Home As a Mobile and Flexible Domestic Space in Amitav Ghosh's Alternative Ideas of Cosmopolitanism

Arnab Das[1],*, Madhumita Roy[2]

[1] Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur, Howrah, India
[2] Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Shibpur, Howrah, India,
 mroy.hss@faculty.iiests.ac.in

Corresponding author: Arnab Das, Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology, Botanical Garden Area, Howrah, West Bengal 711103, India, suvarnabdas@gmail.com

Abstract

In this globalized cosmopolitan world, the concept of home has become one of the most crucial socio-cultural perceptions, playing a significant role in establishing community and transnational relationships both at the local and the global level. Amitav Ghosh's alternative ideas of cosmopolitanism are committed to criticizing the neo-imperial characteristic of the contemporary capitalist cosmopolitan world. This paper argues that Amitav Ghosh through his selected fiction - *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004) - has shown how breaking away from the conventional, constrictive ideas and established definitions of home, that often run the risk of becoming the birthplace of many of the communal, regional or national fanatic ideologies, contributes to forming alternative ideas of home and family that are more mobile and flexible in nature and how they are instrumental in shaping individuals as true cosmopolitans.

Keywords

Introduction

In this globalized cosmopolitan world, the concept of home has become one of the most crucial socio-cultural perceptions that plays a significant role in establishing community and transnational relationships both at the local and the global level. The connotative importance and the literary representations surrounding the ideas of home have undergone radical changes over the years. In today's changing socio-political perspectives, the assumptions of home also include aspects of the homeless state of existence and the feelings of unhomeliness among the transnational refugees and the different other ethnic, migrant and minority communities. When the conventional notions of home are closely examined through the contemporary postcolonial lenses, they invoke a sense of terror and also an urge to escape from this constrictive socio-cultural unit as much as they seem to be against the liberal space of global relationships in the present era of cosmopolitanism.

Amitav Ghosh's alternative ideas of cosmopolitanism are committed to criticizing the neo-imperial characteristic of the contemporary capitalist cosmopolitan world. His articulated form of cosmopolitanism necessitates such ideals of openness and inclusivity that can be claimed to have flourished from the familial environment of a home and such ideals are thought to be progressive and not regressive in nature. In his novels, The Shadow Lines (1988) and The Hungry Tide (2004), the idea that he develops as the concept of a home is not just a single concept to be understood, instead it is being projected as a compound concept. His form of domestic world is found to be a sort of architecture that consists of both the social interactions and the physical or structural world that the families are perceived to be associated with. Just as some postcolonial critics are of the opinion that the identity that cosmopolitanism constructs is devoid of the cultural richness, an inherent quality of the familial space of the domestic world. On the other hand, some other critics like K. Satchidanandan (2002), find the space of a home as an obstacle against the formation of a cosmopolitan identity. According to Sharmani Patricia Gabriel (2005), in Amitav Ghosh's writings the internal world of his narratives is seen to be shaped by the numerous artefacts of domestic life such as the rooftops, house premises, boundary walls, flats etc., but the bonding of the relationships among the families in those houses fulfil the metaphorical parameters that a home signifies. So, in Ghosh's vision the inhabitants of the houses are the individuals who seek to maintain their existence in the physical and figurative space of the home through their transnational means of livelihood in a cosmopolitan world. This paper argues Amitav Ghosh through The Shadow Lines (1988) and The Hungry Tide (2004) has shown that the breaking away from the conventional, constrictive ideas and established definitions of home, which often run the risk of becoming the birthplace of many of the communal, regional or national fanatic ideologies, contributes in the formation of alternative ideas of home and family that are more mobile and flexible in nature and are instrumental in shaping individuals as true cosmopolitans.

Cosmopolitanism and its postcolonial critical aspects

Amitav Ghosh in two of his novels has argued an idea of how the contemporary globalized nature of cosmopolitanism should function in order to constitute a negotiating relationship between the domestic space of the home and the transnational space of the world. For him the postcolonial socio-cultural environment of the familial space opposes the constrictive socio-political impacts of the nation-states. Therefore, it becomes obvious that domestic relationships, in conjunction with the ideals of the transnational cosmopolitanism, can provide an alternative vision that goes beyond the quasi-liberal communal bounds of the conventional notion of cosmopolitanism that holds fast to the collective interests of certain communities, overlooking the individual accounts.

