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## Endorsement of Human Values in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

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This paper is an attempt to present women sufferings due to lack of human values in Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies*. Most of the literature written in the world so far sings of man's joys and sorrows rise and fall in the world. Of late interests of woman and her welfare have drawn international attention and a feminist chore is audible worldwide. Rebellion against tradition, established practices of society, scheme of God's controlling the universe; anything which baffles human efforts has been a typical note of modern writing. Humanism or the supreme interest of man is the central motif behind all such writings particularly contemporary Indo-English fiction. The human values in a community or any geographical area bring forth its identity in the society, and this way this novel presents a miserable plight of women through the characters as Deeti, Munia, Sarju, Heeru. In fact, Ghosh wants to show the evils of Indian society or the false conception of Indian society about women. All women characters in *Sea of Poppies* show the real sufferings of women either by their family or by their society.

In Shakespeare's view ever since creation of God man is regarded as the supreme being on the planet, next only to God, the paragon of animals, a strange piece of work. His interest in the universe is considered paramount although discoveries of modern science have brought about a great change. Some people consider him divine and his suffering and primordial fall from heaven have aroused protest and rebellion. Most of literature written in the world so far sings of man's joys and sorrows rise and fall in the world. Voices are raised against segregation and differentiation at various points. Of late interests of woman and her welfare have drawn international attention and a feminist chore is audible worldwide. Rebellion against tradition, established practices of society, scheme of God's controlling the universe; anything which baffles human efforts has been a typical note of modern writing. Humanism or the supreme interest of man is the central motive behind all such writings particularly contemporary Indo-English fiction.

Among "the big three" novelists of Indo-English fiction, in Mulk Raj Anand humanism acquires a socialistic and realistic concern, in R.K.Narayan it has social and artistic color, in Raja Rao it acquires metaphysical and philosophic garb. In Bhabani Bhattacharya it retains social and realistic color and in Arun Joshi it takes an existential form. In Kamala Markandaya social concerns acquire a Hardian note. In Anita Desai, humanism centers round the revelation of human psyche and sufferings particularly of women caused by psychic and emotional disharmony. In Shashi Deshpande humanism acquires cultural and also spiritual overtones. In Arundhati Roy there is a clear note of feminist preoccupation with psychological and romantic

notions of repression and fulfillment of the ego and the result. Many rebellious tendencies against social and religious practices and institutions are notable.

The Indian English novel is a unique amalgamation of Indian content and western form. It is an integral part of Indian reality being deeply rooted in the Indian soil. The Indian English writers in the post-independence period started turning away from the past focusing their attention now on contemporary issues. The cleavage of the country on religious, political issues, communal riots leaving millions of people either dead or homeless even after the colonial rulers had left, poverty, social injustice, class inequality-all these along with the rapid industrial and technological development created an atmosphere of general distrust and resulted in superficial existence of man.

According to Shashi Deshpande, a woman novelist of the younger generation, woman as the female human species is to play a servile role of waiting, and not doing things of her own accord: "Wait until you get married. Wait until your husband comes. Wait until you go to your in-law's home. Wait until you have kids" (Agrawal 123). She can be angry only with her destiny and no human being. The Partition provided a number of Indian English novelists the basis for their fictional experiments. Some of them took such national experience as a theme, while others took the partition indirectly, as a background to their personal narratives or human values. The horrors of partition with its throes and predicaments have been the content of Indian English writers and we can find out the wounds and scars of partition still fresh in the hearts of people even after several decades. The religious madness with racial hatred and separatist politics have transformed man into beast when human values were recklessly thrown to the winds men become homeless, lonely and alienated and stranger to their background. But even in the stormy night of bloodbaths, people maintained their notes of brotherhood and love. Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies* has a beautiful amalgamation of humanistic values and nature. Through the women characters of his novel Ghosh shows the real picture of human society.

In Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* the action begins in March 1838 with the arrival of the Ibis (ship) at Ganga Sagar Island and later Calcutta. With the abolition of slave trade, the schooner is scheduled to transport girmitiyas or indentured coolies - to Mauritius. Caught within the dark web of the empire's history is a mixed cast of characters for whom the Ibis is a projection of the uncertainties of their lives and the routine at home. On the Ibis communities of sorts begin to form among the migrants. Relationships are forged or broken, hostilities erupt and individual destinies undergo sudden change of direction. The novel attempts a picture of migration blessed by the British; the villagers were forced by Britishers to cultivate opium on their fields this trade brings utter starvation and poverty to the villagers. Ibis is an awesome human cargo. Every passenger has a secret to preserve and a fantasy to pursue, like Deeti married off to a hopeless opium addict, drugged and violated on her wedding night by his brother, bullied into the ritual practice of suttee and rescued from the flames by the loyal massive Kalua, whose cross-caste elopement starts a manhunt the length of the Ganges. Neel a dreamy cultured Bengali Raja whose honor, extravagancy and financial naivety leads him to bankruptcy, trial, shame and sentence of deportation as the British who dined at his table seeks to grab his land. There are also other women characters in the novel those are forced by their family, society to migrate from one place to other.

