in colonial times seems to be factually based. Chambers explains that it was “common currency” among Bengali intellectuals that Ross oppressed native workers in his quest to find the cause of malaria. The fictional Ross is green in his profession but is aided by a shadowy religious sect which pushes him in the right direction. They plan on using his discoveries for their own purposes, which rely on the parasite’s ability to cross the blood brain barrier and extend far beyond a malarial cure. The medical aspects of malarial fever make it fertile ground for a work of fiction. It can provoke wild dreams and hallucinations, which its remedy, quinine, does as well. And intentional malarial infection was once used as a treatment for syphilis another disease with end stages marked by mental generations.

In *Sea of Poppies*, Amitav Ghosh assembles from different corners of the world sailors, marines and passengers for the Ibis, a slaving schooner now converted to the transport of coolies and opium. In bringing his group of characters to Calcutta and into the open water, Amitav Ghosh provides the reader with all method of stories and equips himself with the recruits to man and navigate an old-fashioned literary three-decker.
It is a historical novel, which means that the story is only half the story. Ever since Walter Scott published Waverly in 1814, readers have turned to historical fiction not just for escape from a strained and conventional present, but also for instruction. Scott gave his readers not merely the bizarre character-types and wide open spaces of a fantastic pre-industrial Scotland, but antiquities, dialect, history, geography and lashings of political economy. Amitav Ghosh finds the educational programme of the Scottian novel very much to his purpose. Amitav Ghosh’s two novels carry may deep inside the opium trade in the 1830s. The first Sea of Poppies published in 2008 took along the Ganges and to Calcutta where the poppies are grown and the opium processed. River of Smoke is the second volume of a proposed trilogy.

River of Smoke follows the tale throughout to Canton in China, where the opium is sold. The Chinese authorities are trying to prevent illegal imports of the drug, which has inflicted a plague of addiction on the Chinese population while making empire-sized fortunes for the irrepressibly shameless traders, mostly British.

In historical stories the past can sometimes feel restrained; hindsight floating just off the page, tells us that we know what it all new up to and what came of it, the first opium war, through which British gunboats enforced a truce opening Chinese ports to international trade comes shortly after the ending of this novel. But Ghosh’s novels some succeed in taking us back inside the chaos of when ‘then’ and ‘now’. His grasp of the detail of the period is exhaustive, he is so thoroughly submerged in it – that readers can’t possibly remember all the things he shows them or hold on to all the life stories of all the characters he introduces. Both novels are cabinets of curiosities, crowded with items that hold a story of their own.
The Hungry Tide is a novel of journey and romance set in the alien Sunderbans – treacherous islands in the Bay of Bengal where lonely inhabitants live in fear of drowning tides and man – eating tigers. A headstrong young American arrives in this landscape to study a rare species of river dolphin. She enlists the aid of a local fisherman and a translator and soon their fates on the waterways will be determined by the forces of nature and human folly. The novel talks about the internal struggles which man has to face in a completely different environment. Our personality does change with respect to the change in the surrounding environment. Ghosh has in fact tried to view the darker side of the moon. He has managed to prove the theory that human nature is the most volatile, most vulnerable of all entities.

This novel speaks about one such community who live on the peripheries of the Indian subconscious out in the untamed areas where India’s mighty river drains out into the sea, where sweet and saline water have no boundaries and where tigers and snakes, crocodile and fishes roam free. This is where islands are submerged and where they reemerge, where people eke out a living from the bountiful yet threatened forest produce, where animal and human, myth and reality merge and overlap each other in the ritual survival for existence.

Ghosh locates the characters and events of the novel amidst the shifting lives of this place. Two narratives make up the structure of this novel. The narrative space is taken up by a handful of characters each on a personal quest a personal search through life and its hidden aspects. The setting is geographically limited, yet vast in its implications of a larger global concern. The narrative of the past contains the seeds of the present narrative.
This novel is a full of ideas none of them found to have an easy answer. In Kanai’s and Piya’s world, they prefer the structure of science or business where they can view everything as black and white. In the Sundarbans where the flood changes the environment daily, nothing is assured and everything in life is a shade of gray. It’s a place where tigers kill hundreds of people a year, but village brings in the government authorities to mete out punishment. In an environment where life is fragile, the essence of any person is broken down to its core. Ghosh lets the tide country break down the barriers of both society and his characters.

*The Hungry Tide* is a contemporary story of journey and unlikely love, individuality and history set in one of the most attractive regions on earth. The Easternmost coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal lays the huge labyrinth of tiny islands known as the Sudarbans. For settlers here life is tremendously precarious. Attacks by deadly tigers are common. Unrest and eviction are constant threats. Without warning, at any time, tidal floods rise and surge over the land, leaving destruction in their wake. In this place of vengeful beauty, the lives of three people from different worlds collide. Piya Roy is a young marine biologist, of Indian descent but stubbornly American in search of a rare, endangered river dolphin. Her journey begins with a disaster, when she is thrown from a boat into crocodile-infested waters. Salvage comes in the form of a young, ignorant fisherman, Fokir.

Although they have no language between them, Piya and Fokir are powerfully drawn to each other, sharing an uncanny instinct for the ways of the sea. Piya engages Fokir to help with her research and finds a translator in Kanai Dutt, a businessman from Delhi whose idealistic aunt and uncle is longtime settlers in the Sudarbans. As the three
of them launch into the elaborate backwaters, they are drawn untrained into the hidden undercurrents of this isolated world, where political turmoil exacts a personal toll that is every bit as influential as the ravaging tide.

While this novel is about the struggle for each person to find their place in the world, it’s not a novel of constant action and suspense. This doesn’t slow the pace of the novel. Ghosh keeps the pages rotating with the history of the tide country, the stories of the local deities, scientific information, the back stories for each character and Nirmal’s journal of what happened to Kusum and her son. At times, the history and scientific information start to overwhelm the story and these carry on for a bit too long before the final voyage up the river begins.

Someone already knowledge about the Sundarbans or cytology might find this book dragging at times with these details but the explanation of the exotic, whether scientific, geographic, or historical can be as engaging as the lives of the characters. A bit of judicious editing about three-quarters of the way through the novel to remove the history of the scientific research of the river dolphin would have been helpful. For the most part of the novel is a compelling book about ordinary people bound together in an exotic place that can consume them all. It’s the basest of human emotions, love, jealousy, pride, and trust that will make the difference. That’s a lesson we all can learn, again as may follow Piya, Kanai, and Fokir into the heart of tide country.