

Post Colonial Aspects in Dancing in Cambodia, at Large in Burma By Amitav Ghosh

Naseer ud-din Sofi¹,
Ph.D. Research Scholar,

Dr. Mukti Upadhyay²,
Associate Professor,

^{1,2}School of Languages, Literature & Society, (English Department)
Jaipur National University, Jagatpura, Jaipur- Rajasthan

Abstract: Postcolonial literature refers to the literature produced after colonization. It focuses on the social and cultural disturbance that follows the political independence of colonized people. This paper starts with the view keeping in mind the concept of colonial discourse of two South Asian countries like Cambodia and Burma. Postcolonial travel writing often includes the descriptions of images, maps and historical background of the place which is traveled. In travel literature, the narrator often moves from one place to another. Travel writer tries to explore the places by himself and in doing so the narrator in him tries to discuss the means and way in which he interacts with the people and the places of the nation he travels. The affiliation between the individual and the nation is an essential part of travel literature.

Key words: Colonization, Post Colonial travel writing, Political Independence, Social and cultural disturbance etc.

Introduction: The paper attempts to explore the travelogue of Amitav Ghosh, *Dancing in Cambodia at Large in Burma* (1998) from post-colonial and colonial perspective. It is based on Ghosh's visit to Cambodia and Burma and describes the painful situation of the native people of the Cambodia and Burma in colonial and post-colonial phase. In *Dancing in Cambodia, At large in Burma*, the author has analyzed the impact of colonization by French on Cambodia with special focus on the aftermath of decolonization and its subsequent humiliation and fantasies. *Dancing in Cambodia* prompts us that "The most powerful of the myth that surrounded Ankor the legend of its accidental discovery by the nineteenth century French explorer Henri Mouth is no more and no less true than of others inscribed upon the temple" (Ghosh 59).

Cambodia came in attention in international headlines in April 1998, when the leader of Khmer Rouge leader Pol Pot (Saloth Sar) died at the age of 82 with heart attack. He was grown in the family of Kompong Thong which was considered as the important part of land of then French territory. He entered into the politics during 1950 and became the general secretary of Communist Party in 1962. In 1975, he came into power and quickly tried to transform and demolish the existing institution of the country in his own vision and concept of supreme by using the power to empty the cities and villages, abolishing the economy of the country, private

institutions and property and religion. He was reflected as the game planner of the Cambodia's brutal and innocent killing and had been responsible for the deaths of about two million Cambodians. He made an attempt to change the nation into Agrarian Maoist Utopia from 1975-79. After the Pol Pot death and the end of the cruel rule even Bill Clinton, the President of U.S.A spoke "A time to remember his murderous reign of terror and to pursue justice against other Khmer Rouge leaders who share the guilt." weeks before his death, U.S.A had sought Chinese help to put Pol Pot on trial as reported on page no 6 of *the Hindu* on April 12 in 1998). The death of the tyrant ruler gave rise to international hue and cry. Amitav Ghosh rightly reconstructs and how Pol Pot has imposed cruelty and tyranny on an ordinary people of Cambodia. These two South Asian nations practiced extreme isolation and destitution in the regime of Pol, Pot (Sloth Sar). Amitav Ghosh tries to realize the social setting throughout the period of isolation and destitution. While taking with the advisors of Pol Pot, Amitav Ghosh presents some of the cruelties of the late dictator. For instance, the Khmer Rouge's recognized prejudiced patriotism whose primary targets are: "Vietnam and Cambodia's own Vietnamese minority" (Kiernan 22). Is borne through the exchange of a defector. Amitav Ghosh presents that how Pol Pot in 1992 told United Nations officials about the instruction he had received at Political campus: "As far as the Vietnamese are concerned, whenever we meet them we must kill them, whether they are militaries or civilians, because they are not ordinary civilians but soldiers disguised as civilians. We must kill them whether they are men, women, or children, there is no distinction, and they are enemies" (Khmer Rouge defector 22).

Amitav Ghosh shows how cruelty and terror was important to the use of the power by Khmer Rouge leaders like Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan. The Pol Pot was the dictator of the state and is "believed to have played an important role in planning the mass purges of that period," (50). These leaders who are brutal and are using their power on their own people and who consider terror and cruelty as a morally cleansing weapon: "It (terror) was an integral part not merely of their coercive machinery, but of the moral order on which they build their regime," (50). Pol Pot's concept and vision of social ideal was inclined by life in remote northern-east Cambodia. The tribal of Pol Pot were self - sufficient in their communal living and in other aspects of tyranny. In the beginning of his travelogue, Amitav Ghosh shows how these Khmers and their rulers targeted the common people of Cambodia and he also depicts how these rulers uprooted the roots of middle class people of their native country and tried to push them behind the walls of isolation and ignorance.

Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma is a non-fictional travelogue comprising of three short prose pieces. 'Dancing in Cambodia' 'Stories in Stones' and 'At large in Burma' in which he demonstrates the division between history as recorded and history as sensitively experienced. Amitav Ghosh studies life, art, social culture, and political institutions of the places he visits. The major portion of the books consists of Dancing in Cambodia, at large in Burma. This depicts the conditions of the Cambodia and Burma in pre- colonial and post- colonial period. Dance and music is an important aspect that stands in day to day life of Cambodians.