His vision of cosmopolitanism is not rooted in any abstract platitudinous philosophy but arises from the world of everyday socio-political activities and experiences of the human beings. In his novels, *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004), we can see how domestic life, which is supposed to

be the source of impositions of different repressive cultural practices, engages with the true liberal spirit of cosmopolitanism. Timothy Brennan (1997) has expressed his anxieties in suggesting that the stable and secure environment of a home should not be given any kind of implicit or explicit privilege in the formation of an individual's cosmopolitan identity. What he believes is that the socio-cultural principles of a home or family, which are inevitably considered to be the fundamental scaffolding of every human's personality development, often tend or serve to inculcate divisive and extremist sensibilities like nationalism, provincialism, communal fanaticism among individuals. Critics like Shameem Black (2006) are of the opinion that both the socio-cultural tensions among the relatives of the families and the architectural designs of the houses may contribute in imprisoning the individuals' global exposures by keeping them inside typical non-cosmopolitan homely spaces, and thereby inhibiting their scopes for merging with the foreign or unknown cultural practices. They have asserted that the families or homes celebrate communal ideas instead of promoting any liberal values and believe that any cosmopolitan principle causes serious threats to the familial integrities. In this context, Sissela Bok (1996) has observed that cosmopolitanism seeks allegiance to ordinary human values instead of steadfast loyalty to any familial claims that restore extremist prejudices.

Criticisms of the postcolonial ideas of home and family

Many of the postcolonial critics have revealed that the familial world of a home often gets exposed to the outside world through historical traumatic experiences; therefore, Homi K. Bhabha (1992) has stated that even if it is through unhomely traumatic experiences of the social lives, the divisive wall between the domestic space and the global space breaks down. Such confrontations generate an ambivalent psychological state of existence among the individuals where they start to imagine themselves as crucial components in building flexible relationships between the domestic and the foreign affairs. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah (1998), individuals through their simultaneous engagements with the home and the world, develop identities that are inclusive of all the cultural forces which originate from places and people that are not their own and still they continue to maintain their own cultural practices. On the other hand, Rosemary Marangoly George (1996) has argued those people who lose their homes through being political exiles, subjected to displacements or due to forced migration, the idea of a home seems to be nothing but an illusion. These people appear to assume they are outsiders within their own national territories. They become victims of myriad exploitations and become oppressed under various unrestful domestic conflicts that often result in radical socio-cultural clashes.

Such excluding forces have been instrumental in creating urges among individuals in which they begin to perceive a renewed sense of belongingness to their own homeland that give them opportunities to utilize the global resources to emerge as cosmopolitans. This flexible and mobile sense of belongingness is what has broken the concept of a much secured, static or stable space that defines the conventional notion of home. From a postcolonial point of view home is a very significant word that incorporates issues of an individual's sense of his own self-identity as well as the aspect of his national identity.

Hence, according to Carol Maloney (2017), home can only be defined through all the individual or communal qualities that constitute the identity of a self. She has also suggested that home can be seen as a conjunction of geographical locations, cultural backgrounds, racial histories and other physical spaces that contribute to form individual and collective cosmopolitan identities. Therefore, the postcolonial notion of home is not just limited to individual private spaces; rather it refers to the cultural and ideological extensions where it merges with the global public space. Carol Maloney (1999), in her review of George's *The Politics of Home* (1996), observed that while exploring the political intent of the postcolonial writers in constructing individual identities, she has also critically addressed the postcolonial notions of one's sense of belongingness towards one's home.

V. Dharwadker (2001) has observed that literary representations of home started to evolve at the same time as the postcolonial cultural and as ideological discrepancies began to isolate the writers' understanding of home from the perspectives of being inside the nation or away from the nation. The idea of home in postcolonial narratives has been influenced by the narrator's conscientious perception of the difference between the real and idealized condition of one's existence in a postcolonial world. According to George (1996), the difference between the ideal and real state of existence is what constructs the postcolonial self-identities. Maloney (1999), in this context, asserts that identities that are multi-ethnic in nature find exposures through this line of difference, yet those identities can not necessarily be interpreted as capable of causing revolutions. She has attempted to define home as a space of negotiations that gets shaped and intersected by diverse forces such as race, gender, caste and class. Maloney (1999) therefore asserts that in the postcolonial backdrop, the same socio-political, cultural and topographical aspects that contribute in the formation of both individual and collective identity of an individual also contribute to defining the 'home'. George (1996) in this context has distinguished between the two notions – one is the 'home' and the other one being the 'home-country'. She has attempted to address the idea of home by incorporating the sense of belongingness both in the past or during the colonial period and at present or during the postcolonial period. She observes that during the colonial period, even while the subjects inhabit their 'home-country', colonial rule had made the subjects feel as being away or dislocated from their desired 'home'. In George's (1996) view, the colonizers could never imagine the colonies occupied by them as their geographical and natural home. Rather for the colonizers these locations always stood as politically assigned shelters. On the other hand, George (1996) asserts that for the colonized people, though they could not enjoy the colonial political agency of the colonizers, they had the advantage of occupying such locations which they could easily imagine as their natural home. In this context, Maloney (1999) has observed that though the colonial subjects felt the physical and intellectual sense of belonging in their colonized home-country. the paradox was that the idea of ideal 'home' remained absent both for the colonizers and for the colonized.