Through the story of these migrant characters Ghosh wants to show the condition of women in our society. In *Sea of Poppies* Ghosh presents a purely humanistic perspective emphasizing the human sufferings, illiteracy, poverty, hunger, money, agricultural scandal, physical scandal, drugs, degradation caused by nature, famine, fate and chance, society, the universal forces etc. The crop of opium was the livelihood of Deeti and her neighbors at Ghazipur, in colonial India. 1830's is a pivotal year in the annals of the opium trade when Ghosh's story so vividly begins. Poppy farming was considered a perfectly legitimate line of agricultural work, especially by the businessmen who consider it so profitable and the Ibis transports both drugs and outcasts to far flung corners of the world. Deeti and all the other village farmers of Ghazipur, some fifty miles east of Benares were forced by the Britishers to cultivate opium in their fields.

In the very starting lines of *Sea of Poppies* we find the falls superstition of caste-system in old times which is miserable for the poor people and hurt their feelings which they cannot express. Hukam Singh was going to Ghazipur opium factory where he worked; he had been wounded in the leg while serving as a sepoy in a British regiment. He was waiting for the ox-cart which takes him to the factory. Kalua, the ox-cart driver arrived: "Kalua, the driver of the ox-cart, was a giant of a man, but he made no move to help his passenger and was careful to keep his face hidden from him: he was of the leather-workers' caste and Hukam Singh, as a high-caste Rajput, believed that the sight of his face would bode ill for the day ahead" (*Sea of Poppies* 4). Deeti was a wife of a crippled young man Hukam Singh. One day Deeti was working in the opium field. Chandan Singh, Hukam Singh's younger brother also working in the opium field where he saw Deeti.

A slack-jawed youth with a brood of five children of his own, he never missed an opportunity to remind Deeti of her paucity of offspring. Ka bhail? he called out, licking a drop of fresh sap from the tip of his instrument. What's the matter? Working alone again? How long can you carry on like this? You need a son, to give you a helping hand. You're not barren, after all... (*Sea of Poppies* 5-6)

Here we find that how in our society poor, miserable women are treated by their relatives and society. Deeti was married to Hukam Singh an afeemkhor. In the day of her wedding night Deeti finds that his husband is a serious afeemkhor. So to reduce the pain of the night she accepts the offer of her husband i.e. taking some opium. In the next morning she finds that her purity has been exploited by someone. When she asked her husband about that night: "He nodded and gave her a drowsy smile. He said yes, everything was as it should be. You gave proof of your purity to my family. With heaven's blessing, your lap will soon be filled" (*Sea of Poppies* 35). She lay on her pillow trying to remember what had happened but was unable to retrieve any memory of the latter part of the day. After some time her mother-in-law appeared by her bedside; wreathed in smiles, she sprinkled blessings from a container of holy water, and murmured, in a tone of tender solicitude: beti everything went exactly as it should. What an auspicious start to your new life! Her husband's uncle, Subedar Bhyro Singh, echoed these blessings and slipped a gold coin into her palm: Beti, your lap will soon be filled - you will have a thousand sons. Deeti had some suspension about her pregnancy but it is her fate which forced her to live with her husband.

Deeti tried a few stratagems to break him from the spell of his pipe, but all to no avail: it was pointless to withhold opium from a man who worked in the very factory where it was processed; and when she tried hiding his pipe, he quickly fashioned another... Deeti was forced to conclude that he could never be a husband to her, in the full sense, either because his injury had rendered him incapable, or because opium had removed the inclination...When she tried to question her husband he spoke with pride about the consummation of their wedding...Deeti think was it possible then that her own stupor had also been arranged, by someone who knew of her husband's condition and had made a plan to conceal his impotence, in order to preserve the family's honor? (*Sea of Poppies* 36)

