
**AMITAV GHOSH'S PSYCHOLOGICAL SEQUENCING IN SEA OF
POPPIES**

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DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.7474>**INTRODUCTION**

Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* explores the inequalities and struggles in political, social, cultural and economic realities during 19th century of Indian trade in the world. The lives of the migrants who works in the Opium trade in the *Ibis* and their endangered lives with multicultural connection with undecided destinies on the sea. Ghosh presented this novel implying where narrative technique complexity between colonial structures and Indian social hierarchies, displacing, ill-treatment, disrespect, unrecognised behaviour and identity formation. Even though the novel holds different layers of the point of views, to unravel the hidden meaning and facts which carries both fiction and reality, psychological sequence is discussed in this paper.

This paper will discuss how significant roles and characters shaping the understanding by characterisation. by Gosh. And also, the study examines the psychological point of views both internal and external psychological sequencing viewpoints in Sea of Poppies. Ghosh reveals colonial hegemony over Indian labourers with different stylistic techniques, such as anxiety, memories and aspirations of the characters contradicting the ideological colonial rule. The analysis demonstrates that how psychological point of view is used to mould characters and present their narrative voices, thematic depth, and artistic complexities. And the magic in writing is how Gosh is going to integrate psychological viewpoint with a historical reality. Amitav Ghosh creates a multi-layer approach where his psychological sequencing challenges readers' engagement in critical narration combing with the issues such as colonialism, migration, justice, and human resilience.

METHDOLOGY

Leech and Short (2007)'s narrative viewpoint "psychological sequencing" developed the Uspensky (1973) model is chosen for the analysis. Fowler and Uspensky's Internal and External viewpoint are also discussed in this analysis. The extracts are taken in this study are from Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*'s passages which are chosen by the author to narrative this technique. The study adopts the qualitative analysis approach in Cognitive narratology. The data primarily sourcing from Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* from the selected passage, which are exclusively illustrating narrative technique, psychological sequencing. This analysis is conducted based on the close reading of the text, with the multiple perspectives and shifting personalisation to represent the experience of colonial subjects. The emphasis made on cognitive policy and the study investigates how the internal psychological sequence, how the readers are understanding characters' roles, thoughts, emotions, memories, and also perceptions. The analysis explores the narrative viewpoints are exposed with the structures of power, subjugation and negotiations under the British colonial rule.

Theoretical framework:

Psychological Sequencing:

The keen observation shows that when the story is told from a fictional point of view, the most important sequencing factor is not objective chronology, but psychological sequencing. In the more or less standard formula of fiction, readers follow the fictional point of view of the detective until the end. The psychological sequencing occurs, 'where textual order reflects the order in which impressions occur in the mind' (Leech and Short 2007). Uspensky deliberates that there are two types of narrations in general, which he sketches as follows:

"When an author constructs his narration, he usually has two options open to him: he may structure the events and characters of the narrative through the deliberately subjective viewpoint of some particular individual(s)'s consciousness, or he may describe the events as objectively as possible."

(Uspensky 1973)

Among the above two categories he opts the first term as 'internal narration' and the second is 'external narration'. In addition to these two, he illuminates some alternations and combinations in between of these two categories which are thinkable in a work. The narrative distinctions between the internal and external narration of Uspensky became base to the base for Fowler's (1996) typology of narration.

Internal Narration: Uspensky and Fowler, the term ‘internal narration’ used to denote to the account of narrative events from within a specific character’s consciousness, either with that character captivating on the narrator role or by a narrator assuming an omniscient viewpoint, capable to enter the inner states of the character. This category is characterized by what Uspensky (1973) terms *verba sentiendi* - verbs of thought, feeling and cognition.

External Narration: External narration happens when the minute events of a story are presented from the outside position of any specific character’s consciousness, so exclusive of any thoughts or feelings that character may experience. And further, Uspensky divided it into two types. The first one among of these two is the ‘objective’ presentation of events as they happened, without comment or evaluation from the narrator - an example from Hemingway’s *The Killers* (1928):

“Nick opened the door and went into the room. Ole Anderson was lying on the bed with all his clothes on. He had been a heavyweight prize-fighter and he was too long for the bed. He lay with his head on two pillows. He did not look at Nick.”

(Hemmingway, 1928)

Perceptions are linked to the internal point of view, as can be seen in the following definition by Uspensky:

“In this kind of description, we find revealed the internal processes (thoughts, feelings, sensory perceptions, emotions) which are not normally accessible to an external observer (...).”