Any conceptual uniformity loses its way when it comes to the question of locating 'home'. According to Duyvendak (2011), the exploration of the emotional aspects of home brings one to enquire about two opposite spaces –the public space and the private space. For him, the idea of home stands as a private space away from the public space of the world. But in the same vein he has also asserted that public space can also make one feel as belonging to one's private space when it refers to the individual's connection to any specific group or community, since in such spaces individuals find themselves in the kind of familiar environment that they anticipate for a home. He illustrates that apart from this emotional attachment, home serves as a personal space of self-realization where the infrastructure and invisible conducive environment nourish the collective as well as individual ambitions of the people. Duyvendak (2011) has also addressed the social policies for the domestic familial space at home, stating that while these policies suggest an equal share of household labour both for men and women, there are greater gender-related implications in bringing parity between men and women sharing at home.

Postcolonial notions of global and vernacular cosmopolitanisms

Bhabha (2017) is of the opinion that certain globalized cosmopolitan activities at times try to establish an artificial intimate relationship between the national and local ethnic communities. Different types of cosmopolitanism have their own methods by which various ethnic communities identify themselves and they have their own political identities as well. But such cosmopolitanisms become problematic in transnational market economy operations because of the prevalence of global economic injustices. In this context, Bhabha has referred to Avishai Margalit (2004) in asserting that despotism and political normativity are the supposed outcomes of these socio-political injustices. Therefore, according to Bhabha (2017) the political principles controlling moralities should be formed with an aim to inform the citizens

how to pre-empt the evil ways first instead of instructing them to pursue anything good. Bhabha continues that the financial operational structures of neoliberalism promoted by globalization tend to compromise the sovereign ethical authorities of the nation-states. Due to the lack of enforcement or susceptibility of the international laws various non-governmental organizations intrude into the sovereign territories of the nation-states. Such interruptions bear testimony to the abolition of sovereign power of the nation-states and also the rising of a newly compromised form of imaginary sovereignty of the nation-states. This imaginative sovereign sense generates some apparent sense of belongingness among the diasporic transnational citizens irrespective of their religious and political beliefs. According to Bhabha (2017), the imaginative sovereignty of the nation-states cannot be interpreted as some worn out imitation of any of the western socio-cultural artifices. Moreover, this form of sovereignty is not oppositional to either the forces of globalization or the apparatuses of cosmopolitanism.

Put simply, the imaginative sovereignty among the citizens of nation-states has been fueled by the consumerist culture that arrived through globalization and with the development of industrial and technological fields. The consumerist global economy is what starts to evolve out of the market-based global inequalities or disjunctions and from many other socio-cultural interstices which ultimately culminates into consumerist cosmopolitanism. The arrival of digital technologies through globalization has galvanized ambitions of sovereignty among the globalized cosmopolitans. The rising of global capitalism has catapulted the forming of a multicultural socio-political backdrop. The multicultural scenario has successfully combined the global cultural aspects with the political aspects and resulted in open outsourcing of global capitals and commodification of every socio-cultural aspect and flexible market economy.

Introducing vernacular cosmopolitanism

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001) have argued that the cosmopolitan identity of the citizens of an empire serves to give them freedom from the burden of national identities and the restrictions, the nation-states force on them (p. 151). For them the ideas of inter-racial and nomadic cultural relationships play a positive role for the citizens of an empire. However, Bhabha (2017) is of the opinion that the very idea of 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' of everyday life consists of the practice and progress of ethical learning through an indefinite dynamic process. This dynamic process of ethical development comprises indeterminate anxiety and contingent torments of everyday existence, and the perception of sovereignty the citizens living in a nation-state gain to better understand the plight of the minority communities in the contemporary socio-political scenario. Beyond all other questions of generation, gender, race and class the minority communities struggle to authenticate their natural inheritance and belongingness to the right of citizenship of particular nations. 'Vernacular Cosmopolitanism' assumes that the commitment of those minority communities to raise their voice for equality and their right to cherish differences is much prone to be considered as their ethical and political ventures. But such commitments cannot naturalize or authenticate their national identities. The need of affiliation for minorities to the main cultural flows of a nation is the outcome of the failure of the representational democratic principles of globalization. Globalization has failed to provide new means of agency, new forms of recognition, local, global or transnational justice through international law courts or organization of reconciliation commissions for violation of fundamental rights of the global citizens.

