



## PRESENTATION OF THE WESTERN WORLD IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF SALMAN RUSHDIE AND AMITAV GHOSH

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### Abstract

Several Indian English novelists have presented the western world in their fictions. The main focus of the novelists after nineties is to show how Indian-born people émigré in different countries of the globe and how they respond to the newly exposed society of that particular country. The expatriates cross the boundaries of the world open doors for communication and new forms of artistic expressions. The present paper is an attempt to explore how the Indo-Anglian Writers especially Amitav Ghosh and Salman Rushdie have presented the western world or the East-West relationship through their science fictions and how they expressed their traumatic experiences and cultural perplexity they experienced in the western world.

Key words: western, Indo-Anglian, fiction, expatriate, exile.

Indian writing in English, like literary works in other Indian languages, is not just a collection of fictitious works but journey of the country and its people from colonial to postcolonial era. It vividly and candidly describes the changing faces, both good and bad, of Indian Politics, Culture and Society. It is a historical document and window to the India of yesteryears and a mirror to contemporary society. From humble beginnings, when Indo-Anglian writers were ignored and sometimes mocked at, to worldwide critical acclaim and awards, Indo-Anglian writing has come a long way and has established itself as a force to reckon with. It is a story of mastering the language of the colonizer with distinct Indian touch and flavor. The Indo-Anglian Period, which was ushered in by the middle of the nineteenth century, has gained momentum and has been drawing much attention across the world all these years. In this period we study the literary achievements of Indians who have been to the Western countries for higher education and have

chosen English as their medium of expression. They have, through their literary work, not only showcased their rich heritage and their ancient culture into which they have been born and brought up but also expressed their traumatic experiences and cultural perplexity they experienced in the western world.

The Indian English novelists whether it is Salman Rushdie or Vikram Seth; Amitav Ghosh or Upamanyu have presented the Western World in their novels and open the door of the western world to the Indians and vice-versa. In Amitav Ghosh's *Calcutta Chromosomes* and Salman Rushdie's *Ground Beneath Her Feet* and *Enchantress of Florence* the western influence or we can say the global journey is very much significant. The global journey gives us a scope not only to travel without physical journey and to see the world through the perspectives of the novelists but to compare the cultures of the different countries with our own.

Rushdie is well known expatriate Indian writer living first in England and now in the United States. He in his book *Imaginary Homelands* says that, "the exiled writer always deals in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost" but that "the broken mirror may actually be as valuable as the one which is supposedly unflawed" (Rushdie, 11). He created fantastic worlds in his fiction and connected it with the different parallel "worlds" that exist on this planet: the Eastern World and the Western World; the Old World and the New World. Salman Rushdie combines the East and the West to emphasize the creative possibilities and the dangers in all cross-cultural encounters.

He, in his novel *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* has impressively given us a detailed report about western life at the end of the second millennium. The story begins with the sad demise of the world famous singer Vina Apsara in the colossus earthquake in Mexico on 14th February, 1989. The story unfolds and progresses in flashback. The protagonist Vina Apsara is born in Virginia, USA. Her mother was a Greek-American who divorces her Indian father and later meets the tragic end after her remarriage. Her father sends her to Bombay to live with their distant relatives. Later she starts living with Rai Merchant who is enchanted by her beauty the moment he sees her on the beach for the first time.

Vina meets seventeen-year-old Ormus in Bombay Record Store at the age of twelve. Both of them have the same passion for Music and hence they got attracted to each other. Vina is a singer and Ormus possesses extraordinary song writing skills. He has strange connection with his dead twin, Gayomart. The duo - Vina Apsara and her lover Ormus Cama, has incredibly influenced the western music and brought changes to rock and roll. Their music outshines the Beatles, The Rolling Stones and the other influential groups throughout the unrestrained last three decades of Rock. The story of their love, music and their spectacular success is told by Rai, a photographer who was Ormus' and Vina's childhood friend and becomes Vina's sometime lover. The couple travels across the globe and settles in the United States. In London, Mull Standish invites

Ormus to work for his enterprise. Ormus accepts the offer and starts working for Radio Freddie but very soon they shared fraught relationship. He secretly tries to kill Ormus in a car accident. He is badly injured and later goes in a prolonged coma. But finally, after a long wait, he wakes up with a kiss from Vina. After his accident, he loses his connection with Gayomart but gains double vision and that was a real problem for him.