In the external narration the second one is Fowler’s type D. It is different from the first in that and it does deal with and account of opinions and the impressions of the narrator. Based on the usage of non-fictive expressions that are estrangement of words, metaphors and comparisons, it is characterized (Fowler, 1996). These indicators also can be the features of internal narration; as an example, here, one character focuses on another, and speculates the internal state of that character. Therefore, they are also generally understood as indicators of a limited viewpoint, whether it may be character or narrator. Fowler used an example to demonstrate type D of external narration. This example is in use from Arnold Bennett’s *Riceyman Steps*. It also is taken in the narratorial description of a character’s external appearance and the assumptions made based on this description.

Analysis of *Sea of Poppies*

“how could he conceive that she would go to a place which was, for all she knew, inhabited by demons and pishaches, not to speak of all kinds of unnamable beasts? How could he,

Kalua, or anyone else, know, that it wasn't true that the recruits were being fattened for the slaughter?" (SOP 205)

In the above passage Ghosh uses **Internal Psychological Sequencing point of view** to describe the fear and threat of the living, with "all she knew, inhabited by demons and pishaches" and "How could he, Kalua, or anyone else, know, that it wasn't true that the recruits were being fattened for the slaughter?". Ghosh narrated the interior monologue with the help of cognitive tool **Internal Psychological Sequencing point of view** to address the terrific situation of fear and strange in the above passage. The multiple perspectives and plurality of voices give Ghosh a wider scope of analysing and comprehending the incomprehensible and enigmatic colonial syndrome, the material reality out of which filters down the character's life resulting in anger, shame, revolt, transformation and sometimes loss of identity and loss of self.

"The temptation that afflicts those who bear the burden of governance,' said the judge, 'is ever that of indulgence, the power of paternal feeling being such as to make every parent partake of the suffering of his wards and offspring. Yet, painful as it is, duty requires us sometimes to set aside our natural affections in the proper dispensation of justice . . ." (236)

The point of view is presented in the above passage with ideological point of view of Neel and Judges characters in the attitudinal textual discourse. The style of the narration is presented with the complex omniscient narration of internal psychological sequencing point of view. Ghosh visualizing in the above passage with the ideological point of view and psychological sequencing to understand the judge's attitude towards Neel with ambience character. Here, should understand the importance of the ideological point of view to understand the judge's hidden meaning beyond the spoken line.

Here, Ghosh gave a hint to readers to understand the lines in between of **subaltern treatment**. His ideological point of view divides the text into two sections that one is colonizer "The temptation", "the burden of governance" and "duty requires us sometimes to set aside our natural affections". If the judge is colonizer as Englishman, Neel must be a colonized as an Indian. Ghosh uses these cognitive ideological and psychological point of view techniques to give complex and depth of the narration in this novel. The reader should understand at his/her level personal experience or knowledge over the British rule in India.

The judge further gives his point of view by giving all sorts of arguments:

"But we see no merit whatsoever in the contention that men of high cast should suffer a less severe punishment than any other person; such a principle has never been recognized nor ever

will be recognized in English law, the very foundation of which lies in the belief that all are equal who appear before it . . .” (238)

Ghosh used **descriptive pause** to serve the intensity and warmness of the scene in the court from 235 to 238 pages supporting the judge as a common man. She says, “high cast should suffer a less severe punishment” “English law” and “all are equal who appear before it”. Though these phrases breed the positive meanings, the Indian readers will not find beauty in psychological frames of their minds. The ambience of the judge was narrated in the same court scene one moves to the next passages and finds simultaneously the passages.

Moving forward with different focalizers there are passages in the novel when the narrator very beautifully throws light on the writer’s views on narrative craft and strategies with **Psychological Sequencing Point of view** in the narrative comments from the outside of the text and story. It is very rare in fiction. It is a challenge to readers to understand the viewpoint of the narrator. Unless the keen observation vast knowledge over narratology and reading abilities with pleasure, will not be possible. When **Ah Fatt tells Neel about his past life**, the following comment by omnipresent narrator indirectly presents Ghosh's views on art of story-telling:

“It was not because of Ah Fatt’s fluency that Neel’s vision of Canton became so vivid as to make it real: in fact, the opposite was true, for the genius of Ah Fatt’s descriptions lay in their elisions, so that to listen to him was a venture of collaboration, in which the things that were spoken of came gradually to be transformed into artifacts of shared imagining.” (375)

In the above passage readers can see the cognitive tool **Psychological Sequencing Point of view** /Birds’ Point of view narration where the author or character has the power of seeing things without knowing by live characters. Here Ghosh’s comments on the past life of Ah Fatt expresses “It was not because of Ah Fatt’s fluency that Neel’s vision of Canton”. This passage clearly suggests the authorial presence commenting on the art of story-telling. When an artist creates some work of art, imagination is at work to make it more convincing. The actual challenge of description is not to describe things chronologically. The writers should suggest and leave some gaps so that readers play an important role in filling those gaps. It is this great joy to discover the unspoken and incomplete things that are involved in the reading process of all masterpieces.

