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Cyclic Histories And Rational Discourses: A Postmodern Approach To *The Circle Of Reason*

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Abstract:

Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* uses postmodern techniques to challenge linear historical narratives. The novel follows Alu, a man displaced by personal tragedy and a wrongful accusation, highlighting the cyclical nature of history. Through characters like Balaram, Ghosh critiques Western rationalism, portraying it as a cultural construct. Elements of folklore and symbolic storytelling explore memory, identity, and migration. The novel's structure mirrors the gunas, Satwa, Rajas, and Tamas, representing human existence. The loom symbolizes the unpredictability of history and cultural connections. Ghosh critiques colonialism, presenting history as a fragmented, subjective experience. His non-linear storytelling rejects objective truths. Ultimately, the novel advocates for multiple perspectives on history and identity.

Keywords:

Postmodernism, Cyclical History, Migration, Gunas (Satwa, Rajas, Tamas), Multiple Perspectives.

Introduction:

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most well-known modern Indian authors and a renowned English writer. He is a pioneering postmodern author whose work explores a variety of topics, including colonialism, migration, globalization, environmentalism, cultural identity, and the interplay between history and memory. Through the creation of subjective and personal history, he reconstructs the past. With sociocultural and historical significance, his works depict the difficulty of cultural displacement and geographic adaptability. The modernist perspective of history is subverted and contradicted by postmodern historiography fiction, which places the postmodern study of fact and fiction apart. Published in 1986, *The Circle of Reason* is his remarkable debut novel. Nachiketa Bose, a skilled weaver from a small Bengali town, is falsely accused of being a terrorist in this vibrant and enchanting tale. Due to the shape of his large, bumpy skull, he is given the nickname 'Alu,' which translates to 'potato.'

As a masterful writer, Ghosh gives justice to each character. Each character he creates has a backstory, a past, and a present. By giving them love, attention, and vitality, he brings them to life, making them genuine and lifelike. Another postmodern aspect of this novel is that it begins in the present and occasionally shifts back to the past. This story stands out due to its theme, which breaks away from traditional writing conventions. The novel's vivid and magical storyline reflects a paradox that conveys postmodern unease. With this innovative work, he introduced Indian fiction to a global audience, pushing boundaries in language, content, and style. The novel takes readers on a journey through the three stages of human life, symbolized by Satwa (Reason), Rajas (Passion), and Tamas (Death). Each phase represents a different aspect of existence. Satwa embodies the quest for wisdom, Rajas the life driven by passion, and

Tamas signifies destruction and evil. The book unfolds through three interconnected stories centered around distinct characters.

In postmodern literature, the reader is essential to understanding the reimagined history. This type of literature emphasizes subjective experiences, moving away from the external world to explore inner awareness. Ghosh brought history and his diverse life experiences together through his narrative style. Through magic and irony, he creates ideas, characters, and analogies. Like Derridean analysis, it is an example of a life devoid of a central figure. *The Circle of Reason* is written in the style of magical realism. He attempts to depict India's cultural contact with Egypt and the Gulf States in the west. The novel presents history as a collective memory, stating that everything that occurs in the present is influenced by what happened in the past.

Using allusions to sewing machines, phrenology, the cult of cleanliness, textile mills, migration routes, money and filth, Ghosh attempts to connect the disparate tales. The interaction between fictitious and historical characters is the most challenging aspect of writing a historical novel. The main theme of a historical fiction is a significant political movement, conflict, or upheaval. The Indian subcontinent's split was the most important historical event. In all of his writings, he treats history differently than historians do. These works of fiction focus on history in a more lively and understandable manner, engaging the reader in ways that go beyond history.

The circle in the title of the novel symbolizes history as a collective memory that conveys a reciprocal interaction between the past and present. Ghosh names the three sections after the three gunas, Satwa, Rajas, and Tamas, which he derives from the Bhagavad Gita. Each portion of the novel is governed by one of these gunas. The author blends Western and Indian characteristics. Since "reason rescues man from barbarity" is the motto of rationalist society. According to Balaram, "reasons don't belong to any nation, and science doesn't belong to any country." They are part of the world's history. For him, weaving is also rational since it has always been a part of history and has connected people from all over the world.

The Circle of Reason tells the tale of colonialism's displacement of people and the development of western culture. The central theme of this book is the conflict between disappointment and despair. One of the novel's postmodern methods is that historical events and episodes are not presented in chronological sequence. The past is communicated through the present. Because of the connections between the past and present, historical events come to life. Ghosh is able to adapt his works to the demands of history. In his two novels, *The Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*, he provides striking indications of many facets of the Nationalist movement. He depicted the various facets and evolving phases of Indian civilization as well. Urbanization can lead to feelings of alienation and isolation. The universe of Indian English-language "political novels" is vast and vast. Every social and political issue is covered. Every social issue is intimately related to a political issue.

The period of British colonialism of India is the main focus of the narrative. Through Balaram, Ghosh examines the lingering effects of the Raj's educational practices on post-colonial India. In this book, Ghosh makes the case that science, technology, and machines were not transferred to India in a one-way fashion by the British but rather underwent a complex series of cross-cultural exchanges, translations, and mutations. No country has the right to claim reason. They are part of the world and history [p. 54]. One of the novel's main themes is reason. Balaram, Alu's foster father and uncle, is a fervent advocate of scientific reason throughout the first section. The scientific rationale is questioned throughout the entire book.

In his work, Tabish Khair references Foucault's idea that what reason perceives as necessary or the various forms of rationality presented as essential can be understood as historically contingent. This doesn't imply these forms of rationality are irrational; rather, it means they are rooted in human practice and history. Since these forms were created, they can also be undone. The idea that science is shaped by history and society is explored in the novel through the contrasting depictions of two scientific groups that Balaram admires. One is mainstream science, exemplified by Louis Pasteur, and the other is the so-called pseudo-scientific practices that history has often dismissed. While Balaram is portrayed as a rationalist and believer in science, he often acts in ways that contradict reason. His fascination with Pasteur's work and the Rationalists' society embodies what Ghosh refers to as "A Pasteurized Cosmos" (p. 35). The metaphor of man at the loom highlights humanity's potential to shape its world. The loom becomes a symbol of cultural and historical unpredictability. Balaram reflects on weaving as a cultural practice that transcends national

borders, acknowledging the violent and exploitative history behind every piece of cloth (pp. 57-58). The loom symbolizes both unity and division within humanity; sometimes bringing people together, other times separating them. The novel centers around the evolving concept of reason, suggesting it as a materialistic demand and a tool for practical intelligence in everyday life.

Conclusion:

Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* challenges traditional historical and rational narratives through postmodern techniques, presenting history as cyclical and fragmented. By exploring themes of migration, identity, and the limitations of Western rationalism, He critiques colonial legacies and highlights the interconnectedness of cultures. The novel's non-linear structure and symbolic elements invite readers to reconsider the nature of history and identity, ultimately advocating for multiple perspectives in understanding the world. Thus, Ghosh is a superb author in the new English-language Indian literary genre, where contemporary novels set against historical backdrops reveal deeper cultural insights. Reading his historical fiction allows readers to comprehend the past on a more profound level. His work reshapes historical fiction while offering a profound critique of modernity and colonialism.

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