

Displacement in *Sea of Poppies*

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Abstract— In *Sea of Poppies*, Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh presents the nineteenth-century British imperialist activities including the cultivation of opium as a cash crop in India for the Chinese market, the transportation of the Asiatic to work on sugar plantations in Mauritius Island, the introduction of the free trade, and the approach of opium wars. This paper will look how the environmental injustice created social injustice. British imperialists' intensification of the production of the poppy plant on the bank of the River Ganga to maintain the opium trade between India and China transformed local people first to peasant labour and then to the indentured workers. Ghoshre imagines their loss of local place and dispersion in global place as the indentured labour. He plots the afterlife of a former slave ship, the *Ibis*, which was in the service of the East Indian Company to carry the indentured labour. This paper sets out to discuss how its traumatic movement to sugar plantations characterized diaspora; the ship became shared past, home, parent for the diverse characters. The emphasis will be put on Ghosh's construction of identity in relation to the place from postcolonial eco critical perspective. In his engagement with the connection of place and people, both place and displacement are the essential parts of identity construction. Both places and identities are related and changed through the experience of displacement, mobility. The characters went beyond developing personal identification, fixity, and attachment to a local place within a national border, they were situated in a world of mobility and flexibility which promoted cultural and self-development.

Keywords— postcolonial ecocriticism, place, displacement, diaspora, identity.

This paper will explore displacement, as a notion and process, in *Sea of Poppies* from postcolonial eco critical perspective. *Sea of Poppies* is a remarkable novel for Amitav Ghosh's portrayal of the process of displacement. As a postcolonial narrative of displacement, it has a complex relationship with the notion of place. Indian history has encompassed diverse place detachment experiences since the 19th century due to British imperialism. Ghosh reflects one of them; he fictionalizes the forgotten stories of India's indentured workers who were taken from their homelands to work across the colonies of the British Empire in the early decades of the nineteenth century. He redefines the impact of the uneven British global capitalist expansion on place-based

identities in India, and he engages with the relevance of the replacement and diasporic identities to the notion of place.

The representation of place in literature is the main concern of ecocritics. Cheryll Glotfelty defines Eco criticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment" (Glotfelty and Fromm, xviii). Ecocritics study literary works in relation to their settings, as all literary works are products of time and place in which they are positioned. Its dominant components appear as a room, home, homeland, dwelling, territory, regions, neighbourhood, rural and urban areas, wilderness, pastoral etc... Glotfelty states the significance of place through the question "[i]n addition to race, class, and gender, should *place* become a new critical category?" (Glotfelty and Fromm, xix) She answers that question, "[a]s a critical stance, [ecocriticism] has one foot in literature and the other on land" (Glotfelty and Fromm, xix). The notion of place functions as a critical study area in addition to race, class, and gender. As well as being a physical entity, like gender, race, and class, it is a social difference and subject to the hegemonic power systems as it is socially constructed so it has multiple meanings and perceptions. It takes its meaning accordingly to the narratives of different study areas.

Place has infinite meanings and morphologies: it might be defined geographically, in terms of expansion of empire; environmentally, in terms of wilderness or urban settings; genealogically, in linking communal ancestry to land; as well as phenomenology, connecting body to place... postcolonial studies has utilized the concept of place to question temporal narratives of progress imposed by colonial powers. (DeLoughrey and Handley, 4)

This paper will refer to postcolonial eco critical perceptions of place. Generally, postcolonial works deal with race, gender and class issues but recently have included geographical place because the relationship between social injustice and environmental problems become clear.

In western literary writings, the interaction with the setting came out with environmental literature in forms of nature writing, romantic lyrics, and pastoral imagination. Environmental writers overcame the traditional literature's ignorance of establishing the connection between the setting and the other elements of the literary works. The setting which has begun to take an

active role in literary works affects the plot, the actor or characters, and the sense. Environmental writers' reflection of their awareness of the places in which they lived, stayed or visited became a criterion for critics to re-read their writings from the ecocritical point of view. Ecocritics apply ecological standards to study the notion of place in literature. "Ecology offers to culture an ethic for survival" (Glotfelty and Fromm, 76). Ecocritics extend ethics beyond humanity to develop a holistic view of the world. They deal with the role of literature in encouraging an ecocentric consciousness which secures the sense of holism between place and its inhabitants. They privilege the environmental literature that develops the emphasis on the sense of place attachment at a local or bioregional level. Aldo Leopold said "the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts... The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (194). His land ethic indicated that reconnecting human beings' ties with place at a local or bioregional level, which was damaged by modernism and progress, could reduce the environmental damage. When human beings felt a part of a place, they would protect the rights of it. Identity is the way in which an individual, a community, or a nation defines himself or herself in relation to place so fixity, rootedness, and attachment to a local place within a national border is a fundamental part of identity.