Bhabha (2017) has asserted that 'vernacular cosmopolitanism' represents a liberal space for re-establishing the shared democratic principles instead of merely acknowledging the socio-political identities of the marginalized sections of the nation-states. For the creation of the cosmopolitical identity, an indefinite existential anxiety can be found at the very core of this process of transformation. Seyla Benhabib (2002) argues that the marks of indefinite universal vulnerabilities of the marginals cannot be changed even if the sovereign and liberal rights the nation-states wield are to be conferred to every individual of the nations

(p. 177). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1946 has not been implemented, primarily because of deficiencies in the law, in dealing with the issues of cultural plurality, ethical relativism and different minoritarian claims. Julia Kristeva (1991) while elaborating on the formation of cosmopolitan societies has elaborated on both the strangeness and familiarity of each individual to their respective communities. The ethical aspects of cosmopolitanism do not seem to be based upon the principles of human dignity rather they go far beyond Kristeva's psychoanalytic understanding of cosmopolitanism. Socio-political alienations, psychological torments and ambivalent moral attitudes of the human beings raise questions concerning the recognition of human dignity in a cosmopolitan multicultural society (p. 154). Kristeva (1991) has asserted that it is through the process and practice of enunciation that the marginal subjects articulate their rights and aspirations. In her view, this ethical validation of their democratic rights is far more significant than any institutionalized or legislative acknowledgement of their contentious socio-political existence (p. 155). Amartya Sen (2009) has argued that it is through language the marginal communities assert their ethical rights and there is the need to introduce some fresh legislative initiatives to articulate their basic needs and amenities instead of making any traditional interpretation or proposition of the existing laws for protecting individual or communitarian interests of the human beings (p. 359). The enunciative ethical aspects of cosmopolitanism are not merely limited to its abstract aspects. The linguistic or rhetorical aspects of these ethical rights claim an alternative universal space where they are subjected to ceaseless interpretations with positive anticipatory extensions. It is through these repetitive assertions about the plurality of universalism that the fundamental principles of universality become open to continuous alterations and iterative differences. Through these ever-changing universal assumptions individuals equip themselves to confront myriad newly rising challenges in their cosmopolitan global relations.

Considering *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004)

Both in *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and in *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Amitav Ghosh has promoted attitudes of individual openness while interacting with unfamiliar foreign citizens and therefore gaining experiences of transcultural communications that are helpful in building nexuses with the world. These alternative cosmopolitan principles tend to make the ideals of the home communities more sympathetic towards the world cultures by adding positive social and cultural values to their operational apparatuses. For Ghosh, a true cosmopolitan can never deny or forget one's domestic roots. He has proposed through his narratives that the possibilities of being a cosmopolitan is not just limited to the permanent inhabitants of a home in a community. Working professionals who are bound to travel frequently from one place to another can absorb these cosmopolitan values through their sophisticated practices of maintaining mobility and flexibility in their multicultural global existence. Initially these working professionals seemed to refer to the elites who had those imperial and capitalist privileges to travel from one nation to another and sought to expand their cosmopolitan cultural experiences. But such perceptions of cosmopolitanism are accused, by postcolonial critics such as Carol Maloney (1999), of eliminating the domestic cultural experiences in their attempts to embrace other foreign cultures as their own just to retain their positions as powerful socio-economic subjects. Hence, cosmopolitanism, in Ghosh's assumption, seems to be a continuous process of introducing the individual selves to the unknown globalized world from all possible - socio-cultural, imaginative, political, ethical. and so on – perspectives.

His idea of cosmopolitanism is found to be unique in the sense that his cosmopolitan characters do not venture to prove their world citizenship by imagining the world as their home and by immersing their own communal and national identities. Rather, they attempt to obtain recognitions of being the citizens of the world through their socio-economic activities while being at their homes and keeping their communal and cultural identities unaffected by any of the neo-imperial cosmopolitan forces. He assumes that in order to emerge as a true cosmopolitan, the sense of belongingness of every individual needs to undergo changes

from its traditional and universal tendency of yearning for a global platform. His transformed ideas of cosmopolitanism teach new ideas of identities, ways of actions, enrichment of intellectual abilities to face quotidian challenges and thereby undermining the prejudiced borders of inequalities between the domestic and the global communities.

