

I. Introduction

By revisiting the past and comparing it with present condition, Ghosh, *In An Antique Land*, blends the genre of travelogue with history, cross cultural analysis and social anthropology, that helps him to reconstruct a twelfth century master slave relation that confounds the modern concept of slavery. He evokes class warfare between Egyptian labors and landowners and also writes vividly of Southern India, a tapestry of castes, cults and worship of spirit deities, in a new narrative way. Therefore, he places himself outside the Eurocentric tradition of literature and history, combining fiction, history, travel writing and anthropology to create a single seamless work of imagination. He characteristically makes us rethink the political boundaries that divide narratives.

Ghosh is a traveler in the physical as well as the meta-physical, a writer of formidable learning and intelligence who received Arthur C. Clarke award for *In An Antique Land*. *In An Antique Land* (1992), which won the prestigious Arthur C. Clarke Award, draws a subversive history in the guise of a traveler's tale- a magical biography of a country, Egypt, from the crusades to desert storm.

In An Antique Land is written by the anthropologist, Amitav Ghosh, and the publishers marketed it as '...a subversive history in the guise of a traveler's tale... a magical, intimate biography of a country, Egypt, from the Crusades to Desert Storm.' The basic gist of the book is that Amitav Ghosh has been given some cash to pursue his PHD in social anthropology and at a loss what to study, he comes across the mention of a slave in the letters of a Jewish businessmen living Egypt in the 12th century. For no apparent reason other than that this businessmen spent a good deal of time in Ghosh's homeland, India, he devotes the next few years of his life to tracking down rare archives, interpreting fragments of letters and,

in short, immersing himself in the fossils that make such a feast for dedicated academics. As parallel to the story of his research, Amitav Ghosh relates anecdotes and musings about his life in a poor Egyptian village where he improves his colloquial Arabic necessary for deciphering old scripts and generally gets a better book understanding of what the Middle East is all about. Fortunately, this makes up the bulk of the book and the academic bits can be skipped without missing much. Ghosh reveals himself to have an accomplished turn of phrase and a bumble voice that lends itself to evoking the values and beliefs of a poor, peasant society. It makes the reader wonder why he attempted the dual narrative approach at all.

In An Antique Land evokes class warfare between Egyptian labors and landowners where the writer paints his landlord, Abu-Ali, the richest and the influential man of the village. Getting a leg injury in his youth, Ali was allowed to go to school rather than work in the fields, due to the contacts he made there, he was given to sell all the essential goods in the area. Perhaps the funniest part of Amitav Ghosh's presence in the village is the continual pestering of the Egyptians who want to know whether it is true in India that Indians worship cows. And do they really burn their dead? And in a hurled whisper, is it true that the man and woman there are not pure (uncircumcised)? So when the learned elders interrogate him at a wedding and refuse to believe that India could be as pure as Egypt, he realizes that they see themselves as the bottom rung of the development ladder.

The most interesting feature of the time Amitav Ghosh spends in the Egyptian village is when he returns seven years later and sees the changes where the kids used to pester master slave relationship between Ben Yiju and Bomma confounds the modern concept of slavery where Bomma acted as Ben Yiju's agent and made overseas trips for him which

seems entirely different from those suggested by the word 'slavery' today: their arrangement was probably more that of patron and client than master and slave and slavery in the world of Ben Yiju and Bomma, suggests Ghosh, is a spiritual 'metaphor', a man's enslavement to God finding itself a worldly manifestation in a slave's devotion to his master. One of the prominent Muslim characters, Ustaz Mustafa used to tell that he had read all about India and said smiling severely. There is a lot of chilli in the food and when a man dies his wife is dragged away and burnt alive. But now, after seven years he had grown, old, no more typical conversation was held. Abu-Ali, his former landlord had trays of different things which were with him as a display of wealth, moreover, the mud huts have largely disappeared and bungalows have sprung up in their place.

In An Antique Land by Amitav Ghosh has been studied by different critics from different perspective such as post colonial, autobiographical but this research attempts to show how Ghosh revisits history of ancient Egypt and imbricates it with slavery and present time. Leela Gandhi views *In An Antique Land* as split into two adjacent narratives:

The first an autobiographical account of Ghosh's anthropological historical 'field trip' in Egypt ... second ,his discovery of the story of Bomma, the Indian, 'slave' and lifetime companion of Abraham Benjuju, a Jewish merchant arrived in Indian around AD 1130,vis Egypt and Aden. (66)

Here Gandhi focuses on Ghosh's narrative which has become able to bring together, both historical narrative about slaves and its interpretation in present time.

The author's findings about the daily activities of slave and master make fascinating reading (e.g., that the slave represented his master in financial dealings), and alternating with this historical data are chapters detailing Ghosh's gradual assimilation into the life of Lataifa.

His affectionate portraits of the villagers and of their often colorful idiosyncrasies (for example, the complicated relationship between the Imam and his estranged first wife) attest to his perceptivity as a sympathetic observer of a rapidly changing society. In a particularly effective passage, he recounts his feelings when, after persistent questioning about his Hindu beliefs, he discovered in himself what he calls ‘‘Indians’ terror of symbols.’’ And Ghosh is equally astute in detailing the changes brought by young villagers’ departures for jobs in wartime Iraq. While new homes, refrigerators, TVs, and electric generators proliferate, he says, the weakening of family and civic ties proves a high price to pay. Throughout, Ghosh writes with enormous lucidity and flashes of gentle humor, conveying in small and telling details the underlying suspiciousness and insecurity that pervade Egyptian society

Gaurav Desai opines the novel as the best writing of nostalgia. He claims:

Written as a ‘‘history in the guise of traveler’s tale,’’ *In An Antique Land* is at once a travelogue, a detective story, a romance with a lost world and an anthropologist’s attempt to write a dialogic ethnography. It is not a text that is immune from some of the slippages of what we now commonly recognize as the Orientalist imaginary, but its participation in that discursive economy is calculated. (125)

For him, Ghosh writes the history in the guise of traveler’s tale. He views the novel as the blend of fact, fiction and a romance with the lost world and anthropological research.

A linguistic and stylistic analysis of the book shows how Ghosh mixes different kind of style, language and culture to create a narrative very different from traditional western book from the beginning. Padmini Mongia argues this kind of writing as academic interest that can be explained by the ‘‘Cross-disciplinary nature of travel writing itself’’. In the new

academic environments of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, travel writing is ideally poised for receiving interest from a variety of disciplines interested in contact zones and culture.

Padmini Mongia further argues that the novel challenges the purity of genre on which it relies. By blurring the generic boundaries it forces to rethink the traditional disciplinary form from the post colonial perspectives. He further claims:

A work of many formal affiliations such as *In Antique Land* challenges the boundaries of the many genres on which it relies. In so doing, Ghosh's book forces us to rethink traditional disciplinary forms from a post colonial perspective. Further, the melding of the genres within a single work allows the formal limits of each to confound and challenges the others. (78)

The melding of many genres challenges the western style of writing in limited genre. By doing so, he brings new technique to the strict traditional form of writing.

In An Antique Land Challenges the boundaries of the many genres on which it relies. In so doing, Ghosh's book forces us to rethink traditional disciplinary forms from a postmodern perspective. Library historian Malcolm Bradbury argues, "If the term postmodernism has value, then it surely refers to the emergence of interfused styles, mixed cultural levels and layers, oddly intertwined traditions, multi-cultural pluralism." Malcolm's argument focuses on the melding of these genres within a single work allows the formal limits of each to confound and challenge the others.

Calinesul defines postmodernism as: "The postmodern architecture reinterprets the past in a multiplicity of ways..." (283). Rather than celebrating the grand narratives, postmodernism raises important questions about how the grand narratives get constructed,

what they mean, how they regulate particular forms of moral and social experience, and how they presuppose and embody particular epistemological and political views of the world.

Truth and grand narratives are just the illusion, fluid, constantly changing mass of free-floating signifiers without any fixed reliable point. Regarding the same vein, Peter Brooker and Will Brooker says the post-modern project is an ‘anti-realist narrative’ and ‘Ironic self-referential’. Postmodern project is a nihilistic attempt to undermine the validity of master narrative which try to distinguish between good and bad and legitimate and illegitimate. Linda Hutcheon supporting this writes:

“I should like to argue, postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges be it in literature, paintings, sculpture, film, video, dance, television, music, philosophy, aesthetic, theory, psycho analysis, linguistics of historiography.
(243-44)

To achieve anything from the postmodern experience, one eventually have to break the grand narrative, which are the means of opening up the contradictions and aporias in the power discourse. Hence postmodernism offers a tension that always compels us to see things differently as well as critically.