While ecocriticism stressing the importance of local place, postcolonial ecocriticism goes beyond developing personal identification, fixity, rootedness, and attachment to a local place within a national border. "From a postcolonial perspective, a bioregional ethic poses certain problems, for the concentric rings of the bioregionalists more often out into transdandalism than into transnationalism" (Nixon, 238). Postcolonial ecocriticism recognizes the relationship between local and global and brings them together. Rather than emphasizing the ecocentric perception, it develops socio-centric environmental ethics that reconsider human beings' existence in place in a relational way. It is concerned with recovering environmentally responsible culture that consists of the whole web of creations. And, it confirms the place of individual in the whole web of creation, either in cultural or natural world. It rejects the division of culture-nature or favouring one over the other. It also reminds that before colonization, the place was the integral part of the personal, communal, and national identities in the colonies, that's why; the loss of place or displacement due to imperialism was an assault on place-based identities of the colonized people. These aspects of postcolonial ecocriticism provide a useful exploration of *Sea of Poppies* which has not been bound by the conceptions of fixity to local or national place, which portrays the bound of social

and environmental issues that "there is no social justice without ecological justice" (Huggan and Tiffin, 35).

Postcolonial ecocritics, in their portrayal of human relations to place, they recognize the relationship between place and the expanding networks of the western global cultural, political, and economic imperialism. They deal with the ways how literary works make the place a participant of the western imperial history. "Place encodes time, suggesting that histories embedded in the land and sea have always provided vital and dynamic methodologies for understanding the transformative impact of empire and the anticolonial epistemologies it tries to suppress" (DeLoughrey and Handley, 4). They uncover the suppressed histories of the colonized people and place. They draw attention to ecocritics' ignorance of the impact of colonial history on place and identity in the colonies; "Imperial socioenvironmental degradation remained marginal to the dominant purview of environmentalism" (Nixon, 235). Rob Nixon describes Anglo-American ecocritics' failure of recognizing the disruption of the place attachment at local level, the extraction of the natural resource from the local place of colonies, picking of local communities' lands, the exploitation and objectification of the human in colonies as the act of "spatial amnesia" (238-9). He states that such spatial amnesia is one of the reason postcolonialist distrustful to Anglo-American ecocriticism which ignores the environmental issues in non-western geographies.

Amitav Ghosh unearths the spatial amnesia how the nineteenth century British global capitalist expansion has threatened people and places in particular places of the world with violence, exploitation, and displacement. Places and people on the route of the Ibis to India were transformed by colonialist operations and fell under the control of the global capitalist market. Ghosh reflects the social costs of the British ecological imperialism; the colonial places became the producer of raw materials for the British factories, the forests were destroyed to satisfy the need of timber and to create plantation areas, traditional agricultural style was replaced with monoculture agriculture, and the agricultural products such as sugar, and poppy etc... were commoditized as commercially profitable cash crops. When the main character Deeti was her daughter's age,

poppies had been a luxury then, grown in small clusters between the fields that bore the main winter crops-wheat, masoor dal and vegetables. Her mother would send some of her poppy seeds to be pressed, and the rest she would keep for the house, some for replanting, and some cook with meat and vegetables. As for sap, it was sieved of impurity and left to dry, until the sun turned it into hard abkariafeem. (Ghosh, 30)

Deeti compared the use of opium in the old days with the opium production under the control of the company. "But those toothsome winter crops were steadily shrinking in acreage: now the factory's appetite for opium seemed never be sated" (Ghosh, 31). The East Indian Company had the control on opium production in India. Its enforcing the opium cultivation destroyed the traditional feudal economy and the sustainable local social and economic structure. Zamindary owners and richer peasantry lost their power over their family lands which had been farmed for generations. The British capitalist merchant Benjamin Brightwell Burnham, one of the merchants who looked for sizeable lands in India, took the advantage of acquiring the lands of Raskhali estate for the monoculture practice of producing poppy. [P]oppies might well become a plantation crop, like indigo or sugar-cane: with the demand rising annually in China, merchants who controlled their own production, rather than depending on small farmers, would stand to multiply their already astronomical profits" (Ghosh, 226).