Ghosh uses the **chronotope** of journey in *Sea of Poppies* which commences with Deeti’s vision of a vessel. In the end of the novel, she is seen on this very ship entangled in the mid of her fateful journey towards Mauritius. In the space or more concretely the distance between these two points, the story of so many other characters—Neel, Zachary Reid,

Paulette, Kalua, Jodu and Baboo Nob Kissin are narrated. The first section ends with the beginning of the new life of Deeti, the second section ends with the beginning of the new life of Raja Neel Rattan and the third section ends with the new fate of all the characters of the novel.

In **chapter two** from page 27 to 38, the story goes both in present and past focusing on Deeti's life. Here, though the **speed is decelerated** to narrate her past yet unrevealed secrets of her past life—the truth of her **first night** and the **real father of her daughter** Kabutri. Ghosh presented her past with External **Psychological sequencing viewpoint, the omniscient narrator** recollecting her past “When Deeti was her daughter's age, things were different: poppies had been a luxury then, grown in small clusters between the fields that bore the main wintercrops – wheat, masoor dal and vegetables”. (29)

From page 39 to 52 the narrative focuses the major characters—Neel (his wife, his son, his mistress Elokeshi and his father, the old Raja) and later on shows Zachary, Mr. Doughty and Serang Ali conversing about Raskhali. The **narrative moves both in present and past**, shifting back in time to unveil Neel's life. External **Psychological sequencing viewpoint, the omniscient narrator** recollecting his past “Neel Rattan Halder was a devout upholder of inherited traditions: for over a year now” (39, 40) and “Neel had but recently come into the title, having inherited it upon his father's death two years before: he was in his late twenties, and although well past his first youth” (41) and further discuss the his past of marriage and suspense of his father death in readers minds, “Like others of his ilk, Neel had been betrothed at birth to the daughter of another prominent landowning family; the marriage had been solemnized when he was twelve, but had resulted in only one living child – Neel's eight-year-old heir presumptive, Raj Rattan.” (41)

Pages from 235 to 240 describe Neel in court, the charge of forgery and the judge's verdict against him. The narrative pace here is extremely slow, vividly presenting the comments of the judge and the mental state of Neel. Ghose used **psychological sequencing viewpoint** to narrate the situation and status of both the characters of Neel and Judge in these pages. The whole scene, in descriptive mode, defines in great detail both the arguments and one-sided judgement of the judge on one hand and Neel's physical, mental and psychological state on the other. There is a flashback here when Neel remembers his past in stream of **schematic viewpoint**.

Pages 277 to 285 present a detailed commentary on migrants' shifting to Baboo Nob Kissin's newly built depot. In the journey the situation is changed after reach the pulwar from the ship. People who are travelling in this ship are detailed with **external Psychological sequencing**

viewpoint of men and woman “In the men’s section, with its greater press of numbers, there was a good deal of jostling and pushing and not everyone was able to find a desirable vantage point; the women were luckier – with two windows to share between them, they were all able to look at the shorefront as the city approached.” (273) After reaching their destination they feel as if they are released from jail. Readers will experience the pain of these people and their broken relationships with the family and kinsmen.

CONCLUSION

Amitav Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies* demonstrated his master cognitive and narrative techniques to showcase the complexity of colonial society in 19th century and the human experience from the Indian side. Amitav Ghosh effectively capture the fears, aspirations, memories, and struggles of his characters using the internal and external psychological sequence techniques along with ideological point of view, descriptive pauses and omniscient narrations. His strategies lead the readers towards understanding broad in social and political realities of British colonialism. The novel is written in multiple layers in the perspective of shifting focalisation to reveal the tensions between coloniser and colonised Power and subjugation, tradition and transformation.

The characters such as Deeti, Neel, Ah Fatt and migrants, the Ibis experience, the diverse experiences like displacement, oppression, and self-discovery. Meanwhile Amitav Ghosh with his style of psychological sequencing, not only deep in the characterisation, invites readers to participate. The process of meaning-making by filling cognitive narrative gaps and also interpreting implicit ideological positions. In his style of writing chronotope serves as a powerful metaphor for transition, migration and configuration of identities. Finally, you can see that past stands as a significant example of contemporary historical fiction where the narrative form and cooperative perspective work together to illuminate the complexities of colonial history, human consciousness and cultural encounter.

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