Amitav Ghosh’s *In An Antique Land* is a work of historical reclamation, in which the past is never past, but always reverberates strongly in the present. It tells us little of what it is like to be alive today but has no vision of contemporaries’ crises. Ghosh looks resolutely back, not forwards. He is engaged in revisiting the past and comparing it with the present condition. Written in a history in the guise of traveler’s tale; *In An Antique Land* is at once a travelogue, a detective story, a romance with a lost world and an anthropologist’s attempt to

unite dialogue ethnography. If the anthropological narrative is based on Ghosh's own fieldwork, the historical one is based on an extraordinary triumph of chance over will, of luck over intent. The anthropological narrative is that of Ghosh going to two villages in the Nile Delta in Egypt, the first time for almost a year in 1980-81 to conduct field work related to his doctoral dissertation.

The novel has been read and interpreted from various perspectives. However, the approach of the present study is to depict the dim traces document from the twelfth century which reminds us of the hybridity of language and dialect, the written and the spoken word, Hebrew and Arabic, Muslim and Jews in Lataifa and Nashway villages. The history of ancient Egyptian villages, their perspectives towards the Indian and the Indian culture, and the changes after seven years of the unities reins have been skillfully depicted to trace the differences.

Since the writing of nostalgia is much about the forgetting as the remembrance of the past. The text here also deals with nostalgia both aesthetically and inspiring politically. Regarding the view of nostalgia Gaurav Desai, evokes that 'the point is not to criticize Ghosh's fidelity to the historical record but rather to understand the dynamics of what might be called the production of history in a nostalgic mode.

The approach of present study is to show how Ghosh revisits the past and compares it with the present condition with the extensive reading of text book in the light of new historicism and postmodernism. The postmodern thinker, Keith Jenkins, opines 'History is the theory and theory is ideological just as material interest (qtd. in Abrams 168)'. Similarly for Abrams: (h)istory is not a homogenous and stable pattern of facts and events which can be used as the 'back ground' to explain the literature of an era or which literature can be said

simply to reflect or which can be adverted to as the ‘material’ conditions that is a simple and unilateral way, determine the particularities of a literary text. In contrast to such views, a literary text is said by new historicist to be ‘embedded’ in its context, as a culture power-relations, practices and products that, in their ensemble constitute that we call history.

In An Antique Land is regarded as a revisionist historical novel because it revises and reinterprets the historical record and transforms the conventions of historical fiction. It is a historical and self reflexive novel that enacts yet another of the ambiguity of the post modern position. This novel is an instructive examination of the nature of truth, power, and about history writing which responds the postmodern feature. These multifarious responses from various sources well play the richness of the novel. A novel can have multiple interpretations. However, the present study aims to analyze how Ghosh revisits the history. In the succeeding chapter the researcher is going to analyze the fiction from new historicist perspectives.

Amitav Ghosh tries to wrap up his historical thread also, drawing tenuous parallels between modern times and a story that he is largely obliged to guess on the basis of some ambiguous letters. He includes some explanations on the nature of ancient slavery as a social institutions rather than a crime and he also sheds some light on the destructions of Arab-Indian trade due to the conquering naives of Europe who, seeing that no one else claimed the naval traffic for themselves, reasoned that it must be up for grabs.

In An Antique Land isn’t an anthropologist trying to cash in on years of tedious study because Ghosh writes with great care and tenderness and is honest, funny and wry- all the great qualities of a travel writer. The only shame is that he overstretched himself with the dual narrative theme, a challenge that few ever manage to pass off successfully and even more unlikely a stunt when dealing with ancient anthropology.

II. General Concept of New Historicism

New Historicism which arose in the 1980s reacted against both the formalist view of the literary text as somehow autonomous and Marxist view which ultimately related texts to the economic infrastructure. It sees the literary text not as somehow unique but as a kind of discourse situated within a nexus of cultural discourse -religious, economic, and aesthetic - which both shaped it and in their turn, were shaped by it. If there is anything new about this procedure, it is its insistence, drawn from Foucault and post structuralism, that history itself is a text, an interpretation, and that there is no single history. It also rejects any notion of historical progress or teleology, and breaks away from any literary historiography based on the study of genres and figures. For the New Historicist the culture is situated in a textual construct, Hence, New Historicism refuses to accord any kind of unity or homogeneity to history or culture, viewing both as harboring networks of contradictory, competing, and unreconciled forces and interests.

Anglo-American New Criticism, the most dominant theoretical movement in the mid twentieth century, challenged the historical view of literature put forward by Hippolyte Taine. New critics treat the literary text as an object essentially independent of its author and historical context. All the leading figures of the New Critical School, in one way or the other, focuses their emphasis on the textuality of the text, New Critics assigned full power to the text presenting it as an autonomous, self-sufficient entity. On the other hand, Structuralists critics empower text by viewing it “as a set of Saussurean sign in which signifier and signified is governed by a single, complex system of relationship” (Rohy). Literary meaning should, therefore, be analyzed in its own terms as a semantic composition, not as a reflection of the external factors. Structuralist critics take language as a self-sufficient system and believe that

meaning is produced by the relationships of elements that govern linguistic system as a whole. Following the linguistic model, most of the post structuralists critics give emphasis on the textuality of the text. We can hear the echo of this principle in Derrida's assertion that 'there is nothing outside the text' (qtd.in Barry175). This is to say that for them the text has no relation with the outer world. For them, the political and socio-economic forces are nothing, but the aspects of signifying processes. The Deconstructionists along with New Critics and Structuralists, overlook the historicity of the text and alienated it from the external reality.

Nietzsche and Foucault's concept of History, truth and Discourse: Departure from Old Historicism.

Nietzsche is well-known for stressing 'will to power' that is the basis of human Nature, the 'resentment' that comes when it is denied its basis in action. Nietzsche's current influence derives not only from his celebration of the will, but more deeply from his skepticism about the notions of truth. In particular, he anticipated many of the central tenets of post-modernism an aesthetic attitude towards the world that sees it as a 'text', the denial of facts, the denial of essences, and the celebration of the plurality of interpretations and of the fragmented self. The contemporary supposition of history as the representation of truth no longer exists for Nietzsche because he says that history can never be understood in terms of ultimate truth.

According to Nietzsche, people use history for life; one should be tactful to use history for life which develops critical attitude towards history. According to him the historian as a judge should study history critically. So, he should pick out some relevant events of past, develop critical attitude to these events. He proposes the concept of

suprahistorical being who is able to create history to solve the problem of history. It may fail to realize the extent to which men are the results of the past they seek to condemn.

Nietzsche asserts the potential flow of joy in critical history:

For when past is analyzed critically, then we grasp with a knife at its roots and go cruelly beyond all reverence. It is always a dangerous process that is a dangerous process for life itself. And people or ages serving life in this way, by judging and destroying a past, are always dangerous in danger. For since are now the products of their aberrations, passions, mistakes and even crimes.
(qtd. In Adams 31)

For Nietzsche, truth is relative or subjective: it is something that never exists. It is history what determines truth. As he defines in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, “Everything has become: there are no eternal facts just as there is no absolute truth” (5). Historical facts are only perspectives, determined by power. According to Nietzsche, history emphasizes on events – emergence, beginning and fall. So, all truths are interpretation, and there is no ultimate truth. Any form of writing, claims Nietzsche, can not present truth. Writing according to Nietzsche, is presented through “a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphism” (qtd.in Adams 636). He further says, “Truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions” (qtd.in Adams 636). History and literature, in this sense, are not two extremes- as if one presenting the truth and other the lies.

According to Nietzsche, the world runs with the individuals having ‘a will to power’ He finds that ‘will to power’ is at work in all sorts of human behavior and valuation. He views power as the only important thing in the world. Everyone desires for it.” The only thing that all men want”, for Nietzsche, “is power, and whatever is wanted is wanted for the

sake of power. If something is wanted more than something else, it must represent power” (qtd. in Adams 511).

At the time of Nietzsche’s birth (1844), Hegel’s ideas had flourished all over Europe. Hegel’s idea was that human beings are moving towards a point of perfection which he calls that theological point. Hegel and other idealist philosophers of the time thought that every movement is a new experience. Nietzsche’s idea of historiography radically opposes such idea and conception about time and history. He charges Hegelian idea to be abstract and says there is no such superimposed idea that humanity in general is headed towards. He perceives the idealists’ negation of impulse not more than a fallacy and says that human creature is instinctively animalistic and lives basically on impulse. In fact, despite the suppression of the natural energies, the possible progress when all their potentials, the so called evils as these good are exploited. He celebrates the neglected aspects of things, which are supposed to be evil, immoral, and irrational and so on.

