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Indian Ethos in the Popular Novels of Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract

In the Postcolonial discourse, the study of the nation is emerging as an ambivalent phenomenon that revolves around the political thoughts and literary languages. The term nation uses to describe historical ideas, society, the cultural, traditional and political condition of borderlines in searching the role of social life and nation formation. This paper mainly focused on the concept of the major features of Indian ethos. It explores Amitav Ghosh's contribution to the presentation of Indian ethos in three popular selected novels.

Keywords: ethos, postcolonial, nation, society, culture

The word "ethos" is derived from the Greek word *ethikos* which means civilized, viewing honest temperament. It is employed by the scholars, historians and anthropologists to illustrate the major principles that portray a society, nation or philosophy. The use of this word in rhetoric is closely associated with the Greek terminology used by Aristotle in his concept of the three artistic proofs. He used this word to highlight the power of music to make its impact on the listener's emotions, behaviors, and even moralities. However, Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines ethos as "a set of beliefs, ideas and others about social behavior and the relationship of a person or group". Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines Ethos as "the moral ideas and attitudes that belong to a particular group of society." In short, ethos is the disposition of character or a set of fundamental values particular to a specific person, people, culture or movement. It is associated with the geographical locations, languages, race, religion and culture of a nation. Ethos in India has a specific understanding and impact. Indian territory covers different geographical areas, languages, cultures, religions and races. Indian Ethos is based on "social reality" in India. Alexander the Great, Megasthenes, Apollonius of Tyana, Alberuni, Herder, Schelling, Schlegel, Schopenhauer and even the Chinese scholar Yi Jing came to India and observed the peculiar significance of the Indian Ethos in its social institutions, religions, structures, moral framework and peculiarities of food, ornaments and garments.

The Indian constitution celebrates tolerance towards various religious identities along with their linguistic differences. People living in India as a whole explore various cultures, languages, and customs. Muslims, Sikhs, Jains, Christians, and Zoroastrians also reside amicably in India exploring their own identities. Such complex structure of society, philosophies, religions, languages has contributed to the creation of Indian Ethos.

In the Indian value system money is powerless whereas knowledge, good health and sound character impart the actual power. There is a greater emphasis on values and ethics. Indians believe in the perfect supreme soul, so that there is always a struggle towards perfection on their part. They believe in the principle of reflection in nature. "If you are good, the whole world is good". In short, these distinct features of Indian society are reflected in the Indian English literature. Similarly, the novels of Amitav Ghosh are fine examples of the same.

This paper is focused on *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh for the purpose of demonstrating how his work is soaked in Indian ethos. The modern Indian English novels seem to have westernized in terms of structure, technique, style, subject matter and other novelistic features. However, Amitav Ghosh's three novels namely *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies* reflect Indianness in their plots, characters, settings, dialogue, actions and themes. The novels create Indian milieu through the narration of human relations, behavioral patterns and social customs. The image of India with its multifaceted dimensions has been genuinely reflected in these novels.

Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace* came on the literary scene in the year 2000 and got worldwide fame. It remains one of the best-sellers worldwide and it is surprising that more than half a million copies have been sold in Britain alone. Amitav Ghosh has realistically depicted the devastation which resulted due to Japanese incursion in Burma and its impacts on Army officials and common people. It narrates a sense of depression generated out of wars which can be seen as a human misfortune leading to death, destruction and