In the 1970s, Ormus and Vina arrive in the USA in order to sign a record contract with Yul Sing in New York City and become popular and achieve global stardom. Vina receives worldwide adoration for her exquisite beauty and divine voice. She indulges in many sexual relationships while Ormus remains celibate fully engrossed with song compositions. Finally, Ormus marries Vina. His double vision disappears after their marriage. Rai Merchant exposes a scam artist in Bombay and becomes an internationally celebrated photojournalist. He is in Mexico when Vina loses her life in the earthquake. The entire world mourns for her. Her husband Ormus goes in depression and is shot dead by the unknown woman who looks exactly like Vina.

The novel is set in the wide frame of the post-colonial and the Western culture. The novelist has beautifully depicted the mixture of East and West through multilingual characters and the great number of references from Greek mythology and the European philosophy.

Amitabh Ghosh, in his science fiction *The Calcutta Chromosome*, has remarkably presented the influence of the western world through his characters. The main protagonist of the novel is the Nobel Prize winning scientist Ronald Ross who discovers that malaria spreads through mosquitoes. He uses a local man Lutchman to conduct his research and makes all experiments on him. The novel begins with the story of Antar who is an Egyptian working in the information technology industry in the New York. His advanced computer shows him the trace of an identity card that has been lost in the virtual system. In due course of time, Antar realizes that the card belongs to his former colleague, Murugan, who had disappeared when he

was in Calcutta. Antar is now gripped with the idea of revealing the secret of Murugan's disappearance. And in this course, he encounters the characters not only from past and present but from Egypt, India, America and Britain. He suspects that Murugan's notions about Ronald Ross's discoveries which were secretly planned by an Indian "counter-scientific" cult, was right. The ultimate mission of this cult is to find the secret of immortality. A mysterious woman Mangala leads this cult and Ross's favorite servant helps her in this mission. Antar starts his investigation about Murugan's disappearance from Calcutta long ago. He learns that Murugan was very much fascinated with the life of Sir Ronald Ross and therefore he wanted to get transferred from New York to Calcutta. He studies the old and the lost documents and phone messages thoroughly and reaches to the conclusion that Murugan had systematically discovered the secretive scientific or the mystical movement which is active in the mission of granting eternal life. The members of this movement are able to transfer their chromosomes into another and gradually take over that person.

In the novel, Ronald Ross discovers the mysteries of the malaria parasite. He is assisted by the group of the underground local practitioners who helped Ross to discover that the parasite changes its nature. At this point, a new variant of malaria emerges and the group's research using the chromosome-transfer technique develops even further. The persistent theme of the novel is the Western silence. Murugan exposes the doctrines of the Indian scientific mystical movement. These doctrines include the aspects of the Hindu belief in the drifting of souls as well as the contemporary scientific ideas about genetics and cloning. The native Indian members operate this and keep it hidden from the other Western characters and from the readers too. As the novel progresses, their activities gradually become clearer and eventually their plan is revealed to the readers. The reader gets too much involved in the story and keeps thinking about it even after turning the last page of the novel. The novelist here avoids resolving the mystery of the story completely and leaves much to the reader's understanding and interpretation.

From the above discussion, I can say that my research paper has clearly shown how the Indo-Anglian Writers especially Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh have presented the western world, the East-West relationship and their traumatic experiences through their characters in the science fictions. Both the novelists have beautifully depicted the mixture of East and West through their multilingual characters.

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