Nietzsche’s critique of historicism confronts with Hegelian idea. Against the idealists’ assumption that the historical processes is a rational process which, in Hegel’s time, has ended in an absolute moment in zenith: Nietzsche asserts that the historical process neither is nor can be finished since that completion of history is not merely impossible but undesirable because it would lead to a degeneration of man and that history is not a rational process but is full of blindness and injustice.

It might, thus, appear that Nietzsche simply affects a return to a pre-Hegelian viewpoint which counters history as a realm of chance rather than a dimension of meaning. However, it does not mean that there’s no point in which Nietzsche agree with Hegel. His criticism on Hegel is based on a crucial area of an agreement with Hegel. The implication of

history for Nietzsche is not escape from the present or to deviate from life and action but rather it serves that present. In the Foreword of his 1873 text Nietzsche asserts, “We need (history) for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egotistical life and the cowardly bad act. We wish to use history only in so far as it serves living but there is a degree of doing history and a valuing of it through which life atrophies and degenerates”(1).

Nietzsche provided Foucault, and nearly all French Poststructuralists, with the impetus and ideas to transcend Hegelian and Marxist philosophies. Nietzsche taught Foucault that one could write a genealogical history of unconventional topics such as madness, sexuality and the subject matters which located their emergence within sites of domination. Nietzsche demonstrated the will to truth and knowledge is indissociable from the will to power, and Foucault developed these claims in his critique of liberal humanism, the human sciences, and in his later work on ethics. He did accept Nietzsche’s claims that systematizing methods produce reductive social and historical analyses, and that knowledge is perceptual in nature, requiring multiple viewpoints to interpret a heterogeneous reality.

However, Michel Foucault, one of the major Poststructuralists, views that “the discourses including texts are the embodiment of power” (seldon100). This is to say that the texts can not be free from social and political sphere of an era. Foucault, therefore, endeavors to make a link between the text and the external world or context. The researcher is going to explore how Foucault influences the new historicists’ idea of textualization of history and historicizing of text.

An often quoted phrase that describes the new historicist’s reciprocal concern with “historicity of text and textuality of history” seems to have emerged from M.H. Abrams’

clarification of Foucault's notion, which calls text "a discourse which, although, it may seem to present, or reflect and external reality, in fact consists of what are called representations" (183). The Foucauldian notion that views a text as verbal formations in the form of ideological products or cultural constructs of a certain historical era assists the concept of historicization of the text. Text, to Foucault, never represents or reflects pre-existing entities, and orders of a historical situation, rather it speaks of 'history' but not as it is described by traditional historicists and Marxists. It, within itself, buries the 'situatedness' of institutions, social practices including their workings amidst the power relations and the hierarchies. So a text becomes 'a history of otherwise' in that it presents a historical situation, not a background but as something with which it can have constant interaction, for text is both product and the propagator of the power structures of society.

Now the question arises: how does Foucault influence those who believe in the history of sexuality? As he is always aware of the fact that a historian cannot escape the 'situatedness' of his time, Foucault takes a historian to be 'embedded' in the social practices. It is, by this logic, clear that history is also written from the perspective of the historian.

Foucault's idea of counter-history avoids the primacy of the ideas of the individual and of subjectivity. Alec McHoul and Wendy Grace in *A Foucault Primer: Discourse, power and the Subject* observe, "Foucault thought of the human subject itself as an effect of, to some extent, subjection. Subjection refers enable us to consider ourselves as individual subjects and which constrain us from thinking otherwise" (3).

Hazard Adams in *Critical Theory since Plato* says, "Foucault's influence in a literary theory has been strong among revisionist literary historians known as 'new historicists' who study the culmination of power through society and the literary texts that are part of it". The

position a historian occupies in the society determines the history he writes. The way he goes inside the form of power structures and social practices determines his description of history. Now another question arises: Is history then different from fiction if it is nothing other than fictionalized details of a person's perspectives. In this regard, Foucault has some affinity with Derrida because both of them say that a 'subject' who thinks may not know his own limitations. It indicates an uneven history of relations that testifies to the civilization failure of the Cartesian Project which Foucault says "being as it ends in violence" (85). He further says in the essay "Nietzsche, Genealogy, and History" that "devotion to truth and the precision of scientific methods arose from the passion of scholars, their reciprocal hatred, their fanatical and unending discussion, and their spirit of completion –their personal conflicts that slowly forged the weapons of reasons" (86).

In *The Archeology of Knowledge*, Foucault comments on the nature of humanistic notion of history by finding in it a contradiction that began with Cartesian Mathematics. It is as Foucault writes, "an exhaustive ordering of the world as though methods, concepts, types of analysis and finally men themselves [...] are in inevitable unity of knowledge" (75-76). The insight which is so dispersive sees history as not having a causal law or final goal but as having a network of power relations to work upon an individual. In "*Nietzsche, Genealogy and History*" Foucault taking the concepts of truth and power as described by Nietzsche in his ideas of genealogy, has a three fold aims. First, he offers his arguments supporting his break with archaeology; secondly, he expands the scope of genealogy and thirdly, he reviews the role of the historian.

In arguments that support his break away from archaeology, Foucault describes genealogy as a diachronic method. Genealogy, for him, is a Nietzsche an effort to undermine

all absolute grounds and to demonstrate the origins of things only in relation to and in context with other things. So, genealogy, unlike archaeology which seeks to uncover the layers of civilization by position in them the stability of systems of thought that stay long for an era and come to a sudden end, turns towards the problems of power and practice. Regarding his movement towards genealogy, Foucault states that “ the search of descent is not the erecting of foundation: on the contrary, it disturbs what was previously considered immobile: it fragment what was thought unified it shows that heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself” (88).

Writing about Foucault’s shift from archaeology to genealogy, Arun Gupto describes the Foucauldian concepts of these two historical readings to be complementary .Both of these historical approaches are, for Gupto, in disagreement with “ a fairy –tale like totalizing concept of history” (114). Most interesting idea with genealogy is its scope. Firstly, genealogy attacks the supposed coherence of thinking ‘subject’. Secondly, it dissolves the fiction of singular human identity. Thirdly, it attacks the notion of origins in historical investigations; fourthly, genealogy stresses the idea of history as discontinuity. Finally, it focuses not upon ideas or historical mentalities but upon the body’ so as to show it totally imprinted by ‘history’.

Foucault, departing from the traditional concept, reforms the role of a historian .A historian, for Foucault has a three- fold task .first , while confronting the ‘one ‘ reality , a historian should be in favor of the use of history as a ‘parody’. Second, he should be against a singular human identity. And thirdly, the ‘investigations’ should be directed against objective truth.

To sum up Foucault's idea of historical reading, it can be said that his is the general approach that seeks to analyze "the order, mechanism, and exclusion that have been the feature of western societies since enlightenment" (Gupto 114). This general approach, in sharp contrast to total history which looks at the overall development of the period, attempts to describe differences, changes, alternations, mutations and so on.

Foucauldian radicalism of history manifests itself in three dimensions: it rejects absolute truth or origin and argues for fictionalized history and historicized fiction; it confutes the linearity of history and exposes how a body is imprinted and inscribed by history. Foucault tells us what effective history is:

Effective history differs from traditional history in being without constants. Nothing in man-or even his body-is being sufficiently stable to serve as a basis for this self-recognition or for understanding other men. History becomes effective to the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being –as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiples or body and sets itself against itself. (qtd.in Shreedharana 285)

Foucault develops a theory of discourse in relation to power structures operating in society. His main thesis is that discourse is involved in power: "It is in discourse that power and knowledge are jointed together" (Sexuality100). He views that discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social institutions and that social political power operate through discourse. The discourse, therefore, is inseparable from power because discourse is the ordering force that governs every institution. This enables institutions to exercise power. Those who possess the authority to define discourse exclude others who are not in power. Discourse informs us of the state of affairs, so it is informative or mis-informative. Discourse

also tells us of the propriety or impropriety, rightness or wrongness, of something and consequently influences our attitude, opinion and behavior. The exclusive function of discourse is to serve as a transparent representation of things and ideas standing outside it .Therefore, it is directive too. M.H Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* writes:

Discourse has become the focal term among critics who oppose the deconstructive concept of a “general text” functions independently of particular historical condition. Instead they conceive of discourse as social parlance, or language- in uses and consider it to be with the product and the manifestation not of a timeless linguistic system, but of particular social condition, class structures, and power relationships that alter in the course of history. (262)

Following Nietzsche, Foucault believes that we can never possess an objective knowledge of history “because historical writings are always entangled in tropes” (Seldon 102). Discourses are produced within a real world of power struggle .Discourse is used as a means to gain or, sometimes even to subvert power. For Foucault, discourse is a central human activity. So he is interested in the process of how discursive practices change over time.

