

Magic Realism a Remystificative Narration in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

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Abstract: Realism is a doctrine or universal concept followed by every writer to idealize the realities in their work. There are five types of realism. They are social realism, psychological realism, historical realism, mythic realism and magic realism. The magic realism deals with the realism that shifts from realism to a magic world and vice versa. It is one of the characteristic features of post colonialism. As Amitav Ghosh is a post colonial writer, he has incorporated magic realism in his novels to fantasize the reality. In this article I have dealt with the application of magic realism by Ghosh in his novel *Sea of Poppies*.

Keywords: Post colonialism, Magic Realism, psychological realism, mythic realism

Realism is a doctrine or universal concept followed by every writer to idealize the realities in their work. There are five types of realism. They are social realism, psychological realism, historical realism, mythic realism and magic realism. Social realism deals with the reality that one encounters in the contemporary society. The psychological realism deals with the hidden thoughts of an individual and is expressed in their interior monologue. The historical realism reconstructs the past using myth. The magic realism deals with the realism that shifts from realism to a magic world and vice versa. It marks the thematic transition in literature.

As fiction is a combination of fact and imagination, magic realism is one of the amenable narrative techniques. It aims to grasp the union of opposites that is the reality and the non reality. It is a kind of art which entertain or depict the enigmas of reality. It reconfigures the supernaturalism to reality and arise the question whether it is supposedly true or not. The tone of depicting magical elements explores the culture of a particular nation. It is a mixture of rationality and irrationality and is left to the reader's view. The recognition of reality depends upon the reader's own consciousness. Roshin George says magic realism is a post colonial narrative device. Since Amitav Ghosh is a post colonial writer, he uses this narrative technique in most of his novels. This article is concerned with the magic realism dealt by him in his work *Sea of Poppies*. It is a novel that narrates the 19th century India and is an amalgamation of five realisms. Here the magical elements are blended into the realistic atmosphere to access a deeper understanding of the reality. The novel itself begins with the touch of magic realism. The young Bihari woman, Deeti seeing the apparition of a two masted ship during her bath in the

holy river Ganges. Ghosh says, that “the vision of a tall masted ship at the sail on the ocean, came to Deeti...the apparition was a sign of destiny” (01). The magical element is stressed in the following line “the vision was not materially present in front of her” (07). It reminds the form of magic that arises unexpectedly and it returns to reality to a normal concrete structure.

In India, the river Ganges is considered as a holy river and there is a traditional belief that taking bath in Ganges purifies the sin of people. The author expresses the magical holiness as “it was accepted that it was the river [Ganges] itself that had granted Deeti the vision : that the image of the Ibis has been transported upstream, like an electric current, the moment the vessel made contact with the sacred waters” (10). Here the magical elements are amplified like the normal occurrences to accept the real and the fantastic in the same stream of thought. It endeavors to see the happening through other eyes or through our inner mind. It also reflects the culture, the acceptance or the belief of Indians on mystical elements. Even the dream we visualize is some sort of a magic realism. It looks like a mirage but it transpires in reality. Likewise the Ibis appeared as a dream to Deeti. She is almost surprised and shocked by envisaging it. But she does not leave it mere as a dream but the one that is going to happen in her real life. Assimilating the vision as a prophecy she drew the outline of her inner vision of the mast ship and places it in her pooja room. The phantasm of her inner mind later comes true in her life. After encountering several social strategies in her life, she boards the Ibis, the ship which she visualized in the beginning of the novel transpire in reality. It is a kind of magic reality, that the sacred river showing her the vision that her fate is inexplicably going to be tied to the vessel Ibis. Through this Ghosh exemplifies the shift of magic to reality. There is a relationship between psychological realism and magic realism. Like a prophet, Deeti psychologically foreknows the upcoming problems in her life and takes precautionary steps to distract from it. As a loving mother, she expedientially sends her daughter to her brother's house. There is an uncertainty in the mind of every one whether the magic realism takes place in their life. Obviously it comes in different form. The belief in it varies from culture to culture.

The religious experiences are also considered as a magic realism. Roshin George says “The world of ghosts, angels, witches on brooms and even religious experiences like God revealing himself to believers, all can be considered as magic realism” (12). As Indians are very pious in religious belief, they believe that God comes to the earth in the form of human being to redeem them. To the believer it is real while to the non-believer it is mystical or frivolous. Some people assume themselves as the alter ego of their likable God. It seems to be superstitious or illogical. It surprises or confuses the reader's psychology and arises the question in their mind that 'whether it can happen or not?'. The same question arises through the character Baboo Nob Kissan Panda, the gomusta of Mr. Brunham. He is a fervent devotee of Guru ma Ma Taramony, his aunt. She considers herself as the alter ego of Goddesses Radha. He is responsible

for transporting the indentured laborers to various islands. Though he is the devotee of Lord Krishna, his way of earning money to build temple to fulfill his vow for his family is immoral. His heart is filled with premonition and finds solace in nostalgia. He await for the sign of God Krishna and when he hears the Zachary Reid's sea shanties and is mesmerized by it and says "was it really a flute, Lord Krishna's own instrument, that had started to play" (142). It shows the mysterious relationship between man and his acceptance of the fantasy as another reality. Moreover Kissan considers Zachary Reid as the alter ego of Lord Krishna. He compares his physical appearance with his imaginary God. As imagery is one of the devices used to create the aspects of reality, it is created according to their own thought and belief. The logic also varies from person to person depending on their interest. Zachary, the Westerner is irritated by Kissan's belief. The idea of logic to the occident seems to be illogical to the orient. It is left to their own view of thought. As Zachari is an occident his belief varies from Kissan and his activity towards God irritates him.

Ma Taramony had a firm belief in incarnation and says that "Your [Kissan] will be the vessel for my return. There will come a day when my spirit will manifest itself in you, and then the two of us, united by Krishna's love, will achieve the most perfect union- you will become Taramony"(162). It is very ambiguous and raises doubt about reincarnation. He waits for the indication of her incarnation and is very prompt to go across the sea in search of her incarnation. It is a search for the transmigration of soul. To know about the possibility of the reincarnation we have to wait for the trilogy by the author.

Thus the magic realism is characterized by the use of mystic and psychological model to capture the reality and to recreate the magic. Like Samuel Taylor Coleridge's theory of poetry "the willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith" the magic realism is also a form of willing suspension of disbelief.

References:

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