In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), the readers come to realize how home can play the role of an exclusionary force, similar to communal extremisms, when the narrative unfolds the story of intolerance between the ancestors of the narrator. The narrator describes how his ancestor brothers had solved their house sharing related problem by constructing wooden walls to separate their adjacent houses according to their shared partitions. In doing so, they had emulated the partition-related political decisions when two nations try to put an end to their topographical or boundary-centred contradictions by erecting fences to segregate their national borders from each other according to their shared cartographical locations. The narrator describes this anxiety by stating that – "In later years it always made my grandmother a little nervous when she heard people saying: We're like brothers. What does that mean? She would ask hurriedly. Does that mean you're friends?" (1988 p.136). Critics, such as Gabriel (2005) and Black (2006), are of the opinion that both the socio-cultural tensions among the relatives of the families and the architectural designs of the houses may contribute in imprisoning the individuals' global exposures by keeping them inside typical non-cosmopolitan homely spaces, thereby creating inhibitions on their scope of merging with foreign or unknown cultural practices. They have asserted that the families or homes celebrate communal ideas instead of promoting any liberal values and they also believe that any cosmopolitan principle causes serious threats to the familial integrities.

In *The Shadow Lines* (1988), Amitav Ghosh has drawn a domestic world that enables the individuals, who by cherishing the global cultural values that always keep them mindful of their own cultural roots and through such reciprocity, to develop as cosmopolitans, who are optimistic of their global attachments. The novel begins with an introspective note where the narrator is talking about Mayadebi, his great aunt by addressing her by her first name, Mayadebi – "It startles me now to discover how readily the name comes off my pen as 'Mayadebi'…for I have never spoken of her thus; not aloud at any rate: as my grandmother's only sister, she was always Maya-thakuma to me" (1988 p.3). Through this context Amitav Ghosh has shown the narrator's transgression of his familial language or addressing system, thereby revealing the narrator's intent to reach beyond the known space of the home and his interest for a liberal global space – "The truth is that I did not want to think of her as a relative: to have done that would have diminished her and her family – I could not bring myself to believe that their worth in my eyes could be reduced to something so arbitrary and unimportant as a blood relationship" (1988 p.3). These are the lines where the narrator is expressing his desire to build connections with the outer world by identifying himself as an aspiring cosmopolitan individual. The idea of home that Amitav Ghosh has developed throughout the novel is such that the narrator, while being brought up at home since his childhood, does not possess any of the separatist communal or fanatic nationalist kind of impulses. Instead, the idea of home is transformed into being a springboard for all cosmopolitan values and abilities where the individuals reconfigure their cultural attachments in accord to their existential conditions.

In this book, Amitav Ghosh has unfolded how the more individuals are making distinctions between the domestic and the foreign, the more they are getting exposed to those arbitrary confrontations that are prompting them to come out of their interior home space. Ghosh has also shown how travel, migration or even political forced movements can transfigure and shape the cosmopolitan visions of individuals and how they reinvent their domestic ties. In this novel, Tridib is the character who has travelled to many countries across the world and it is through his descriptions of those foreign landscapes and the people there that the narrator is introduced to the world beyond his domestic space. Tridib is the narrator's older cousin and through him Ghosh has insisted that true cosmopolitanism demands proper attention to one's familial relations. Tridib is pursuing his Ph.D. in Indian Archaeology and so he possesses sound

academic knowledge, but simultaneously during his transnational journeys he has gathered experiences and reconstructed his worldviews. Through his character portraiture of Tridib, Ghosh has emphasized that it is not through any passive transcultural involvement but through one's pure contemplation over what is to be taken into serious consideration, that true cosmopolitanism begins to flourish. The narrator speaks of this contemplative quality of Tridib when he says that "The one thing he wanted to teach me, he used to say, was to use my imagination with precision" (1988 p.26). This ability of precise imagination and thinking trains cosmopolitan individuals to overlook certain insignificant domestic matters.

Ghosh's alternative view of cosmopolitanism becomes prominent when Tridib visits the narrator's house in India on a vacation and the narrator's aunt tells them stories of a cobra causing life-threats for the narrator's cousin Ila when she was in Sri Lanka. When the aunt's story was over, Tridib explained to the narrator that in the aunt's story it is not the context of the snake which is to be given any importance, rather it is the architectural descriptions of the houses with sloping roofs that need to be focused upon. The narrator says that Tridib "put his hands on my shoulders, turned me around and asked me whether I could imagine what it would be like to live under a sloping roof – no place to fly kites, nowhere to hide when one wanted to sulk, nowhere to shout across to one's friends" (1988 p.32). Tridib through his reference to the sloping architectures of the house roofs wanted to redirect the narrator's attention towards the significance of how it is perceived to be in a domestic space in a cosmopolitan world. For Tridib, the sloping roofs stand as representations of liminalities or a transitional space of communication between the familial world and the outside unknown world. In Ghosh's vision the houses become the pivotal space for understanding both the private world and the public life of the individuals.