The written discourse or the texts are meant to be addressed to the readers .So they are not meaningful until they are actualized and made present by the readers or critics. Text, being emanated from the author, is meant to be verbal message, which needs to be deciphered by the reader or critic. This helps to formulate an opinion that to engage in an interpretation of a text is to take part in a dialogue with the author, Bakhtin School has similar opinion stating that, “ every utterance is potentially the site of a struggle: every word launched into special space implies a dialogue and therefore a contested interpretation”

(Seldon75). In such a situation, it is impossible to establish a single authoritative meaning because language “is always contaminated, interleaved, opaquely colored by layers of semantic deposits resulting from the endless process of human struggle and interaction” (75). All interpretations become site of power–struggle.

Discourse, according to Foucault, are produced in which concepts of madness, criminality, sexual abnormality, and so on are defined in relation to sanity, justice and sexual normality. Such discursive formations massively determine and constrain the forms of knowledge, the types of normality and the nature of subjectivity, which prevail in a particular period. Foucault argues that the rules and procedures, which determine what is considered normal or rational, have the power to silence what they exclude. His main point, here, is that meaning of any discourse depends on those who control it. For example, the scientist who first claimed ‘the earth revolves round the sun’ was punished and his truth was ignored because for the people who were in power had another version of truth: ‘The sun revolves around the earth’. So truth can be proved wrong by power. People recognize particular piece of philosophy or scientific theory as true, only if it fits the description of truth laid down by the intellectual or political institution of the day, by the members of ruling elite or the existing ideologies of knowledge. Every system of knowledge, we may say, establishes rules for exclusions or discriminations and it always implies taking sides. The discursive practices, however, have no universal validity but are historically dominant ways of controlling and preserving social relations of exploitations .Foucault’s interest is in historical dimension of discursive change. System of knowledge establish rules and procedures governing the particular epoch by exclusion and regulations .Foucault regards the nature of discourse as an event in time since it is not only that which represents struggles or systems of domination,

but the object through which and with which we struggle the power we seek to possess. For him, as for Nietzsche, any attempt to produce and control discourse is 'will to power'. Every instance of discourse embodies power struggle, as Foucault argues, 'Discourse is a violence that we do to things' (qtd in Seldon60). Truth itself becomes not an unchanging universal essence but a perpetual object of appropriation and domination. This implies that a discourse is always in a process of formulation, correlation and transformation, which takes place after a certain epoch.

This concept of discourse is obviously very different from the Anglo-American concept that connects the term discourse only to language or to social interaction. It is so because for critical theorists like Foucault, discourse refers to well bounded areas of social knowledge. And this social knowledge is reflected in discourse.

In "Truth and Power:" Michel Foucault revisits the major theoretical trends and questions of his career, Foucault spends much of his career tracing the threads of truth and power as they intertwine with the history of human experience. He especially loves to study asylums and prisons because they are close to an encapsulated power structure. Using techniques gathered from psychology, politics, anthropology, and archaeology, Foucault presents the analysis of the flow of the power and power relations.

Foucault sees every action and every historical event as an exercise in the exchange of power. He has spent a large bulk of his career analyzing the eve and flow of power in different situations and with relevance to different aspects of human life.

Structure organizes and broadens the web of power. The overall volume of power rises with each individual involved in his play. The society is a huge web, and much of the power tends to concentrate towards the higher echelons. Foucault sees the exchange of power in very

active terms: Isn't power simply a form of war like domination?" It is difficult to sort out just who is fighting the war, since Foucault seems to lean towards the war of all against all notions. Power flows simultaneously in different directions and different volumes according to the various terms of 'power relations' in the 'network' of power exchange. Regarding power and truth Foucault says, "Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which falls under the category of scientific truth and that which comes under some other category, but in seeing historically how effects of truths are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false" (qtd.in Adams 1139). He further states that power is not only repression, it is something positive:

In defining the effects of the power as repression, one adopts purely juridical conception of such power, one identifies power with a law which says no power is taken above all as carrying the force of a prohibition [...] what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse.
(qtd. In Adams 1139)

Foucault's ideas gravitate toward the ultra- highly complex and similarly politicized, leaving one to wonder what the real –world impact of his notions might be. Foucault opens a new way in the post –deconstructionist impasse of literary theories by reaching beyond the traditional hierarchy of history over literature. Following Nietzsche, Foucault denies that history can ever be objectively known. Historical writing can never be a science. It always becomes entangled in tropes (Seldon102), "Any form of writing "claims Nietzsche," can not present truth "Nietzsche denies that there is any reality beyond the appearance of the world."

All discourses, including history,” according to Foucault, “are produced within a real world of power struggle; Claims to objectivity made on behalf of specific discourse are always spurious: there are no absolutely ‘true’ discourses, only more or less powerful ones’ (qtd in Seldon102).

According to Foucault every discourse is meant to obtain power. In other words every discourse is involved in power. He views the discourses are rooted in social institutions and that social and political power operates through discourse. Discourse is the ordering force that governs every institution. Hence, the discourses are inseparable from power. Discourse is a means of achieving power. The social, moral and religious disciplines always control human behavior directly by means of discourses people at times cannot do whatever they feel like doing. The discursive formations have enabled institutions to wield power and domination by defining and excluding ‘the other’. Such discursive formations determine and constrain the forms of knowledge and types of normality of a particular period. These discursive practices have also the power. Truth is being told, with ‘facts’ to back it up, but a teller constructs those very facts by giving a particular meaning to events .Facts do not speak for themselves in either form of narrative ;” the tellers speak for them making these fragments of the past into a discursive whole” (qtd.in.Hutcheon56). According to Foucault, truth is not outside power, or lacking in power. It is rather a thing of this world which is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraints in a society. So each society has its own regime of truth.

Furthermore, the power diffuses itself in the system of authority and the effects of truth are produced within discourses. But the discourses in themselves are neither true nor false. Foucault argues, “Truth is linked in a circular relation with system of power which

produces and sustains it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it” (qtd.in Adams 1145). Thus, Foucault sees truth as a product of relations of power and it changes as systems changes. Both literature and history are narratives and they are in the form of discourses. They are entangled in the power relations of their time. Literary works are not secondary reflections of any coherent world –view but the active participants in the continual remaking of meanings. In short, all the texts, including history and literature, are simply the discourses which seek the power of ruling class – the power to govern and control. Hence, the dividing line between history and literature is effaced.

New Historicism: Stephen Greenblatt and Louise Montrose

Foucault’s notions of ‘power’ and ‘discourse’ were particularly formative to develop a critical approach to literature known as ‘new historicism’ in the early 1980s. These literary critics, new historicists like Stephen Greenblatt, Louise Montrose, Jonathan Goldberg, Kermode, H. Aram Veesser and others, are more interested in the relationship between history and literature. They tried to dismantle the bridge between literature and history widened by New Critics and Structuralists. New Historicists argue that we can not know texts in isolation from their historical context. But unlike Old Historicists, New Historicists insist that an interpretation is subjectively filtered through one’s own set of historically conditioned view-points. Hence, there is no ‘objective’ history. Here, for the purpose and interest of this research Greenblatt and Montrose’s notions on relation between history and fiction will be studied.

Greenblatt begins his most theoretical statement on New Historicism in *Towards a Poetics of Culture*, by stating that his methodology is at best a practice rather than a doctrine: “one of the peculiar characteristics of the ‘new historicism’ in literary studies is precisely

unresolved and in some ways disingenuous has been –I have been-about the relation to literary theory” (1). He points out some of the influences on the school (Michel Foucault and European anthropological and social theorists) while distinguishing the approach from both Marxist critics like Frederic Jameson and post-structuralist critics like Jean-Francois Lyotard, Greenblatt argues that both Jameson and Lyotard employ history in an effort to support one theoretical viewpoint that in turn leads to their monolithic and contradictory versions of capitalism. History functions in both cases as a convenient anecdotal ornament upon theoretical structure, and capitalism appears not as a complex and social and economic development in the West but as a malign philosophical principle (5).

