

Encoding and Decoding Auxiliaries in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* for the Semantic Interpretation

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Abstract: One of the most enduring issues in the analysis for semantics is the nature of an auxiliary system that helps a main verb for thematic interpretation. The issue of this paper is to analyze how the auxiliary helps the main verb to give the interpretation of a writer. I have culled out some usages of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* for this analysis. He expresses his semantic ideas with the aid of auxiliaries. The usefulness of a primary auxiliary verb for stylistic analysis may depend on the aspectual function it serves in relation to the lexical verb: for example, whether an action is still going on, no longer functioning etc. These verbs may be of concern in relation to the accuracy of our analysis of time in the literary work.

Keywords: Auxiliaries, Generative Grammar, Utterances, Negation, Syntax and Semantic Interface, Semantics, Syntax.

Introduction: The verbs in English can be generally categorized in terms of auxiliary and lexical. The auxiliary verbs perform their function only in relation to the lexical verbs sometimes also known as function verbs. Auxiliary verbs, unlike lexical verbs, are sometimes described as a closed category, as their total number is limited, and has not changed very much in the recent history of the language. Due to their limited number, all the auxiliary verbs in English, unlike the lexical verbs, can be conveniently listed in a typical grammar of English. Some of the auxiliary verbs are categorized as modal, whereas the others can be categorized as primary. The primary auxiliary verbs in English are do, have, and be. The modal auxiliary verbs are can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, used to, need, dare. One must be careful with these examples, because some of them can function as lexical verbs. All the primary auxiliary verbs for example, depending on their meaning, can function as lexical verbs, and this is also true for some of the modal auxiliaries, such as need and dare. In order to see whether a verb functions as an auxiliary, we have to see whether its essential function is to modify another verb; if the verb stands on its own, then it should be regarded as a lexical verb. For example, the verbs in the following clauses are all lexical:

'He needs some money', / 'He has two houses', / 'She is a teacher'.

However, the same verbs are auxiliary in the following examples, because they modify other verbs:

'He needn't do it', / 'He has done it', / 'She is doing it'.

In linguistics, an auxiliary is a verb functioning to give further semantic information about the main verb following it. The auxiliary verb alters the basic form of the main verb to have one or more of the following functions: passive, progressive, perfect, modal. In this paper, the study would be made on exploring how Amitav Ghosh communicates his ideas with the help of auxiliaries that gives the meaning of the novel. One can analyze the meaning of sentences, as well as, how one can trace out a part of an initiation process of a writer by analyzing two meanings in the given literary work, firstly, the word meaning and secondly, sentence meaning. The writer usually reveals semantic ideas with the help of the main verb, and even subtle ideas with the aid of auxiliaries which interface between syntax and semantic interface. For example,

Relieved to be out of the sun, Deeti **squatted** beside her oven and **thrust** an armload of firewood into last night's embers, which **could** still be seen glowing, deep inside the ashes. (Ghosh 4)

In the above sentence, starts with the main verb 'relieved' and further it interfaces with primary auxiliary 'to be', then 'could' also conveys some meaning that some suggestion 'still be seen glowing' for this sentence besides 'squatted' and 'thrust'. In this novel, he uses this particular primary auxiliary in a unique way; he combines this primary auxiliary with 'be' verb like 'is', 'are', 'was' and 'were'.

The Ibis **is to be** his last command. (Ghosh 97)

'are': It is in keeping with these precedents that this court pronounces its sentence, which is that all your properties are to be seized and sold, to make good your debts, and that you yourself **are to be transported** to the penal settlement on the Mauritius Islands for a period of no less than seven years. (Ghosh 111)

'was': Many days passed with no word being received about when exactly Neel **was to be** moved to the jail at Alipore, where convicts were usually sent to await transportation. (Ghosh 123)

'were': And 'roti' was indeed the name by which these poppy-petal wrappers were known although their purpose was entirely different from that of their namesake; they **were to be** sold to the Sudder Opium Factory, in Ghazipur, where they would be used to line the earthenware containers in which opium was packed. (Ghosh 4)

He uses 'be' verb and 'perfect' verb followed by the primary auxiliary 'to be' throughout this novel, which functions as an adjunct to give further semantic information about the arguments. He adopts this particular technique throughout the novel. Generally there are two main functions in English auxiliary verbs which are follows:

The first, the auxiliary verb 'be' is used with a past participle to form the passive voice; for example, passive= is written(Present), is being written(Present Continuous), has been written(Present Perfect), was written(Past), was being written(Past Continuous), will be written(Future).

The second, the auxiliary verb 'be' is used with a present participle to form the progressive aspect; for example, "I am reading a book." describes what the speaker is doing at the very moment of

utterance, whereas "I read my book." is a temporally broader statement.

