



AMITAV GHOSH

A
CRITICAL
SPECTRUM

Edited by
Dr Bijender Singh
Subrata Ray

Space studies and Media Studies.

Kalyan Pattanayak is a Lecturer in the Department of English, Ghatal Rabindra Satabarsiki Mahavidyalaya, affiliated to Vidyasagar University, Medinipur, West Bengal. He has completed PG from Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University, Kanpur. Presently, he is pursuing PhD from the Department of English, Seacom Skills University, Birbhum, West Bengal. He is also an Academic Counsellor of the Department of English, Netaji Subhas Open University, West Bengal. His area of research is Indian Writing in English. His areas of interest include Subaltern Studies, Diaspora, Ecocriticism, etc. He has presented many papers in several national and international seminars, webinars, and conferences. He has published research papers in UGC CARE-listed journals and other journals of international repute, and contributed book chapters too. He has authored a book *An Objective Approach to Literature in English* that was published by a Kolkata-based reputed publisher.

Jayanto Ghosh was educated at The University of Burdwan, West Bengal (India) where he obtained his master's degree in English Literature and Language. Since 2008 he is faculty and Head of the Department of English at Sri Ramkrishna Sarada Vidyamahapitha, Kamarpukur. His areas of interest are Post 50's British Literature, English Language Teaching, and Climate Change. Currently, he is pursuing his doctoral research on Cli-fi (Climate Fiction) and climate change. He has contributed substantially to journals and books of national and international repute.

Sunil Basak is a Doctoral Fellow in Social Sciences at CSSSC (Centre for Studies in Social Sciences) under Jadavpur University, West Bengal from the academic year 2021. He has done his Undergraduate and Post-Graduate in English Literature and Linguistics from the University of Kalyani and Bachelor of Education from Santipur BEd College under West Bengal University of Teachers' Training, Education Planning and Administration. His major area of research interest is the caste question in Bengal and Bengali Dalit community. His other areas of interest are Gender Studies and Dalit Literature.

Atanu Sarkar, (MA in English Literature, UGC-NET) is an Assistant Professor in City College, Kolkata, West Bengal and a PhD

Research Scholar in Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. He had also been a former Assistant Professor in Amdanga Jugal Kishore Mahavidyalaya, West Bengal. His areas of interest are History of English Literature, T. S. Eliot (Modernism), Theatre Studies, etc. Besides, he is a theatre worker and an artist.

Ranjana Upadhyay is a PhD Research Scholar in the Department of English at Pt Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur, Chhattisgarh. Her research area is on Indian mythology and its modern perspectives. Her areas of interest are Indian Mythology, Fiction, Indian Writing in English, and Feminist Writing. She has done her MA and MPhil from the same university. Her previous research topic was "Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila: A Critical Estimate*." She has 5 years of teaching experience at college and university level. She has participated and presented papers on many national and international conferences and seminars. Her research papers have been published in a number of eminent international journals. She writes short stories and novels as a hobby.

Abhinandan Bag works as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Humanities, Budge Budge Institute of Technology, Kolkata. He is also a Research Scholar in West Bengal State University and is working on transnational aspects of Amitav Ghosh and Kunal Basu's fiction. He has published his papers in many national and international journals and edited anthologies.

Zahra Ahmad is pursuing MA English from Patna Women's College (Autonomous). She authored 'My Stories' Vol. I and II for primary schools. She has published fifteen research papers and presented at seventeen national and international levels. Her recent publications include poems in *Setu Magazine*, *Live Wire* and *RIC Journal*, and research papers in *The Criterion*, *Motif*, *Lang-lit* and *Re-marking*. She is an academic editor of the esteemed *New Literaria Journal*.

Pallavi is an Assistant Professor in Department of English, Chaudhary Ranbir Singh University, Jind (Haryana) and is a Research Scholar in Department of English & Foreign Languages, Chaudhary Devi Lal University, Sirsa (Haryana). She is interested in medical narratives of doctors and patients. Her memoirs as embodied texts reflecting on how changing space and time constraints due to illness affect their identity. Her areas of interest are Indian Writing in Translation, Medical

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THE SHADOW AS A PALPABLE MONSTER IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE SHADOW LINES*

ATANU SARKAR

Unbiased at least he was when he arrived on his mission,
Having never set eyes on this land he was called to partition
Between two peoples fanatically at odds,
With their different diets and incompatible gods.
'Time,' they had briefed him in London, 'is short. It's too late
For mutual reconciliation or rational debate:
The only solution now lies in separation.

...

He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate
Of millions. The maps at his disposal were out of date
And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect
Contested areas. The weather was frightfully hot,
And a bout of dysentery kept him constantly on the trot,
But in seven weeks it was done, the frontiers decided,
A continent for better or worse divided.
The next day he sailed for England, where he quickly forgot
The case, as a good lawyer must. Return he would not,
Afraid, as he told his Club, that he might get shot. (Auden
189)

The poem narrates the pretext of the Partition of India by Sir
Cyril Radcliffe with a worthy satire and his painstaking effort of that

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While relentlessly interrogating and challenging the established facets of human understanding of the historical, societal, political, geographical, cultural, psychological and, of course, climatic realities of today's world, and powerfully denying the hegemonic Eurocentric historiography, Amitav Ghosh makes us almost forcibly run into some of the most disturbing issues which, as far as human consciousness is concerned, stand as exigent demand for social and human justice. As recorded in Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional oeuvre, how the highly unstable and rapidly evolving relationship between human beings and the human societies works and how this relationship is conditioned by various volatile value-systems across time and space in human civilisation and how all through the civilisational journey human beings have learnt to ignore and even unrecognise some of the most uncomfortable truths, strongly ask for fresh critical attention and incisive inquiry. It is hoped and believed too that this anthology, with its deeply penetrative and strikingly diverse range of 45 provocative papers containing some of the most pressing issues that Ghosh tirelessly warns us of, shall do justice somewhat towards these urgent needs.



MALIK & SONS
PUBLISHERS & DISTRIBUTORS

C-293 A, Street No. 3, West Karawal Nagar

New Delhi-110094

Mobile No: 9873248544, 9312442975

Email: malikandsonspub@gmail.com

ISBN 978-93-92459-11-5



Price: ₹ 1650 | \$ 70