Greenblatt argues that New Historicism, by contrast, works to remain always attuned to the contradictions of any historical moment, including those moments dominated by capitalism. On the issues of the relation between private and public or between the aesthetic and political realms, Greenblatt argues that:

The effortless invocation of two apparently contradictory accounts of art is characteristic of American capitalism in the late twentieth century and an outcome of long-term tendencies in the relationship of art and capital; in the same moment a working distinction between the aesthetic and the real is established and abrogated”. (7)

The result of such attunement to the contradictions of any given historical moment leads Greenblatt (and other New Historicism) into a number of basic premises: one should begin with specific details, anecdotes, and examples in order to avoid a totalizing version of history: one should proceed from such details to illustrate how they are tied up with larger contradictory forces in a given time period, no matter how apparently innocuous the detail

may seem at first; one should remain self-conscious about one's methodologies, thus resisting "a historicism based upon faith in the transparency of signs and interpretative procedures;" one should be suspicious of libratory narratives: everything is ,on some level, caught up in the circulations of power in a given time period; and all cultural products whether they are high art, political documents, personal letters, or trash ,are a part of larger discursive structures and, so, can offer clues to the ideological contradictions of a given time period"(12). In introduction to *The Power of Form in the English Renaissance*, Greenblatt differentiated:

[W]hat he called the New Historicism reform both the new criticism, which views the text as a self-contained structure, and the earlier historicism which was monological and attempted to discover a unitary political vision? Both of these earlier modes of analysis, according to Greenblatt, engaged in a project of uniting disparate and contradictory elements in an organic whole, whether in the text itself or in its historical background .The earlier historicism, moreover, viewed the resulting totality or unity as a historical fact rather than the product of interpretation or of the ideological leanings of certain groups.

(Habib 763)

The goal of new historicism for Greenblatt is to put cultural objects in some interesting relationship to social and historical processes. He distinguishes new historicism from the old principally by the convention that the new correctly holds that at no stage of history is there one single political vision but rather completely ones, and that the cultural environment which the old historicism regarded as an historical fact is, instead ,a creation of the historian

.In an interview with Harvey Bloom Greenblatt says,” One simple way to describing new historicism is to say that it’s interested in the simple dimensions of symbolic practice”.

Montrose, in his study of Elizabethan drama, focuses on how Elizabethan culture involves bringing oppositions and otherness into visibility so as to reinforce the norms of the dominant Elizabethan power. This type of cultural is dispersed across a whole range of texts, from literature to travel writing .Montrose, thus, sees the impossibility of subverting the dominant culture when he says that “a text creates the culture by which it is created, saves the fantasies by which it is shaped, begets that by which it is begotten” Montrose emphasizes that literary texts act out the concerns of ruling class by reproducing and renewing the powerful discourses which sustain the system.

According to Montrose, “we live in history and that the form and pressure of history are made manifest in our subjective thoughts and actions, in our beliefs and desires” [...].

According to New Historicists, the idea of a uniform and harmonious culture is a myth imposed on history and propagated by ruling classes in their own interests. So the new historicists focus not on history but on histories. New historicism, thus, is characterized by, as Louis Montrose says, “a shift from history to histories” [...]. This is to say that history is not a homogeneous and stable pattern of facts and events. New Historicists assert that the historians, like the authors of literary texts, possess a subjective view. They too are informed by the circumstances and discourses specific to their era. So they can no longer claim that their study of the past is detached and objective.

Furthermore, literary texts polish the dominant ideas of a particular time by representing alternatives or deviations as threatening. The new historicists tend to examine

widely different texts in order to show that those texts play a key role in mediating power relation within the state role to contain, and make safe, that subversion.

Historiography literally means the art of writing history. It is the history of history, or the history of historical writings. Historiography tells us the story of the successive stages of the evolution or development of historical writings. It has come to include the evolution of the ideas and techniques associated with the writing of history, and the changing attitudes towards the nature of history itself. Ultimately it comprises the study of the development of man's sense for the past. So, revisionist historiography refers to the study of the historical writing again.

History is a subjective phenomenon. In order to underline the subjective nature of history, he used memory as a tool to present the alternative version of history. The past exists in one's memory, and any historical writing, in this sense, is a construct of human subjectivity. Since history is account of past events, the historians have to remember them in order to present them in text. The demarcation line between the role of the official historian as a recorder of facts and poet as the creator of plausible facts has been blurred. If history concentrates on the events of past that are determined by our own particular present fictionalized history also inquires about the past by focusing on human predicaments, social responsibilities, and the observation of human values.

F.R. Ankersmit argues that a contemporary, post-modern historicism what he calls narrativism needs in no way to be a contradiction in terms with the proviso, however that we distinguished between a phenomenon's identity and its individuality. In Ankersmit's terminology the phenomenon called identity is the determinate interpretation given to it at a certain moment in time, while it's individually is the actual phenomenon or it occurred in

history. Narrativist historicism is true to the sense that it rejects the metaphysical assertion. Narrativist historicism is historical practice which operates in search of the historical idea, yet which in doing so displaces the principle from post modern historicism.

One could even say that the relationship between the old and the new historicism in literary studies is comparable to that between the old and the new historiography as Ankersmit outlines it in a *History and Tropology*: (T)he distinction between the two lies in different views on the historical reality of historical texts and of the relationship between both” (24). Ankersmit further writes:

For the new historiography, the text must be central –it is no longer a layer through which one looks (either at a past reality or at the historian’s authorial intention), but something which the historiographer must look at. In the new historiography this new postulate of the non transparency of the historical text leads to a construction of the conflicts, hesitations, ambiguities ,ambivalences- -in short , on what Paul de Man has styled the undesirability of historical text, in which the non--transparency of the text reveals itself. (128-129)

Recent critiques of historical methodology have inaugurated a radically revised understanding of art, culture and society. History as a literary artifact is the recent notion developed by Hayden White. To raise the question of the nature of narratives, White writes in *The content of the Forms: Discourse and Historical Representation*:

It is to invite reflection on the very nature culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself. So natural is the impulse to narrative, so inevitable is the form of narrative for any report the way things really happened, that narrativity could appear problematical only in a culture in which it was absent

or, as in some domains of contemporary western intellectual and artistic culture, programmatically refused. (1709)

Hayden White, the post modern philosopher and historian, has consistently favored structuralized approach emphasizing the primacy of secondary signification in historical writing. They only differ in that the former highlights the underlying principles which determine the generation of the text, whereas the latter displays them in the implicit structure on realistic narratives. Similarly, White converges fiction and historiography. Historiography and factious events are rendered meaningful through the same representational strategies which insert the single event into an overacting structure. Thus, White strives to see any “link between the realities of past within the historiographical text” (metahistory, 427).

Historiography claims to deal with the real, its methods of representation legitimate a specific standard for the conceptualization of reality, past and present alike. Post modern historicism is herpetological. Post-modern theory does not look upon historical sources having a wholly fixed and unalterable meaning. Postmodernist historical theory maintains that no objective knowledge of the past is possible because all knowledge is relative, all theories are equally valid and that a text is but an infinite play of significations. Hayden White would add that the only reason we have for preferring one interpretation over would be moral or aesthetic.

Postmodernism has made a great impact on historiography. It has developed its own genre of historical writing with mere denunciation of conventional history, it rejects the master narratives as hegemonic stores told by those in Power .Moreover, faith in reason and progress, postmodernist historiography has directed much of its attention towards the

irrational, the odd and the magical in human life. Postmodern historiography has however, promoted good writing as a normal historical practice.

III. Revisionist Historiography in Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*

Ghosh revisits the history of ancient Egypt imbricates it with slavery and present time. As a revisionist writer, Ghosh is very successful in portraying the Egyptian and Indian culture where he also relates anecdotes and musing about his life in a poor Egyptian village. In an autobiographical and anthropological way, Ghosh here, recounts his attempt to merge the two stories. He does not make any protagonist to write the history but makes an autobiographical writing as a travelogue. His 'field trip' in Egypt and history of slavery raises the voice of marginalized people and tries to give voice for those unheard realities. Ghosh's novel analyzes the history of twelfth century Jewish, businessman living in Egypt.

The traditional ideas of viewing history as a group of facts which supposed to exist textually and which was assumed to represent it, really have been questioned in Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*. It is now believed that past is available to us through the textual traces. Thus, like fiction, history is textualized; therefore, it is a kind of human fabrication. The historian interprets the past, presents it in a written form and makes it intelligible to the readers. History is therefore, always contaminated, oblique and subjective. The assumptions such as the neutrality of the language and the absence of domineering, ideologized narrating voice are contested by new historicism, which takes the present process and limitation of the writing of the past into ascend. This view of history stresses on the impossibility of an all-embracing and totalizing account of the past. The history cannot be represented in pure form, for it always remains relatives to the narrator's prejudices and preoccupations. So the proclamation of universal truth in history can no longer sustain. What is available to us is only different version and perspective of interpretation in history. Different factors manipulate the representation of history.

