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### Reconstruction of identity in Amitav Gosh's Sea of Poppies

#### Abstract

This particular study aims to demonstrate identity Crisis as a dominant theme in Gosh's Sea of Poppies which was published in 2008 as part of Iblis trilogy. Identity is not a constant one; instead, it is an on-going progression that can be considered as a subject to change. Since the colonial period the mobility of people increased across world. Particularly in the postcolonial era, there were vast movements of people, culture and religion. Consequently, the world became a mixture of people from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Quest for Identity is predominant element in the postcolonial writing. The theoretical argument about identity concerns its nature, process of formation, and its existential questions. The idea of firm identity was questioned in many of the contemporary writings owing to its fluidity in such a transcultural world. Amitav Ghosh as a diasporic writer deals in his novels, mostly with migration, displacement, Transculturalism, dual identity and so on. When the migrated individuals were on move and confronted a number of other cultural behaviours to some extent, their indigenous cultural individuality was challenged hence they were drawn into the dual identity

Key words: identity, post colonialism ,diaspora, Transculturalism, Displacement

Sea of Poppies creates a world made of few privileged ones and masses of oppressed, exploited, displaced, dispossessed subjects. The lives of the Marginalized subjects in this novel are conditioned and dictated by movements of people, commerce and empire. Opium trade and sugar cane cultivation in Mauritius and Fiji by the British are such movements that throw shadows on the lives of the natives like Deeti and Jodu. As the different stories come together, each carrying its share of delights and grief, however the Ibis becomes a shelter to those in destitution. Thus on their way to the black sea, these characters are exposed to a suttee or widow-burning, a shipboard mutiny, a court case, jails, kidnappings, rapes, floggings, a dinner party and every refinement of sex. After much conflict and violence on board of the boat, Neel, Ah Fatt, Jodu, Serang Ali and Kalua manage to escape, unaware of the destination the sea waves would drag them to. Both Calcutta and the Ibis are polyglot communities. As the slave ship becomes a coolie ship, the histories of the indentured labourers will be written on the hold of the ship that contains traces of those older histories of slavery. The British owner of the Ibis, Benjamin Burnham, says to Zachary, —A hold that was designed to carry slaves will serve just as well to carry coolies and convicts. Do you not think? We'll put in a couple of heads and piss-dales, so the darkies needn't always be fouling themselves. That should keep the inspectors happy! (SOP74). The experiences of the indentured labourers on ship (which includes abuse, disease, death, mutiny) echo not just that of the slaves but also of convicts, thus suggesting connections between these different forms of incarceration

Novel roam around the issues like colonial rule, implied poverty, suppression, migration, assimilation, identity formation and so on. Colonization separated everyone and propelled them into the nook and corners of the world. He introduced the ship named Ibis in this novel

as a constructor of new identities for migrants. It was this ship, which should be considered as a protagonist of this novel with the given importance to it. It was the ship that allowed them to form new relationships with hope. Here members of Marginalized section of society face insults and exploitation publically and individually and therefore, when they find a chance to move away from their native land they decide to go far away. The prevailing circumstances force them to leave their place. It was impossible for them to cut off themselves entirely from their past. However they go forth into the future crossing numerous identities, the blinking light of the past was unavoidable. The people of deprived sects are dissatisfied with the prevailing life. The members of Ibis as Deeti, Kalua, Paulette, Neel, Ah Fatt and other passengers share a common past of disrespect and filth and as the result of this they unit on the ship to generate a new identity. It brings to them freedom and individuality. On the ship identity transformation and rebuilding takes shape. All passengers are girmits from different places, heading towards one destination that is Mareech Island

Deeti and Kalua hide their actual identity because they wanted to live new life with rapidly changing situations and locations. Also, it is rather a gaining of true and respectful identity. For Deeti, it is reassuring her nick name: It was on her lips to identify herself as Kabutari-ki-ma, the name by which she had been known ever since her daughter's birth...her proper, given name was the first to come to mind and since it had never been used by anyone, it was as good as any. Aditi, she said softly, I am Aditi. (SOP 233)

Deeti was saved from from widow burning by Kalua, an untouchable from a society which is ruled by patriarchal laws Kalua, an outcaste person, saves Deeti from the burning pyre and jumps in the river Ganga. Deeti sends her daughter to her brother's home because she feels that Kabutari will be safe there. She rejects gender bias and marries Kalua as her second husband. She had rejected the body of the old Deeti, „with the burden of its karma;

she had paid the price stars had demanded of her, and was free now to create a new destiny. The social interaction during these sea voyages begins a process of rebuilding ethnic and cultural identities.