Initially, I have traced out this question, what are all the components that make us to understand his language? The writer expresses, what he means to convey to readers. One can analyse sentences from this novel that renders his emotions, ideas and intentions with the help of auxiliaries. Language is a complex phenomenon and it is difficult to define the intended meaning of the writer. The writer communicates his intended meaning with the help of a sentence and we can derive the meaning from the sentence by analyzing contexts in which language is used. The sentence is a construction of words in a particular sequence that reveals the ideas of the writer. If one analyze the structure of sentence properly, this would help to find out the utterance of the writer. Kabutri, in the meanwhile, **had kneaded** some atta and **rolled** out a few real rotis. (Ghosh 4). The above sentence, he uses 'had kneaded' which is a perfect auxiliary that joins with main verb that clearly indicates a past perfect event. He constructs the sentence in the following order:

NP+ PP+VP+NP+VP= S (Sentence)

This sentence is not constructed properly according the generative grammar which defines that "the grammar will generate all the well-formed syntactic structures (e.g. sentences) of the language and will not generate any ill-formed structures. This has been called the 'all and only' criterion, that is, all the grammatical sentences and only the grammatical sentences will be produced" (Yule 87). So, it is clear that the writer follows different techniques to represent his ideas, in which the primary auxiliary 'to be' plays a vital role in conveying arguments in sentences. He starts with 'was', 'is', 'are' and 'were' then followed by 'to be' throughout this novel.

He also uses 'has to be', 'have to be' and 'had to be'

This here mud is good akbarry: **has to be** eaten whole. (Ghosh 210)

There's some who just can't take it and **have to be** sent home. (Ghosh 36)

The sahib's pregnant wife was in great pain and in desperate need of a white doctor; there were none to be had on this side of the river, so she **had to be** taken to Calcutta, on the other bank. (Ghosh 31)

The Sentences above state that the usage of two auxiliaries together in the sentences; he follows that throughout this novel and he proceeds with the utterance which is "an act of speech or writing that describes a specific event, at a particular time and place and involving at least one person, the one who produces the utterance, but usually more than one person" (Kreidler 26-27). For example,

Paulette to Annabel: 'Of course not! It is only that I feel I should not let down your family at such an important evenment.' (Ghosh 115)1

He feels thirsty.2

In the first sentence, Paulette utters that 'I feel I should not let down your family' which is the act of speech that describes a specific event. But in the second, 'He feels thirsty.' is the complete sentence which gives us the meaning with the help of syntactic and semantic construction.

According to Kreidler, "The utterance is often part of a larger discourse

like conversation, a formal lecture, a poem, a short story, a business letter, or a love letter, among other possibilities”(Kreidler 27). 'I feel thirsty' is spoken discourse, the act of speech that occurs in a given place and during a given period of time. A written discourse may be the record of something that has been spoken, or it may originate for the purpose of being performed aloud, like a play or speech, or it may exist without ever having been spoken or intended to be spoken, like most articles and books.

According to Noam Chomsky, “Language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length, and constructed out of a finite set of elements”. Chomsky, **Syntactic Structures** (Chomsky: 13). For example, the utterance 'I feel thirsty' is produced with the help of a certain grammatical structure like I (NP), feel thirsty (VP x Adv), therefore NP x VP = S (Sentence), i.e. language is described by a particular grammar as the set of all the sentences it generates. The set of sentences may be, in principle, either finite or infinite in number. For example, the sentence:

This is the tiger that chased the fox that killed the deer.....3

The sentence will be finite if we look it as it can be expanded by making proper insertions in the place of the ellipsis (...). Ellipsis is one of the main properties in English Auxiliary Verb, which says that auxiliaries can appear alone where a main verb has been omitted, but is understood:

I will play cricket tomorrow, but she will not."4

'The judge **does** so enjoy your company, Puggly!' she said. (Ghosh 97)5

In sentence 5, 'does' is the auxiliary verb which can stand alone where a main verb has been omitted, but the sentence gives us meaning, according to Falk who says in *The English Auxiliary System Revisited* that there are two types of analyses, the aux-predicate (5) and aux-feature (4) which conveys that 'does' plays a role of aux-predicate, but in sentence 4, 'will' plays a role of aux-feature.