The history ultimately comprises the study of the development of man's sense for the past where Ghosh revises it again and confounds it with the present situation that makes the history revisionist. In a leisurely blend of travelogue history and cross cultural analysis, Indian writer Ghosh reconstructs a twelfth century master slave relationship that confounds modern concept of slavery. The traditional notion of viewing official historical discourse as an absolute, authentic and the final version of history has been undermined in this novel *In An Antique Land*. Ghosh attempts to encourage the readers to consider the interpretations of history. He undermines the claim that the official historical discourse is pure and valid. For him, official history functions as a kind of writing affected by the ideology of an era. History is the record of events in the order they occurred. Evidence is a fact, or combination of facts which provide grounds for belief than a historical event or events actually happened. It is common evidence which is available only on certain aspects of what happened and historians, then, know facts and fills in the unknown elements with their own theories. That's why, different versions of history can and do arise.

There are two versions of history presented in the novel, one depicts the twelfth century master-slave relationships and the other creates the documents of custom and culture in modern: Egyptian villages. There is evidence that in 1149 Ben Yiju went to Aden a major gateway in the trade route between India and Egypt and that at some point thereafter he moved to the city of Fustat known today as Cairo. Ghosh here includes some explanations as the nature of ancient slavery as a social insulation rather than a crime. He also depicts the dim traces of documents from the century reminding us the hybridity of language and dialect, the written and the spoken word; Hebrew and Arabic, Muslim and Jews. There is Abu-Ali as land lord Zaghlul the meaner, Khomeer the Rat, The Imam and many other, all quite

unforgettable who have certain perception of India and Ghosh finds himself in the position of culture, and have to assume position and identities for which he has no ardent sympathy or affinity. Thus, here, Ghosh revisits the ancient slavery, the different customs and tradition of Egyptian villages and confounds them with the present time. So, the history becomes revisionist.

History, like Fiction, is Subjective and in the Creation of it, Memory Plays a Vital Role

The subjective nature of history gives way to create many other various form of history. Ghosh, thus, replaces the notion of history with multiple truths. Traumatized by the past, the characters of this novel seek to cope with their traumatic experience by drawing the event into a narrative space that will contain and position the past. In particular, *In An Antique Land* conjuring of memory that organizes the narrative of text as ‘I first began to dream of Cairo in the evenings, as I sat in my room, listing, while ‘Abu-Ali’ berated his wife or shouted at unfortunate customer who had happened to incur his displeases (1).

Describes on its book as the story of two Indians in Egypt, Amitav Ghosh’s *In An Antique Land*, is the story of Bomma, an Indian slave, and Ghosh himself, the student of anthropologists and writer who traces the story of Bomma, some 800 years after it occurred. At its most simple, *In An Antique Land* is the story of two Indians in Egypt, but even the jacket blurb complicates the simplicity of this description by going on to describe the book as ‘subversive history in the guise of a traveler’s tale’. *In An Antique Land*, published in 1992, is in part based on research that Ghosh conducted for a D. Phil in social anthropology, but manages to appear as travel narrative, ethnography, history, and fiction all at once. It casts a wide net. Bomma’s story is set in the 12th century, in a world of flourishing trade on the Indian Ocean between Masr (Egypt) and Mangalore in south-western India, although he only

exists as a shadowy presence in a few letters to and from his master, the Tunisian, Abraham Ben Yiju. As Ghosh attempts to create Bomma's tale, he interweaves his own into it. The story of the second Indian, Ghosh, is presented to us at several different chronological moments; the time of his fieldwork in 1980, his return to Egypt in 1988, and finally the Gulf war in 1991.

In this setting, to Ghosh reminiscent of the British occupation of Egypt, the two men face each other across what Ghosh sees as the resolutely modern, all too contemporary, colonially implicated divisions between peoples who once experienced a connected history. "You're Indian- what connections could you have with the tomb of a Jewish holy man, here in Egypt?" he is asked. He cannot find an immediate answer but, the book he will eventually write will attempt to provide one.

Finding himself as a narrative impasse at the moment of officer's questioning, Ghosh nevertheless shares with the readers his own sense of excitement at the survival of a popular religious syncretism of the past: "it seemed uncanny that I had ever known all those years that in defiance of the forces of history, a small remnant of Bomma's world had survived, not far from where I was living." (342) This is, in fact, an echo of an earlier moment in the text when Ghosh has visited, this time in the vicinity of Mangalore, a Hindu temple built by the Magavria community. He has arrived here in pursuit of a Bhuta shrine of spirit-deity called Bobbariya, legendarily named after a Muslim mariner and trader who died at sea. But just as Ghosh is surprised to find a modern concrete structure honoring Abu-Hasira, he is surprised to find that the Bhuta shrine in this community has in fact been placed in a Hindu temple that is a testament to the high Sanskrit form of the religion. The main deity is Vishnu, a Brahmanical god, and the Bobbariya-bhuta is placed in a subordinate position. The Bhuta

itself has been stripped of its traditional iconography and is now represented as a Hindu god. Remarking on the ironies of such a representation, Ghosh writes, “The past had revenged itself on the present: it had slipped the spirit of an Arab Muslim trader past watchful eyes of Hindu zealots and installed it within the Sanskrit tradition” (274).

The language and the writing style are both stilted and his subject is exotic yet intimate where he relates anecdotes and musing about his life in a poor Egyptian village. Thus, here Ghosh mixes different kinds of style, language and culture to create a narrative very different from traditional western book from the beginning which seems as the “cross disciplinary, nature of travel writing itself, he mixes styles.” What’s in, this soccer stuff, I want to know? Abu-Ali would explode from time to time. Is not there work to do? Allah! Is the world going to live in soccer? What’s going to become of...? (74)

He mixes different types of languages reminding us of the hybridity of language and dialect, the written and the spoken word, Hebrew and Arabic, Muslim and Jews. Ben Yiju bears a dialect which is a startlingly close resemblance to the usage of the North African Arabic. There are also Khamees (the host) who would talk in their Arabic language as “why are you still standing, ya doktor?” “You have come a long way and you want to be able to get to your country before sundown anyway, so you may as well sit with us for a while” (134).

Ghosh also had not succeeded in finding a word such as ‘cremate’ in Arabic which the Khamees has used. The verb ‘to burn’ which is the ‘word for what happened to firewood and straw and eternally damned that gone Ghosh assert to the term. Various languages have been depicted to create a different taste in the novel, the language of Muslim people, their customs and traditions, also portrays the different customs.

In Iataifa, and in neighbouring Nashway, Ghosh encounters to use that dreadfully clichéd word apropos the ‘Third World’, a ‘colorful’ cast of characters. (We know just how drenched in colour is the East.) Many of these characters belong to a complicated web of kinship relations, and Ghosh’s curiosity of the layman. Kinship has been the timeless obsession of the anthropologist and Ghosh, certainly in his early years as a student of anthropology, was not exempt from partaking in that obsession. There is Abu Ali, his landlord, Zaghul the Weaver, Khamees the Rat, The Imam, and many others, all quite unforgettable. They have certain perceptions of India and Ghosh finds himself in the position of being interrogated about his culture, and having to assume positions and identities for which he has no evident sympathy or affinity. What is unsettling for Ghosh, to begin with, is that it is not he who is directing the interrogation, but rather they who were supposed to be the informants; the ethnographer is not in control of the investigation, the mastery over the other is not easily achieved. Just a troubling is the tendency of his interlocutors to construct, howsoever unknowingly, an empire of signs by which India, and in particular Hindu India, can be known. To identify just a few of those who remain Uncircumcised (63), cremate their dead (61), consume spicy food (46), and worship cows (47, 126, 170-71, 186, and 234). The conversation between Ustaz Mustaf, a one-time low student at the University of Alexandria, and Ghosh is rather typical:

‘I have read all about India,’ said Mustafa, smiling serenely, ‘There is a lot of Chilli in the food and when a man dies his wife is dragged away and burnt alive.’

‘Not always I,’ I protested. ‘My grandmother for example ...’

Jabir was drinking this in, wide-eyed.

‘And of course,’ Ustaz Mustafa continued, ‘you have Indira Gandhi and her son Sanjay Gandhi, who used to sterilize the Muslims...’

‘No, no, he sterilized everyone; I said. His eyes widened and I added hastily:

‘No, not me of course but...’

“Yes; he said, nodding sagely, ‘I know, I read all about India when I was in college in Alexandria’ (46).