To escape from the clutches of this patriarchal society and painful life, she decided to go for the ship to move from her past. Here Ghosh placed the ship named Ibis as a transforming entity which resulted in achieving a new identity that is separated from her past. After she entered the ship, Heeru asked about Deeti's identity – "Tohar nam pata batavaniif you don't identify yourself, how will I know who you are" (SOP233). The ship ultimately becomes the Center of human civilization. They leave behind the strictures of caste, community and religion; rename themselves as jahaz -bhais and jahaz-bahens

On boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste and everyone is the same: it's like taking a boat to the temple of Jagannatha, in Puri. From now on, and forever afterwards, we will be ship-siblings- jahaz-bhais and jahazbahens – to each other. There will be no differences between us. This answer was so daring, ingenuous, as fairly to rob the women of their breath. Not in lifetime of thinking, Deeti knew, would she have stumbled upon an answer so complete, so satisfactory and so thrilling in its possibilities. In the glow of the moment, she did something she would never have done otherwise: she reached out to take the stranger's hand in her own. Instantly, in emulation of her gesture, every other woman reached out too, to share in this communion of touch. Yes, said Deeti, from now on, there are no differences between us; we are jahazbhai and jahaz-bahen to each other; all of us children of the ship. (SOP 356)

The entry to the ship Ibis is symbolic because Deeti enters the ship in gunghata as a new bride with people around her. Her change of name to Aditi while registering her name in

migration list shows her search for identity because till now she was known as Kabutari-kima „it was on her lips to identify herself as Kabutari-ki-ma, name by which she been known ever since her daughter’s birth – her proper given name was the first to come to mind, since it had been used by anyone it was good as any. Aditi, she said softly, I am Aditi (SOP 233)She becomes leader of grimityas on Ibis. She is called bhaugi by men and women on the ship because she possesses the solution of their problems. She is confident and ready to fight for anyone in trouble The ship becomes a socio-cultural unit in which social relations were resisted and recognized. The space of the ship is totally delivering a site where position purities were to a great extent lost and new type of socialization that passed by 'jahaj bhai (transport fraternity) made. On the ship Ibis, travelers from different standing and class segments are available; Chamars, Mussahars and others however they share an aggregate personality called 'girimitya' or works on assention. They all had an account of misuse, torment and hardship at the back. The place of their inception has never been simply the place of their fulfillment however the ship turns into their place of living respectively and self-improvement For several decades, caste constituted the core of social and religious life in India. Rooted deep in religion and based on the division of labour, the caste system in India, among other things, dictated the type of occupation a person would pursue and the social interactions a person would have. Castes were ranked in hierarchal order, based on birth rather any other quality, which enjoined that the ruler would do little more than maintain the prevailing social order while requiring the lower castes to do all the necessary work for him. Since caste was given, it remained inalienable from birth to death; so much so, that even after conversion, it would not fade away.

Deeti’s description of the Ibis that —as a vessel that was the Mother-Father of their new family, — a great wooden maibap, an adoptive ancestor and parent of dynasties to comel(p. 356-57) is suggestive of their new adoptive homeland, the plantation colony. Deeti’s changed

consciousness was visible in her effort to save a young Muslim julaha, she dares overseers and maistris to throw the dead body in the sea waters unceremoniously, and succeeds in wresting the concession from the authorities for a respectful burial of the dead. Again, she dares to confront the authorities when she hears Munia, an orphaned girl, crying for help. Receiving no answer from the overseers and maistris to her knocking at the door of dabusa, she turns towards the girmitiyas for not volunteering and exhorts them to act: —And you? She said to her fellow migrants :Why are you all so quiet now? You were making enough noise a few minutes ago. Come on! Let’s see if we can’t rattle the masts on this ship; let’s see how long they can ignore us (SOP 472)

For a case, it was the colonization which conveyed numerous English and French individuals to India. Pierre Lambert, Mr Burnham, Zachary, and Mr. Doughty were come to India when it was colonized. In spite of the fact that each one of them entered into India with an interesting occupation in their grasp, it was colonization that opened the best approach to enter. In the event that Pierre Lambert was taken, he was a French botanist who moved to India, learnt the dialects and the way of life of the dirt, favoured Bengali to speak with different Bengalis and settled in India with his gathered plants. Lambert assimilated the Indian lifestyle rather than the English culture. As already discussed it was the impact of the context in which an individual grown up that influences his or her personality by dominating the indigenous culture and tradition of that particular individual. Accordingly Paulette was highly influenced by the Indian culture, tradition and lifestyle because of her long presence among other Indians in India. Though she was a French girl by her parentage, she was an Indian for her brought up by the Indian woman, Tantima along with her son Jodu. Hence Tantima became her mother, Jodu became her brother and India became her country and its culture and lifestyle became her own.

Towards the end of this novel, Paulette was portrayed as a complete Indian girl in her sari. As she believed, her identity was changed and no one identified her French background, instead everyone considered her as a daughter of a Brahmin: Her complexion had a soft, golden glow, like that of the cosseted daughter of a village pandit, a child who had never worked a day in the fields and had never had to endure the heat of the sun. (SOP 355)

Toward the end of the novel the Gosh immovably builds up enormity of mankind than any differences in light of shading and statement of faith. Here one can see Jodu (an orphaned Bengali Muslim boatman), Neel (erstwhile landowner- avid practitioner of the caste system and caregiver of his fellow convict), Ah Fatt (the illegitimate son of a Parsi businessman in Canton, a convict, and an opium addict to boot), Kalua (a chamar ox cart driver of prodigious strength, who rescued Deeti from her Sati-pyre) and Serang Ali (the leader of the Lascars, of indeterminate origin and background) escape from the Ibis. The group that looks on in (at maybe!)farewell is equally motley- Paulette, Baboo Nob Kissin, Deeti and Zachary (with their origins and occupations as widely different as the one before). But in spite of their differences all this people come together because of their shared experiences as marginalized sect

### Work Cited

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