Tridib's romantic imaginations surrounding May Price, the young girl from London, proves fascinating in forming a nexus, full of intricacies, between the space of domesticity and perception of worldliness. Alan was May Price's uncle who was a warrior in the Second World war and his stories of heroism had attracted Tridib towards the British cosmopolitan ideals of sophistication. But Tridib's attraction to cosmopolitan ideals shifts from May's uncle to May Price herself because for Tridib she embodies most of the cosmopolitan impulses that Alan once used to possess. In his childhood Tridib for a long period of time had lived with May Price's family in London, which he used to consider as his second home. This kind of familial attachment with people belonging to a foreign world establish Ghosh's claims of an alternative form of cosmopolitanism where a domestic space even on a foreign land redefines and reinforces the inevitable affiliations of cosmopolitanism and human relationships. In his alternative view it is essential for a cosmopolitan to appreciate the ways of living of people who live a world which is beyond one's familial space.

While Gaston Bachelard (2014), considers the idea of the world consists of a natural unoccupied space (p. 66), Ghosh has shown through Tridib's view that to learn true cosmopolitan perceptions, one needs to reconfigure one's understanding of the world. In his view, the world is a socio-cultural space where the politics of everyday domestic life requires individuals to investigate the minute details of one's own familial relations and their apprehensive interactions with unknown individuals. This thinking is projected when Tridib speaks of the "unwashed bathtubs…arguments over who was to pay for the sugar that week… quarrels over who was to share whose bedroom" (1988 p.74). Tridib writes a love letter to May Price and that letter becomes a medium of interaction between the domestic world and the world outside. When May Price receives the letter, without knowing that the letter was written to her by Tridib himself, she was surprised and confused, and had retreated to the washroom of her house to contemplate precisely over her emotional confusion. She was confused over the fact that a man unknown to her could write her a love letter. The bathroom of one's house is considered to be the most private space in one's domestic life. When May Price, after entering into the bathroom, got absorbed in imagining the sexual accounts described in that letter, it was then the unfamiliar space of the outside public life had intruded into the most private domestic architecture and space of one's house. "Every sound in the house seemed to carry

into the bathroom with an unnatural clarity, and she told herself that she ought to remind her mother to do something about it; it wasn't right in a house like theirs, not decent, really…" (1988 p.142). For both Tridib and May Price, in their emotional world the home and the outside world are inseparable. From their stories, the narrator learns that true cosmopolitanism welcomes strangeness and always rejuvenates one's sense of inquisitiveness, and also realizes that in order to emerge as a true cosmopolitan one needs to get immersed into the discursive space of domestic life.

On the other hand, through Ila's characterization, Ghosh has shown how one's negligence of the domestic space completely negates one's potential for becoming a true cosmopolitan. Right from her childhood, Ila has experienced a transnational way of living, therefore she fails to understand the importance of living in a domestic world, and this is also the reason she does not feel any sense of inquisitiveness when she visits a new country. She lacks the sensibilities in welcoming the cultural diversities of unfamiliar communities. When once the narrator expresses his desire to visit Cairo to Ila, she responds by clicking her fingers and saying indifferently that – "O yes, Cairo, the Ladies is way away on the other side of the departure lounge" (1988 p.20). Her transnational experiences have been contracted merely into the public toilets of the foreign lands due to her lack of true cosmopolitan perceptions.

In *The Hungry Tide* (2004) as well, Amitav Ghosh's alternative idea of the home as a mobile and inclusive space becomes instrumental in combining all the local and global engagements to make individuals oppose the destructive forces of communalism and regional fanaticism and to encourage them to absorb true cosmopolitan ideals. Where Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) speaks of the importance of one's affective attachments to particular environments that help individuals to mingle their domestic sentiments with the cosmopolitan principles of worldliness, Ghosh in this novel appears to proceed further with his alternative idea, showing how individuals can cherish affective attachments for places that they never had considered as their home. It is through this newly acquired perception of domestic attachments to places and with unknown people, that the individuals learn to be inclusive of unfamiliar cultures.

Piya and Kanai are the two characters in this novel who are portrayed as cosmopolitan figures. Piya is an American cetologist who has come to the islands of Sundarbans to do her research on the Orcaella Brevirostris, a kind of river dolphin. Though she was born in Kolkata India, she could neither understand nor speak Bengali because in her early childhood her family had migrated to America where she was brought up with English language only. To carry out her research successfully Piya had come out of her comfort zone, familiar people and environment. She was even ready to live in the islands of Sundarbans only drinking bottled water and eating nutrition bars till the completion of her research which could go on over months. Piya is a representative of a true cosmopolitan spirit who although she initially fails to communicate with the local unfamiliar people; she gradually advances in forming kinships with Moyna, Fokir, Nilima and with non-human creatures like the river dolphins. The local people of Sundarbans are not the permanent inhabitants of that place either; they also had migrated, from Bangladesh to the Sundarbans islands. Thus, this mobile domestic space consisting of migrants and socio-politically uprooted communities erases the lines of differences between the local people and the global individuals.