What more could one want to know about Hindu India? Worse still, to speak of ‘Hindu India’, as Ghosh’s neighbors do, is to have entered the world, a world that Ghosh seeks to defy, where “Hindu” and “Muslim” are marked as sharply defined, demarcated, and irreconcilable categories with histories that cannot intermingle. What then might be the gestures with which Ghosh must respond to this attempt to reduce India to ‘Hindu India’, and that in turn to a constellation of signs, and himself to a specimen of that empire which produces and reproduces such signs? One response predictably is that of denial; the other is to admit the practice in question, such as forced sterilization, but to say that it was not characterized by exclusivity. If that is so, go with histories that cannot intermingle. What then might be the gestures with which Ghosh must respond to this attempt to reduce India to ‘Hindu India’, and that in turn to a constellation of signs, and himself to a specimen of that empire which produces and reproduces such signs? One response predictably is that of denial; the other is to admit the practice in question, such as forced sterilization, but to say that it was not characterized by exclusivity. If that is so, Ghosh has still to recuperate a space wherein he himself is not so marked: ‘No, not me of course ...’ yet, being not so marked is just as problematic. The dreaded question is finally put to him: they have circumcision where Ghosh comes from, do they not (61)? The import of this question is scarcely innocuous, and

how could it be when few symbols are such, but here the question had a particularly ominous resonance,' In Arabic the word "circumcise", writes Ghosh, derives from a root that means "to purify": to say of someone that they are "uncircumcised" is more or less to call them impure' (62). Incredulous as it is that he himself is 'impure', he is, as he puts it, trapped by language'. How easily, he appears to be suggesting, do we appear 'impure' in the sight of others!

Since Ghosh is neither a Christian nor a Muslim nor a Jew, he is something of a mystery to his fellow villager, and impurity in someone who is a mystery can almost be tolerated. It is really the betrayal from within, the purported apostasy of a Rushdie, which is unpardonable. The villagers even humor Ghosh, but they do not recognize that the chain of their questioning assumes a life of its own, nor do they 'understand an Indian's terror of symbol's (210). To be uncircumcised is to appear impure. The Egyptians know that in India men have been killed on account of being or not being circumcised? Do they understand the tortured history, so largely fabricated around a symbol that goes under the name of 'communalism'? Their questioning of Ghosh is never altogether innocuous, but the poignancy of their queries is something that the Egyptian villagers cannot fully appreciate; at the same time, it is not certain that the Indian alone has a 'terror of symbols; and Ghosh may have done well to reflect on the particular manner in which this 'terror is manifested in India, rather than assuming that very essentialist reading to which he is opposed.

When Ghosh looks back the same place after of years later in 1988, he sees the changes with in the life style of the people where he memories their past tradition and compares it with the present one:

The children who used to pester him have also grown up. When Ghosh talks about Shaikh Musa, he views, “Looking back, it seems to me now that until I returned in 1988. Saikh Musa had not realized himself quite how dramatically things had changed in Lataifa since my departure, seven years ago. As we sat talking on that rainy evening when I arrived at his door, I had the impression that he was looking back with new eyes, as though the sharp eyes of my memories had served and strip away a dense layer of accretions that had gathered upon his surroundings, like lark. (241)

Ghosh further studies the Abu-Ali’s condition and how he and his family had been fared. What he knows from his study is that Ali was in the same places exactly where he had been. But some changes were there where he writes as:

“The dirt and chaos of the ground floor, where Abu-Ali and his wife lived, the flies, the grime, and the scattered goats’ droppings, stopped abruptly halfway up the staircase: above that point the floor were meticulous clean, covered in mosaic tiles. Where my room, the old chicken-coop, had once stood, there was now a large kitchen, adjoining a repellently furnished bedroom. It had been incorporated into a complex of four apartments, one for each of Abu-Ali’s sons. The three who were married had already moved in, but the youngest, bachelor, still lived downstairs whenever he came home on visit from Iraq. (247)

Ghosh seems to show that the present condition of the slaves is as similar as that of the twelfth centuries. He also wants to illustrate that the place for slaves can changed, but the position can not be changed.

Interrelation among Discourse, Power and Truth in the Novel

Any literary text is situated within the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute the overall culture of particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes. It is not possible to deal with a text in isolation from its historical context, therefore, we have to attend to the historical, cultural, social and political condition of its production, its meanings, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations.

The discourse of a near, instead of reflecting preexisting entities and orders, brings into being the concepts, oppositions, and hierarchies of which it speaks: these elements are both products and propagators of power, or social forces; and that as a result, the particular discursive formation of an era determine what is at the time accounted as knowledge and truth, as well as what is considered to be humanly normal as against what is considered to be criminal, or insane. Abu- Ali, the central figure of the novel is portrayed as ruthless cook and inhuman by the record and it is done by using power being a reach landlord.

Ghosh views his characters as:

“Abu-Ali berated his wife or shouted at some unfortunate customer who had happened to incur his displeasure while making purchases at his shop. I would try to shut out the noise by concentrating on my book or my diaries or by turning up the volume of my transistor radio, but Abu-Ali’s voice always prevailed, despite the thick mud walls of his house”. (11)

Discourses are always created by the people who are in the power and the powerful people make the powerless people to accept their discourses. The villagers know about the behavior of Abu-Ali but they would simply hate internally. Everybody in the area knew of Abu-Ali’s

temper and most people did their best to avoid him (11). It seems that history is possible to exist only in written form of discourse and discourse itself is involved to power.

Colonialism is the use of economic, political, and social policies to maintain or extend control over jurisdiction and people that lie outside the nation exercising such power. In this setting to Ghosh reminiscent of the colonial building built by the British in India and probably a testimony to the British occupation of the Egypt .The two men face each other across, what Ghosh sees as the recently modern all too contemporary, colonially implicated divisions between peoples who once experienced a connected history, ‘you are Indian --what connection could you have with the tomb of Jews holy man, here is Egypt?’, He is asked.

It is that the discourse of Egyptian villagers about India is saved from being wholly Orientals. Yet, sad to say, the discourse of the modern West seems to have triumphed nonetheless: in Ashis nandy’s language, ‘the West is everywhere, within the West and outside; in structures and in minds’. Nowhere is this more evident than in the conversation between Ghosh and the Imam: the ‘Indian doktor’, who ‘doesn’t even write in Arabic’, and trumpets a familiarity with languages that a child would be loathe to use, appears to the Imam as a pitiful example of civilization that worships cows and burns its dead, What else could a civilization like that be but ‘primitive an backward?’ Are you savages’, asks the Imam, ‘that you permit something like that? You’ve even been to Europe; you’ve seen how advanced they are. Now tell me; have you ever seen them burning their dead?’ And when Ghosh avers that in Europe, they have special electric furnaces meant just for that’, the Imam must retort in the only language available to him: ‘He’s lying’, he said to the crowd. ‘They don’t burn their dead in the West. They’re not an ignorant people. They’re advanced, they’re educated, they have science, they have guns and tanks and bombs,’ as Ghosh reminds the

Imam, the West does not have a monopoly on hideous weapons. What is, after all, a nation-state without its armory? What remains to be resolved is who, besides the West, has the better technology of mass destruction, and when Ghosh can claim with unassailable certainty that his country has ‘even had a nuclear explosion’, which the Imam’s nation ‘won’t be able to match even in a hundred years’, we know that the language of the barbarians has reached its apogee. There stand he and the Imam, ‘delegates from two superseded civilizations’, reduced to ‘vying with each other to establish a prior claim to the technology of modern violence’, and all that the West comes down to something that should make the West pause over its claims of Enlightenment rationality and democracy revolutionizing the world – is ‘science and tanks and guns and bombs’ (234-36). The very notion of ‘development’ is embedded in the belief of the absoluteness of time and the discreteness of epochs’ and it is the language in which that belief is echoed that now reigns supreme (200). We, the Imam and I, say Ghosh, ‘had demonstrated the irreversible triumph of the language that has usurped all the others in which people once discussed their differences’ (237). In a world that appears to be increasingly cosmopolitan, where distances have collapsed, where commodities violate boundaries with maddening impunity, our options have in fact narrowed, and the multiplicities of history with which the medieval world easily cohabited now all speak in a univocal language.

Social institutions and that social and political power operate through discourse. The discourse, therefore, is inseparable from power because discourse is the ordering force that governs every institution. It enables institutions to exercise power and dominate. Those who possess the authority to define discourse exclude others who are not in power. Discourse informs us of the state of affairs, so it is informative or misinformative. Discourse also tells

us of the propriety or impropriety, rightness, of something and consequently influences our attitude, opinion and behavior. The ruled ones are very much oppressed by the rulers. Their rules are guided by the tyrannical ideology as power determines the truth, rulers do so. There is no law for the ruled ones or they are poor down trodden. Ghosh here reconstructs the twelve century master's slave relationship that confound modern concept of slavery.