Before we analyze the auxiliary which helps to present intended meaning in the sentence or utterance, we distinguish these two components:

I don't believe you!(Utterance)

He doesn't believe him.....(Sentence)

UTTERANCES	SENTENCES	PAGE NO.
'Six nine-pounders, sir '	Neel lay on his back.	81
'Going back?'	Neel stared at the bird.	112
'Amiable, was he?'	Paulette snatched the tablet	210
'But Mr Reid'	from the Bee Bee.	252
'No can do ,' said Zachary.	He whispered to Paulette.	12

The utterance clearly indicates what a certain individual meant by saying such-and-such in a particular place, at a particular time, and to certain

other individuals. When we have to analyze the utterance properly, then we need the help of context, but the sentence reveals the particular pieces of language with a syntactic component, which specifies how to combine words together to form phrases and sentences. If we try to characterize this ability of decoding any new utterance which is mingled with the auxiliary verb then we can find out the creativity process of the writer which is the problem of knowledge. For example:

'I **do** apologize, sir,' said Zachary, stepping forward. (Ghosh 13)

Paulette looked quickly away, for she harboured a great dread of attracting the attention of Mrs Doughty, who tended to speak, at length and with exceptional rapidity, about matters she **could** not quite comprehend. (Ghosh 119-120)

'**Can do**,' said Serang Ali, handing him the Dosootie shirt. (Ghosh 25)

'It does,' she said. (Ghosh 120)

Auxiliaries play a vital role in the utterance as we see in the above utterances where 'could' stand alone and give a semantic interpretation without main verbs. But the sentence will be finite if we look it as it can be expanded by making proper insertions in the place of the ellipsis. For example:

"Why so it **does**," he said. "So then tell me, sir," I asked, "how often have you heard anyone say in Hind. (Ghosh 259)

He said that he does. . . .

We can remove 'does' and by adding proper insertions, we can make an infinite sentence as suggested by Chomsky before.

In the syntactical structure, subject comes first, then verb and finally objects. For example:

Kalua lived in the Chamar-basti, a cluster of huts inhabited only by people of his caste. (Ghosh 25)

But in this novel, the writer uses a different sentence pattern with the help of the rules of recursion because rules have the capacity to be applied more than once in generating a structure. For example,

In her last days, when her mind was wandering she often referred to Deeti as 'Draupadi'; when asked why, she **would** murmur drowsily: Because the earth **has** never seen a more virtuous woman than Draupadi, of the Mahabharata, wife to five brothers. (Ghosh 119)

One prepositional phrase describing period (in her last days) in the sentence, he develops the sentence by using 'Wh' pattern and auxiliary as a recursive tool. Instead of following the rule that creates a prepositional phrase over and over again. He uses 'wh' pattern 'why' and then auxiliaries like 'would' and 'has' to change the pattern of traditional syntactical structure of the sentences. We can take one more sentence for this linguistic analysis,

At that time, help **had** come to Kalua from an unexpected quarter: one of Ghazipur's most prominent landowning families **had** three young scions, thakur-sahibs, **who** were much addicted to gambling. (Ghosh 26)

Thus, we can say that he follows the distinctive pattern in conveying his ideas in this novel which clearly portrays his creativity process which shows that the pattern is syntactically constructed even though phrases differ in the sentence, he utilizes auxiliaries and 'wh' type pattern to extend his creative ideas. In this particular juncture, we need to discuss negation which is one of five properties in English Auxiliary Verb which take 'not' (or n't) to form the negative, e.g. cannot (can't), will not (won't), should not (shouldn't), etc. In certain tenses, in questions, when a contracted auxiliary verb can be used, the position of the negative particle n't moves from the main verb to the auxiliary, but Amitav Ghosh has used a distinct type of narrative techniques in this novel which he used 'no' in the place of auxiliary 'had n't' and 'have n't' as a replacement for expressing negation. We can clearly analyze negation 'no' with the past perfect and present perfect which we have traced out in this novel, which are follows:

Deeti **had no difficulty** in ignoring his jibes: turning her back on him. (Ghosh 4)

The knowledge of this terrified her, for she had never set eyes on anything that remotely resembled this apparition, and **had no idea** what it might portend. (Ghosh 5)

If I may say so, your youthful Queen **has no** more loyal subject than myself, and none who is more keenly aware of the rights that are enjoyed by the people of Britain. (Ghosh 56)

To put the matter simply: there is nothing they want from us – they've got it into their heads that they **have no use** for our products and manufactures. (Ghosh 53)

'The truth is you **have no option**. Your debts to my company would not be covered even by the sale of the estate. I am afraid I cannot wait much longer.' (Ghosh 58)

Conclusion: The above empirical analysis shows that Amitav Ghosh's novel is unique. He communicates his ideas with the help of auxiliaries which play a vital role in bolstering arguments in semantic or syntactic information about the main or full verb following it. He also uses 'no' in the place of auxiliary 'had n't' and 'have n't' as a replacement for expressing negation. It clearly explicates that he follows a distinct narrative techniques in combining auxiliaries with the main verb.

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