The demand of labour by British global capitalism transformed the local human beings in India to the human resources. British global capitalism rested heavily on the unpaid and underpaid peasant family labour and indentured labour. It made it difficult for the small landholder local Indians, who depended upon the agricultural activities on their lands for sustaining their lives, to interact with their places in a local way. Growing mono-crop damaged the traditional crop cycle and changed their local lives. In the long term, it became hard for the local to survive within a changed environment. They were transformed to peasant family labour. They became clinging on to the merchants of the company to supply their needs, they fell in an unending cycle of debt and they lost their lands due to the payment of dues to the merchants. As a result, the indentured labour system haunted the local people rooted in the Ganges plains of Bihar.

Many of these people were from the Gangetic plains of Bihar.... How had it happened that when choosing the men and women who were to be torn from this subjugated plain, the hand of destiny had strayed so far inland, away from the busy coastlines, to alight on the people who were, of all, the most stubbornly rooted in the silt of the Ganga, in a soil that had to be sown with suffering to yield its crop of story and song? (Ghosh, 592)

Many of the indentured workers on the ship *Ibis* were taken away from their opium producing countryside homelands to various plantation colonies.

Ghosh reimagines their individual experiences of detachment from their origins, roots in the Gangetic plains in forceful, illegal, inhuman, and voluntary ways.

Historian David Northrup categorized the reasons, the circumstances that "pushed, pulled, and coerced populations –and even single individuals" (78) to take part in indentured labour.

The growing demand for plantation labor coincided with a growing willingness—often bordering on desperation—by individuals in many parts of the world to accept long-distance migration as a way to improve their lives. In the language of migration studies, the push of undesirable circumstances at home was joined to the pull of opportunities overseas. (Northrup, 43)

In the novel, although the increasing poverty, hunger, exploitation and suffer from the hard situations were the dominant factors that pushed the characters to look for survival as indentured workers in the overseas plantation colonies; political circumstances, social inequalities, gender, race and class discriminations, the unacceptable and scandalous behaviours in their homelands also motivated them to be subject to displacement. Female characters such as Deeti, Paulette and Munia run away from their homeland due to social oppression such as gender discrimination and sexual oppression in addition to economic oppression. "[F]or women, as for men, emigration provided a means to escape oppressive circumstances and held out hope of a better life, even if domestic cultural norms and social institutions made it much harder for women to join the emigrant flow" (Northrup, 78). Deeti was blamed to be a whore who run away with a filth-sweeper and brought shame on her family, her in-laws and her village. Neel Raja was on the ship due to colonial injustice, Kalau due to the traditional caste system of India, Baboo Nob Kissin due to his choice. The displeasing circumstances at their homelands were related to the pull of their hopes for their future lives and opportunities beyond the local and national boundaries.

Indian peasants, outcasts, and the tribal intended to escape from social and economic problems at home. Through Mr. Burnham's organization, they signed up contracts to be hired as labour for the empire to be shipped to remote sugar plantation colony to cultivate sugar. "[T]heir names were entered 'gimits' -agreements written on pieces of paper. The silver that was paid for them went to their families, and they were taken away, never to be seen again" (Ghosh, 75). Ghosh fictionalizes the demand of labour for the plantations that developed after the end of the slave trade, the planter Monsieur d'Epinau handed a letter to be delivered to Mr. Burnham. He said "my canes are rotting in the field, Mr. Reid." "Tell Mr. Burnham that I need men. Now that we may no longer have slaves in Mauritius, I must have coolies, or I am doomed" (Ghosh, 22). His demand for labour would be provided by indentured labour trade that largely constituted South Asian. Following the formal

abolishment of the slave trade, British rested on “a new system of slavery” (Tinker, iii,xvi-414), indentured labour, that was the extension of the slave trade in the colonial territories.

Postcolonial ecocriticism favours postcolonial preoccupation with the histories of the experiences of displacements. Ghosh recreates the experience of detachment from the place that was shaped by the process of global colonial expansion of British Empire. Since the sixteenth century, British Empire has played the main role in the worldwide organization, production and exchange of labour due to its industrial strength and global capitalist projects. It has created mass movements of local people in its overseas colonies as labour to the plantation colonies. Within this framework, many people experienced slavery, transportation, voluntary migration or removal for indentured labour, all of which can be described as the events of displacement.

In the history of transatlantic slave trade, British imperialists' need for labour in the Caribbean and Americas created changes in the colonized inhabitants' place-based identities and their perceptions of place attachment. The transported African lost their identities, broke their ties with their local lands and societies, but, after a while, they were reconnected beyond their local, communal and national borders that shaped contemporary Diasporas. The ships played significant roles in their experiences of displacement, uprooting, and rupture from their lands and their revival, transplantation, interconnection across the globe.