If the institution of slavery was one of the conditions of possibility of this “bourgeois revolution,” its status as a lived “structure of feeling” is somewhat open to debate. Eager to distance slavery in the Arab world from the plantation slavery of the Americas, scholars have repeatedly noted the religious edicts in both Islam and Judaism on the humane treatment of slaves. Thus, for instance, both religions considered the manumission of a slave virtuous and an honorable deed on the part of the owner. Likewise, there were restrictions on the degree to slave old orders: Amitav Ghosh and the writing of nostalgia could be worked, with specific proscriptions against their ill-treatment. The fact that some slaves were recruited to military service and indeed could rise considerably in rank has led scholars to emphasize the radical distinctions between slavery in the Middle East and across the Atlantic. Ghosh himself is alert to the distinctions “ the terms under which Bomma entered Ben Yiju’s service were probably entirely different from those suggested by the world ‘slavery’ today: their arrangement was probably more that of patron and client than master and slave, as that relationship is now understood”(259). Ghosh goes on to note that slaves in this context could find themselves in positions with greater privilege than the poor free folk and that they could “generally be sure of obtaining manumission” (260).

While the cautionary note distinguishing transatlantic slavery from Arab forms is essential, it risks coming across as an apology. Ghosh’s own nostalgic narrative risks such a

sanitized view of slaver; and it does so especially when it seeks to link the ideology of servitude to a religious foundation. Slavery in the world of Ben Yiju and Bomma, suggests Ghosh, is a “spiritual metaphor” (260), man’s enslavement to God finding itself a worldly manifestation in a slave’s devotion to his master. This Sufi-inspired vision was articulated through poetry, in which “it was slavery that was the paradoxical embodiment of personal freedom; the image that represented their notion of relationship, of human bonds, as well as the possibility of their transcendence.”(261)

What characterizes slavery almost in context is the ‘social death’ of the slave and the denial of the slave’s honor. In this sense, whether or not slaves could look forward to their manumission or whether or not they occupied positions of considerable power, it is nevertheless the case that they were acting not as free agents but always on the behalf of their masters. We might ultimately never know exactly how slaves in the Arab world incorporated the ideologies of their times, but we do know that there were slave rebellions, the most famous one occurring in Iraq in the ninth century. Slaves sought their freedom and often escaped from their masters. And while Ghosh portrays an amicable relationship between Bomma and Ben Yiju, even a quick look at the strictures on the treatment of ‘heathen’ slaves that Abraham Maimonides laid down for his coreligionists suggests an ugly side. If the master smites the eye of the slave and diminishes its vision, or his tooth and it becomes loose, then we hold as follows: if the slave can still use them he does not become free; if not, he becomes free; If his eye is dim and its vision poor, or if his tooth is loose and the master smites him and knocks out his loose tooth or blinds his dim eye, then we hold as follows: if he could use it even to the smallest degree heretofore he goes out free; if not, he does not go

out free. That such strictures were necessary speaks volumes about the harsher aspects of human bondage.

Even if such violence were the exception, the systemic inequities between masters and slaves suggest that exploitation was not entirely absent from the commercial world that Ghosh depicts. At one point Ghosh notes that the amount of money Bomma spent shopping for his master on one of his trips to Aden would have” paid the wage of a mason or builder for more than two and a half years” (255-56). The amount of money circulating in the Indian Ocean trade was enormous compared to the costs of labor. Without involving ourselves in debates over whether these societies could be characterized as engaging in a “slave mode of production,” we can easily establish that surplus value was being generated not only through trade, but also through the manufacture of commodities. Thus, for instance, we remember that in addition to Bomma and Ashu, Bin Yiju also had a number of other slaves who worked in his bronze factory on the Malabar Coast. And if we may categorize this relationship as one of economic exploitation; sexual exploitation was never far behind in the case of female slaves. India in Ben Yiju’s time, suggests Ghosh, “bore a reputation as a place notable of the ease of its sexual relations” (228) where concubine was thought to be the norm rather than the exception.

This story, then, is also about two Indian slaves ... one male and the other female. But it is one that speaks not to the romance of intercultural bonding but to the unjust nature of human bondage. No matter how privileged a slave might seem, this story tells us, he was always susceptible to “social death” and no matter how romantic an alliance between the Jewish traveler Ben Yiju and the Nair woman Ashu might appear to the poetic imagination, there were also other stories of sexual exploitation and abandonment . I suggested earlier that

Bomma's status as the lowest to the low is an enabling fiction for Ghosh. Bomma, Ghosh has told us in his prologue, is not one of those for whom we can imagine "properly human, individual, existences" (17). He is not one of the "literate and the consequential, the wazirs and the sultans, the chroniclers and the priests- the people who had the power to inscribe themselves physically upon time" (17). If, as sympathetic readers, we can celebrate Ghosh's nostalgic reconstruction of the character of Bomma, we must do so with the knowledge that here too is an erasure.

History can not be represented in pure form. For it always remains relative to the narrators prejudices and pre-occupations they want to show demonic instinct and arises honor on people, they are persuading people to hate and fear a man they never met. It is power which twists the fact. Power can determine the truth. It is as a mentioned in history that one may want to think of "*In An Antique Land*," though finally Ghosh's book too, is emulation as it was of the in between world of which he defies categorization. Honorable and dignified as the quest is to uncover the identity of the slave who we eventually get to know as Bomma, what is regained can all too easily to be lost. Ghosh, here, depicts the problems in Indian culture and how the Europeans look towards their customs and religions.

Through different characters such as Abu-Ali, the rich landlord, Ghosh views the tradition of the ancient villages. Through Abraham Ben Yiju, a prosperous Tunisian Jewish Merchant shows the relationship between the masters and slave that is like a friendship. Abu-Ali shows the real picture of the history that depicts the truth created by the powerful people. The twelfth century master slave relationship has been confounded to modern concept of slavery by the relationship of Bomma and Yiju. Other minor characters, such as the weaver, khamees, the Rat, the Immam have certain perception of Indian culture and they do have

their own culture. Ben Yiju also had his own tradition who was to return to Egypt, arranged for his daughter's wedding with a largely unknown relative, and did so after rejecting an offer from a close friend as she couldnot marry a foreigner." Ghosh revels himself to have an accomplished turn of phrase and a humble voice that lends itself to evoking the values and beliefs of a poor peasant, society that makes the reader wonder why he attempted to use dual narrative approach at all.

IV. Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's "*In An Antique Land*" revisits the history of ancient Egypt and imbricates it with slavery and present time. As a revisionist writer, Ghosh is very successful in portraying the Egyptian and Indian culture, different types of languages and tradition. *In An Antique Land* stresses the fact that history can never be represented in an objective and unbiased way. It rather remains relative to the historicity of the historians. The historians are the ones who make history coherent and intelligible through the use of points of view of interpretation that are always partial, provisional, in the final analysis, as subjective as artistic elements. The subjective nature of history gives way to create another story of history. Ghosh underlines such fact by presenting version of Egyptian history.

Ghosh, here, tries to wrap up his historical thread also drawing tenures parallels between modern times and a story that he is largely oblique to guess on the basis of some ambiguous letters. Ghosh evokes the nature of ancient slavery as a social institution rather than a crime. The customs, religions of the modern Egyptian villages are shown which is not dissimilar that of 5000 years ago. The details of the different cultures are the suppressed and unraveled.

This story, then, is also about two Indian slaves-one male and the other female. But it is one that speaks not to the romance of intercultural bonding but to the unjust nature of human bondage. No matter how privileged a slave might seem, this story tells us he was always susceptible to a "social death." And no matter how romantic an alliance between the Jewish traveler Ben Yiju and the Nair woman Ashu might appear to the poetic imagination, there were also other stories of sexual exploitation and abandonment. Bomma, Ghosh has told in his prologue, is not one of those for whom we can imagine "properly human,

individual, existences.” If, as sympathetic readers, we can celebrate Ghosh’s nostalgic reconstruction of the character of Bomma, we must do so with the knowledge that here too is an erasure. The abandoned concubine, defended in her time by her fellow traveler Safi, has yet has yet to find a modern spokesperson.

The revisionist historiographical approach tries to express the reality of the poor Egyptian village in the modern life and also the master slave relationship in 12th century. The minority and subaltern social groups such as slaves, working classes have raised the voices because of the advent to post-modern theories like new historicism, post colonialism, feminism etc. So, the hierarchy in terms of history has been shattered. Thus, the minority history, culture and heritage have made a separate and unique identity.

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