Kanai is an Indian businessman who was born in Kolkata although he now lives in New Delhi where he runs a well renowned translation agency. But he too appears to be an intruder into the lives of the local inhabitants of the Sundarbans. Being a businessman and according to the nature of his job he serves to communicate with "foreign diplomats, aid workers, charitable organizations, multinationals and the likes" (2004 p. 17). His key role in maintaining the transnational networks of communication and information between India and the rest of the world raises his horizons to go beyond the global politics of exclusivity. Kanai can speak five languages that help him to learn and understand the diverse foreign socio-cultural practices that ultimately contribute to his cosmopolitan worldviews. But he is still emotionally connected to the domestic space of Lusibari in the Sundarbans where his aunt, Nilima lives after his uncle, Nirmal's death. Kanai, though he lives in New Delhi, is quite aware of the local culture and language, and he

understands that to know the local language is essential for living in a place like the Sundarbans or anywhere in the world. He is really surprised to know that Piya cannot even understand the local language and still she has come to this place for her research. Piya's response to Kanai's queries as to whether she knows Bengali or Hindi, embodies her cosmopolitan nature of being inclusive of all adversities – "I'll do what I usually do…I'll try to wing it" (2004 p.10). The familial bonding between Piya and Fokir starts to develop when she falls into the crocodile-infested muddy rivers of the Sundarbans and is finally rescued by Fokir. Though neither knows each other's language, they can understand each other's requirements better than others; without knowing Piya's language, Fokir understands what kind of river dolphins Piya is looking for and so turns his boat towards the place where they can be seen. Through this and other examples, such as Piya's sitting in Fokir's boat and watching him catching crabs with rolling lines and her using the GPS to track the river dolphins, Amitav Ghosh has shown how the feeling of kinship can connect those two socially, culturally, nationally and linguistically different individuals. It is this sharing of knowledge and understanding that can unite the local culture with the global culture without any divisive conflicts between them. When Piya is brought to Kani's aunt Nilima's house by Fokir, finally she begins to feel what it means to be at home even when she is so many miles away from her actual homeland, America.

From Kavita Daiya's (2008) point of view of a 'migrant cosmopolitan', Piya could be described as one who, while having global attitudes, is dissatisfied and exasperated with her desire for a domestic familial space. According to Daiya (2008), home can be perceived as a comfortable place where one can connect one's roots or senses of belonging for a secure future life. Piya, being a migrant cosmopolitan, initially fails to connect her cultural roots to the islands of Sundarbans, saying to Kanai "I have no home, no money and no prospects. My friends are thousands of miles away and I get to see them maybe once a year, if I'm lucky" (2004 p. 302). But gradually with the passing of time, Piya begins to feel the familial peace in the islands of Sundarbans, learning from Fokir how to maintain a harmonious relationship with nature. It is this familial domestic bonding that makes Piya think of moving from America and to settle down to in the islands of Sundarbans permanently. It is through the simultaneous representation of Piya's sophisticated research work and Fokir's practical knowledge and dedication to confront any existential crisis in this novel that Amitav Ghosh has shown how true cosmopolitanism can come into existence through the successful combination of globalized authentic knowledge and practical local expertise.

Kanai's uncle Nirmal is another local character in this novel who even though he is victimized by the regional politics, he is a devoted cosmopolitan in his concerns for the well-being of the local people of Lusibari. He too was to some extent a migrant to Lusibari because he was actually born in Dhaka from where he moved to Kolkata and then due to some political issues, he and his wife, Nilima, moved to Lusibari. Through Nirmal's long-lost diary, Ghosh has described how the emotional bonding among the local people of a homeland can unite them at the local or the global level to protest against any regional, communal or national injustices done to them. The slogans that Nirmal hears when he comes to the island with Horen, his friend, to help the migrant settlers at the police blockade imposed on the inhabitants of the island, are truly suggestive of their familial bonding – "the people on the boat to shout in unison, 'Amrakara? Bastuhara.' Who are we? We are the dispossessed" (2004 p.254). While this unity, togetherness, familial bonding and kinship have created a mobile domestic space among the migrant settlers and have enabled them to embrace differences and to raise their voice against any socio-political injustices, these domestic cosmopolitan sensibilities come into direct confrontation with the stark realities of the regional politics of Morichjhapi where people like Nirmal are shown to share solidarities and to suffer equal consequences with the dispossessed communities. Flexibility and inclusivity are the two essential qualities that Amitav Ghosh has repeatedly shown as indispensable for any individual to subsist in a cosmopolitan world. Kusum, Fokir's mother, who had been one of the victims who died during the Morichjhapi police blockade, had failed like other victims, to connect herself or had been indifferent to this flexible quality in facing the socio-political intrusions. This flexible analytical view is reflected through Piya when she points out that "Once we decide

we can kill off other species, it'll be people next – just the kind of people you're thinking of, people who're poor and unnoticed" (2004 p.301).