Historically, the slave ship is a potent site of diasporic imaginings, resistances, and recreation. A potent symbol of the political economy of slavery, it also denotes the destruction of African societies inaugurated by the wrenching of people from place. This dissemination of peoples and culture also gave birth to new forms of cultural reconstruction in its traumatic wake. (Mullaney, 11)

Ghosh portrays the afterlives of one of the slave ships. The schooner *Ibis* was a reminder of traumatic movements between various colonial territories and metropolis. It was in the service of the East Indian Company to carry natural products and labours. Ghosh writes that the *Ibis*

had been built to serve as a “blackbirder”, for transporting slaves. This, indeed, was the reason why she had changed hands: in the years since the formal abolition of the slave trade, British and American naval vessels had taken to patrolling the West African coast in growing numbers, and the *Ibis* was not swift enough to be confident of outrunning them. (Ghosh,12)

The British capitalist merchant Benjamin Brightwell Burnham intended to fit the *Ibis* for the export of opium to China in chests to be used for buying tea. The British established a market of opium addicts which created social and economic problems in China. Chinese authorities tried to challenge the changes forced upon their traditional society by British capitalist free trade which was hidden behind the civilizing mission. Mr. Burnham explained that slavery presented freedom to the lesser races; slaves under the control of white masters were freer than their brothers under the black tyrants. According to him, after the formal abolishment of slavery, doors of freedom remained open to African and Asiatic due to indentured worker trade. “Have you not heard it said that when God closes one door he opens another? When doors of freedom were closed to the African, the Lord opens them to a tribe that was yet more needful of it- the Asiatics” (Ghosh, 83). According to him, the Chinese had difficulty in understanding the benefits of free trade so the schooner would do the kind of work that it was intended for; it would carry coolies to Mauritius instead of carrying opium on its first voyage.

Ghosh fictionalizes British imperialists' disruption of place attachment at local level. In the process of displacement, characters moved from their homes, their farms, villages, local areas to larger places beyond the Black Water. Instead of being part of a specific place, origins, community and nation, they negotiated several degrees of places, locations, cultures, regions, nations, and continents by crossing across the Black Water. They lost their boundaries and construct their new identities in their new place. The postcolonial ecocritical narrative is not bound within a local, regional, communal or national framework. It deals with the movement from local belonging that was a form of colonialist essentialism to international areas to focus on the global social and environmental concerns and injustices. It engages with postcolonial border crossing, hybridization, replacement in connection with the idea of the place. Rob Nixon compares postcolonial concern and ecocritical concerns related to the notion of place.

First, postcolonialists tended to foreground hybridity and cross-culturation. Ecocritics, on the other hand, historically were drawn more to discourses of purity: virgin wilderness and preservation of ‘uncorrupted’ last great place. Second, postcolonial writing and criticism was largely concerned with displacement, while environmental literary studies tended to give priority to the literature place. (236).

After exploring the economic and social realities of migration, Ghosh collects his heterogeneous characters upon a ship as indentured labourers whose migration created South Asian diaspora. Diaspora refers to the experiences of the movement, displacement, and

dislocation of local people from their origins, roots, home, homeland, and nation. Diaspora has a displacement factor in its roots, "diaspora as *dislocation*" (Mullaney, 9). In addition, Diaspora recall the meeting of the diverse people, hybridity, replacement, and recovering a sense of place-attachment. It is closely related to the redevelopment of individual, communal, and national forms of identities. Place functions as a significant element in understanding these identities. The displaced people find themselves through the notion of home within the parameters of place.

The notion of home is understood in physical and psychological terms. Physically, the indentured immigrants were torn from their homes to go to unknown lands. Psychologically, being at home or keeping the connection with home present people a sense of belonging and security, while leaving home, and crossing the Black Water, losing their castes, being located in an unaccustomed place, and getting lost evoke a sense of identity crisis, alienation and fear. On the night of parting from their homes, when the ship casted anchor at the last place from which the migrants could view their homeland, they felt the proximity of their homes. Deeti expressed, "there is nothing worse than to sit here and feel the land pulling us back" (Ghosh, 417). They were aware that this was the last time they could see of their homelands. The last view of the outstretched part of their homeland reminded them of their going an unknown and hidden future; it seemed to reach out to protect them from being lost in void.