Dance and music represent the significant symbols of politics of resurgence, isolation and resurgence in Cambodia. It gave the struggling people of Cambodia an identity and confidence, an emblem of authenticity. The author thus sums up his thinking as “a kind of rebirth: a moment when the grief of survival became indistinguishable from the joy of living” (52). These two South Asian countries have been colonized by the colonizers earlier and both the nations had painful institutions of their rulers, and have totally been isolated from the practice of politics. Ghosh tries to rebuild the situation during the period of alienation and destitution. Descriptions of the present destitutions are juxtaposed with an account of the visit of Cambodian dancer in France in 1906.

Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma starts with a realistic and pleasant sentence Ghosh recalls the childhood tales he had heard about Burma. He confirms that his interest in Burma developed through the tales narrated by his aunt and her husband, nicknamed “Prince.” As an anthropologist, Ghosh relates this story telling to an Indian tradition:

Like many Indians; I grew up on stories of other countries: places my parents had lived in or visited before the birth of the Republic of India, in 1947. To me, the most intriguing of these stories were those that my family carried out of Burma. I suspect that this was partly because Burma had become a kind of lost world in the early ‘60s, when I was old enough to listen to my relative stories (Ghosh 57).

Amitav Ghosh gives the detailed description how the problems of Cambodia get added day by day with the colonization of France, how Pol Pot rises and became the head of the nation, Khmer rouge and by the attack of Vietnam, through the plans and policies of contrast and comparison. In spite of all critical situations like social, cultural and the political turmoil and radical situations, the rich cultural heritage of music and dance is considered as one of the special things that kept the nation alive. In the sharp analysis of the socio-political and cultural crises from the colonial and post-colonial perspective of two South Asian countries like Cambodia and Burma, accessible in extremely readable in lucid, simple and elegant prose, Amitav Ghosh has presented the concept of the illusions and productiveness for the vision for India from the perspectives of national reconstruction and integration. With the use of history, this interfaces imaginative tale by the work of fine art, a recognizable province for Amitav Ghosh. K.C. Belliappa in his learned essay predicts that in his novel *Dancing in Cambodia*, Ghosh demonstrates, “how an excursion into the past is no escape from the present, but a coming to grips with the present realities of having” (65). Here Ghosh uses the technique of juxtaposing the medieval and modern worlds of the twelfth and twentieth century’s in two different aspects of civilizations of India and two South Asian countries like Cambodia or Burma. In these countries, there is a diverse culture of different religions like Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. Through this clever fictional discourse of diverse cultures and religions, Ghosh illustrates how we have to develop the need for human understanding and religious tolerance among the masses of India, Cambodia and Burma which he considers as imperative in a world full of strife due to religious obscurantism and fanaticism. Ghosh has emulated history and politics in *Dancing in Cambodia; At Large* in

Burma. This is a sensitive insight into the postcolonial experiences and politics of isolation, violence and hatred in two volatile South-East Asian nations, Cambodia and Burma (now Myanmar). Amitav Ghosh then analyses like a true anthropologist as to what went wrong and how Burma was made, after fifty years, one of the United Nation's ten least developed nations on earth, and a byword for repression, xenophobia and civil abuse. The decline started with the assassination of Aung San on 19 July 1947, though he was the country's acknowledged leader and the hero of its independence movement. Suu Kyi, as an eminent human rights activist and a 1991 Noble Peace Prize Awardee, still living in a kind of house arrest in Rangoon, is Aung San's worthy daughter and she was only two at the time of her father's assassination. Since it attained its independence in January 1948, Burma has seen civil wars, communist uprisings, military coups and continual fighting amongst its sizable minority groups-the Karen, the Rakhine, the Shan, the Mon, and several smaller groups.

Conclusion:

This research paper deals in aspect with diverse movements of journey inscription before dealing with the preferred travelogues of Amitav Ghosh. Travel writing goes from beginning to end a range of stages and changes; the illustration of diverse spaces in travelogues depended on the time period in which they were printed. Throughout the middle ages, travel writing had a budge from legends and myths to the pilgrimage narratives. This paper also helped to expose the colonial certainty as presented as a result of the Amitav Ghosh to Cambodia and Egypt. Travel inscription not only gave an approaching into the place and people of various religions but they also represented the psychology and philosophy of the traveler.

. Amitav Ghosh gives the detailed description how the problems of Cambodia get added day by day with the colonization of France, how Pol Pot rises and became the head of the nation, Khmer rouge and by the attack of Vietnam, through the plans and policies of contrast and comparison. Amitav Ghosh shows how cruelty and terror was important to the use of the power by Khmer Rouge leaders like Pol Pot and Khieu Samphan. The Pol Pot was the dictator of the state and is "believed to have played an important role in planning the mass purges of that period," (50). *Dancing in Cambodia at Large in Burma* written by Amitav Ghosh is the story of his travels throughout Cambodia and Burma after they get free from the clutches of colonialism and achieved freedom and then they wanted to do each and everything according to their own wishes and aspirations. It is the description of two South Asian Countries like Cambodia and Burma, when there is complicated response of the unbearable pain and agony which they have analyzed in their colonial phase.

References:

1. Ghosh, Amitav. *Dancing in Cambodia, At Large in Burma*. Ravi Dayal, 1998.
2. Korte, Barbara, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Post Colonial Explorations*, Translated by Catherine Matthias. New York. St. Martin's Press, 2000, p.21.
3. Ed. Peter Hulme and Tim Young's *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing..* London. Cambridge University Press, 2002.