While *The Hungry Tide* (2004) details the exploitation of the rootless, migrant and poor people through dubious policies such as setting up tiger and forest reservations but neglecting to provide basic amenities or rehabilitation to the dispossessed local population, Amitav Ghosh has shown ways of balancing both the local and the global concerns through individuals like Piya, Nirmal, and Fokir who embody the co-constitutive and conscientious principles of cosmopolitanism. Viewed from the perspective of sustaining human societies from the universal cosmopolitan politics of global capitalism, Amitav Ghosh has provided this alternative cosmopolitan vision of a flexible domestic space that accommodates all adverse differences.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's alternative ideas of cosmopolitanism are inclusive of the real-life conditions of the refugees, migrants, travellers, political or socio-cultural exiles. In his alternative forms of cosmopolitanism, the privileged and elitist cultural ties have been revoked to give birth to new points of view that are devoid of any sort of ethical conflicts to be found in the class divisions of the populations belonging both to the home and the world. His ideas incorporate the potentialities of migrant labourers to emerge as cosmopolitans through their acceptance of common familial bonding with every individual of their mobile migrant communities. According to some postcolonial critics (eg Kavita Daiya 2008, T. Brennan 1997), just as privileged migrant cosmopolitans can be turned into elitist cultural bodies, perpetuating a permanent, prevalent, globalized elite culture through their mobility, even though they might not see themselves in this way, so to the familial bonding in a homely environment, which is supposed to cherish open mindedness or liberal values among individuals, at times functions in hatching values of extreme nationalism and violence. These kinds of extremist and fanatic nationalistic ideals have been strongly renounced by Amitav Ghosh in his alternative visions of cosmopolitanism. Ghosh also rejects depiction any of the romantic interpretations associated with the domestic space of the home. For him the architectural structures and the cultural values that are pivotal constituents of a home need to remove the exclusionary extremities and instead should champion inclusivity in order to adapt and promote the true liberal principles of cosmopolitanism that also involve being free from any of the distinctive prejudices of the world.

References

Appiah, K. A. 1998, 'Cosmopolitan Patriots', In: Cheah, P. & Robbins, B. (eds), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, pp. 91–116.

Bachelard, G. 2014, *The Poetics of Space*, translated by M. Jolas, Penguin Classics, New York, NY.

Benhabib, S. 2002, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691186542

Bhabha, H. 1992, 'The world and the home', *Social Text*, no. 31/32, pp. 141-153. https://doi.org/10.2307/466222

Bhabha, H. 2017, 'Spectral sovereignty, vernacular cosmopolitans and cosmopolitan memories', In: Robbins, B., Horta, P. L., & Appiah, K. A. (eds), *Cosmopolitanisms*, New York University Press, New York, NY, pp. 141-152. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479829682.003.0012

Black, S. 2006, 'Cosmopolitanism at home: Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 45-65. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989406068734

Bok, S. 1996, 'From part to whole', In: Cohen, J. (ed) *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA, pp. 38-44.

Brennan, T. 1997, *At Home in the World: Cosmopolitanism Now*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Cheah, P. & Robbins, B. (eds) 1998, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN.

Dharwadker, V. (ed.) 2001, *Cosmopolitan Geographies: New Locations in Literature and Culture*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Daiya, K. 2008, 'Home and the nation: Women, citizenship and transnational migration in postcolonial literature', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 391-402. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449850802410507

Duyvendak, J. W. 2011, *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Western Europe and the United States*, Palgrave Macmillan, London. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230305076

Gabriel, S. P. 2005, 'The heteroglossia of home: Re-"routing" the boundaries of national identity in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 40–53. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449850500062816

George, R. M. 1996, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Ghosh, A. 1988, *The Shadow Lines*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Ghosh, A. 2004, *The Hungry Tide*, Harper Collins, Noida.

Hardt, M. & Negri, A. 2001, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. https://doi.org/10.4159/9780674038325

Kristeva, J. 1991, *Strangers to Ourselves*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY. pp. 154-155.

Maloney, C. 1999, 'Review: The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction by Rosemary Marangoly George', *MELUS*, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 188–191. https://doi.org/10.2307/468185

Margalit, A. 2004, 'The lesser evil', *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements*, vol. 54, pp. 187-201. https://doi.org/10.1017/S135824610000850X

Satchidanandan, K. et al. 2002, *At Home in the World: A Window on Contemporary Indian Literature*, Full Circle, Delhi.

Sen, A. 2009, *The Idea of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Tuan, Y-F. 1974, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.