This created an atmosphere of uncertainty and ruthlessness. The *girmityas* whispered rumours that the migrants, who crossed the Black Water, would be forced to convert to Christianity, consume all kinds of forbidden foods and oil would be extracted from their brains. The captain explained the assembled *girmityas* that there was another law on the ship, when the *girmityas* on the ship, and the ship was at the sea, he was their fate and only lawmaker and his whip was the keeper of his law. He threatened them to be submissive and obedient. The captain's words chilled them,

many of *girmityas* were in trance of fear: it was as if they had just woken to the realization that they were not only leaving home and braving the Black Water—they were entering a state of existence in which their waking hours would be ruled by the noose and whip. She could see their eyes straying to the island nearby; it was so closer that its attraction was almost irresistible. (Ghosh, 422)

Some of the desperate migrants threw themselves into the sea to go back to their homelands, but they were disappeared below the water. The remaining *girmityas* fell in a state of helplessness.

Characters' displacement increased their emotional attachment to their homes; home became an abstract concept "even when removed from view, the island could not be put out of mind" (Ghosh, 413). Despite being away from there physically, they retained strong social, symbolic, and material connections to their homeland in order to seek relief from the suffer, fear, and alienation on the ship, foster a sense of belonging and encourage the shared cultural, communal, and national identities. They kept on significant aspects of Indian traditions, practices, and values such as caste, song, dance, ceremony, food, and clothing.

Migrants remained connected to their homes with memory. Their memories recalled their happy days, beautiful landscapes, riversides and seaside of their homelands. For example; when the ship was passing Raskhali estate, Neel Raja's memories caught him, he saw the veranda and the terrace where he had taught his son to fly kites; the avenue of palash trees his father planted, and the window of the bedroom to which he had taken Elokeshi. Women *girmityas* reconstructed collective memory to come over their hard conditions and to bear the pain of separation and longing. In order to express the plight of those who left home, they sang the song when the bride was torn from her home.

Among the women, the talk was of the past, and the little things that they would never see, nor hear, nor smell again: the colour of poppies, spilling across the fields like air on a rain-drenched Holi; the haunting smell of cooking-fires drifting across the river, bearing news of a wedding in a distant village; the sunset sounds of temple bells and the evening azan; the late nights in the courtyard, listening to the tales of the elderly. (Ghosh, 413)

Deeti, the main character, remembered that she would not witness the growth of her daughter Kabutri and keep her secrets. She would not be present at her wedding to chant the laments that mothers chanted when the bride was carried away from home. She felt the pain of being excluded from her life and memories forever.

Ghosh exposes how migrants perpetuated traditional and cultural norms as well as fostering new forms of cultural engagement and exchange. He engages with how diaspora relocates, re-places, and repositions the migrants.

If migrancy is most often addressed in terms that stress questions of movement, dislocation and displacement, diasporas are differently not always distinctly freighted. Historically, they settle in the new place rather than return to home. They are 'in place', but because of a tendency to emphasize diaspora as *dislocation*, the question of how

diasporas *relocate* is often overlooked. (Mullaney,9-10)

When they became aware that returning to their local places was not possible, they adapted themselves to their new situations. And while travelling on the Ibis, they tried to regain a sense of identity through recognizing a shared past, place and place attachment. They all shared a story of exploitation, exclusion, discrimination, and deprivation in their past, they were taken away from their personal, familial, communal and national roots and they shared a collective identity as *giritiyas*. “[I]t was the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world that ‘unified’ these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past” (Hall, 227). They developed diaspora identity. Rather than being fixed to a homeland, they made their home and their places in global and transnational contexts to support their desire to survive.

Characters constructed their new physical place, the ship Ibis as their home; this was related to postcolonial perception that home, which is related to the conception of place, is socially constructed. It is a fluid and dynamic concept and continues to be recreated as characters, who detached from their culture and identity, struggled to give new meaning to their place, the Ibis as a result of their experience of it. Tim Cresswell defines place as space with meaning, “when humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming in such way) it becomes a place” (16). This definition emphasizes the significance of experiencing a place. A result of their interaction, The Ibis, as a place became the source of their new identities. They articulated their belonging to local place-based cultures. Rather than individual immersion or imagination, in their relations with the physical environment, they had collective experience of it.

Postcolonial ecocritics rely on the postcolonial perception of identity. Postcolonialists believe that identity has potential to adapt itself to changing situations and time. It can constantly reconstruct itself rather than be fixed or rooted in single and stable places. Homi Bhabha confirms the ever-changing nature of identity as a response to essentialism. Identity is a flux socio-cultural element that has a potential to take shape accordingly to changing situations and time, so it always remains under reconstruction. He accepts the diaspora aspect of identity by indicating concepts like in-between space and hybridity. He says “‘in between’ spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood-singular or communal-that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (2). When characters were out of their local places, they were situated

in a world of mobility, process, and flexibility, as their connection to place, was determined through power systems.

Postcolonial ecocritics deal with the postcolonial writers’ reflection of crossing the borders of fixed and essentialist identities. Ghosh discusses global transfers of the indentured workers without reducing them to stereotypical or essentialist assumptions. While reconstructing their identities, characters tried to escape their names, caste, race, and places of origin in order to discover their identities and live self-respectful life. The place of their roots did not allow them to develop, satisfy and construct their own identities, individualities and involve in decision-making processes for themselves. For example, if they had been at home, it was impossible for Heeru, a married woman whose husband was still alive, to get married Ecka Nack a married man.

Now they were all cut off from home, there was nothing to prevent men and women from pairing off in secret, as beasts, demons and pishaches were said to do: there was no pressing reason for them to seek the sanction of anything other than their own desires. With no parents or elders to decide on these matters, who know what the right way to make a marriage was?” (Ghosh, 449)

Deeti transformed herself into a new identity and became Aditi, in Indian mythical history, Aditi was a woman granted by a boon of living her life again. Kalau becomes Maddow Colver. The dualistic perceptions of the hegemonic power structures, the dominant caste system, religious divisions, and racial and gendered separations in their place of roots were dissolved on the ship.

The Ibis became a site of multiple identities. It provided a space for coexistence of diverse people from various castes, classes, religions, regions and nations; diverse kinds of people such as Brahmin, Ahir, Chamars and Telis, people from diverse castes or religions were collided, conferred and united to generate a new identity. They adopted the Ibis as the new cultural community; they were bounded to each other by the Ibis which became “the mother-father of her new family, a great wooden mai-bap, an adopted ancestor and parent of dynasties to come” (Ghosh, 356). The diverse people became children of the ship who were reborn from the ship’s womb; they called each other as sisters and brothers. “From now on, and forever afterwards, we will be all be ship-siblings-jahazbhais and jahazbahens-to each other. There will be no differences between us” (Ghosh, 372). The Ibis made them build a shared origin, past, a single family or a kin. “Indeed, boats constitute a resonant image of the multiple forms of journeying that characterize Diasporas conjoined or separated in time and space” (Mullaney, 12). The indentured immigrants formulated new social relations and ties beyond the boundaries because everyone on the ship

became the same. They developed the special feeling towards their new place, the Ibis within the context of diaspora. Their diaspora identities is defined, not by conventional understanding of identity, “not by essence or purity, but by recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of ‘identity’” which is based upon the difference and hybridity. “Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference (Hall, 235). Their past and old relationships were washed away by the Black Water. Crossing the Black Water is symbolically crossing the social boundaries of caste, gender, religion, and race. For example, the loss of caste purity made the social interaction outside the caste system possible. Raja Neel Rattan, the former zemindar had to travel with a lower caste man, Aafat to his jail across the Black Water. “He is all [his has], [his] caste, [his] family, [his] friend” (Ghosh, 330).

To sum up, in *Sea Of Poppies*, Ghosh portrays that the experiences of the Indian who suffered from the results of the socio-political, environmental, cultural and economic changes in colonial India. Ghosh describes how the British Empire’s financial power depended on nature and labour in India. He recreates the Indian indentured labour immigration to British colonies in the early decades of the nineteenth century which was one of the fundamental historical events that created South Asian diaspora identity. “Such cultures of displacement and transplantation are inseparable from specific, often violent histories of economic, political, and cultural interaction (Clifford, 108). Colonial capitalism in India disconnected the local people’s relationships with their local places which rendered their personal, communal, and national identities. Ghosh reflects that belonging to a place and displacement are key terms to indicate the value of identity. Displacement affected the identities of his characters. The displacement of the Indian related to the gathering of them in diaspora. He defines their moving across the borders, their developing identity and creating their own culture beyond boundaries in their new place; the Ibis. He proves that identity develops through shifting situations; it is not pure, stable entity. The identity is characterized by Ghosh’s use of displacement with an emphasis on postcolonial ecocritical perception of place. The paper concludes that postcolonial ecocriticism offers new insights into the relationship between diaspora identity and place.

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