Deeti knew that her mother-in-law would stop at nothing where her sons were concerned: all she would have had to do was to ask Hukam Singh to share some of his opium with his new bride; an accomplice could have done the rest. Deeti could even imagine that the old woman had actually been present in the room, helping to roll back her sari and holding down her legs while the deed was done. As for whom the accomplice was, Deeti would not allow herself to yield to her first suspicions: the identity of her child's father was too important a matter to be settled without further confirmation. Deeti knew to confront her mother-in-law would serve no purpose: she would tell her nothing and spout many lies and soothing reassurances. Yet everyday offered fresh proof of the old woman's complicity - in nothing more so than the look of proprietary satisfaction with which she watched over the progress of the pregnancy; it was as if the child were her own, growing in the receptacle of Deeti's body. In the end, it was the old woman herself who provided Deeti with the impetus to act upon her suspicions. One day, while massaging Deeti's belly, she said: "And after we've delivered this one, we must make sure there are more - many, many more" (*Sea of Poppies* 37). It was this throwaway remark that revealed to Deeti that her mother-in-law had every intention of ensuring that whatever had happened on her wedding night would be repeated; that she would be drugged and held down, to be raped again by the unknown accomplice. Deeti has a seven years daughter kabutri whom she cares very much. Looking down on her daughters dreaming face, Deeti smiled and decided that "She wouldn't wake her after all: in three or four years the girl would be married and gone; there would be enough time for her to work when she was received into her husband's house; in her few remaining years at home she might as well rest" (*Sea of Poppies* 5). Deeti herself was not more than a girl when she was married to Hukam Singh and suffers much from her married life. Here a concept of early child marriage is clear which is miserable for the girl child who is unknown about the world and its sufferings.

Due to Hukam Singh's ill health Deeti first brought in an ojha to exorcize the house and when this produced no effect, she consulted a hakim, who purveyed Yunani medicines, and a vaid who practised Ayurveda.

The doctors spent long hours sitting at Hukam Singh's bedside and consumed great quantities of satua and dalpuris; they dug their fingertips into the patient's stick-like wrists and exclaimed over his pallid skin; they prescribed expensive medicines, made with gold foil and shavings of ivory, to obtain which Deeti had to sell several of her bangles and nose-rings. When the treatments failed, they

confided secretly that Hukam Singh was not long for this world, one way or another - why not ease his passage by allowing him a taste of the drug his body craved? (*Sea of Poppies* 154)

After this incident she had all responsibilities of the house. She sold opium to the factory and purchased every house goods. For Kabutri's sake she agreed to place the impression of her thumb on the seth's account book in exchange for six months worth of wheat, oil and gurrh. She asked seth about the yearly interest. The seth's answers took her breath away; "His rates were such that her debt would double every six months; in a few years, all the land would be forfeit. Better to eat weeds than to take such a loan: she tried to return the goods but it was too late. I have your thumbprint now, said the seth, gloating. There's nothing to be done" (*Sea of Poppies* 156). On that day while sold opium to the factory Deeti found that her husband had taken much advance than she had thought so she had some money to spend. It is not enough to feed a child. Deeti forget Kalua's fare and the word of Deeti's plight filtered across the fields to Chandan Singh, who appeared at her door with a sackful of nourishing satwa. Deeti as for her daughter's sake could not refuse to take satwa. This gave Chandan Singh an opportunity to enter in the house and flirt with Deeti.

He was entering he would brush his hand against her thigh. Sitting on his brother's bed, he would look at her and fondle himself through the folds of his dhoti; when Deeti knelt to feed Hukam Singh, he would lean so close as to brush her breasts with his knees and elbows. His advances became so aggressive that Deeti took to hiding a small knife in the folds of her sari, fearing that he might attack her, right on her husband's bed...He said to Deeti; listen to me, Kabutri-ki-ma. You know very well how your daughter was conceived - why pretend? You know that you would be childless today if not for me. (*Sea of Poppies* 157)

He nodded dismissively at his brother's bed it is the only truth. Hukam Singh couldn't have done it then any more than he can now. It was he; no one else. And that is why he says to her: wouldn't it be best for her to do willingly now what she did before without her knowledge? Her husband and he are brothers after all, of the same flesh and blood. Where is the shame? Why should she waste her looks and her youth on a man who cannot enjoy them? Besides, the time is short while her husband is still alive - if she conceives a son while he is still living, he will be his father's rightful heir. Hukam Singh's land will pass to him and no one will have the right to dispute it. But she knows herself that as things stand now, his brother's land and his house will become him on his death.

Jekar khet, tekhar dhan - He, who owns the land, owns the rice. When I become master of this house, how will you get by except at my pleasure? This is what I say to you, Kabutri-ki-ma: why not do willingly now what you will be compelled to do a short while hence? Don't you see that I'm offering you your best hope for the future? If you keep me happy, you will be well looked after. (*Sea of Poppies* 157)

There was a part of Deeti's mind that acknowledged the reasonableness of this proposal - but by this time her loathing of her brother-in-law had reached such a pitch that she knew she would not be able to make her own body obey the terms of the bargain, even if she were to

accede to it. Following her instincts, she dug her elbow into his bony chest and pushed him aside; baring just enough of her face to expose her eyes, she bit the hem of her sari, drawing it aslant across her face. She said to Chandan Singh what kind of devil, can speak like this in front of his own dying brother? Listen to her words: she will burn on her husband's pyre rather than give herself to him. Hearing Deeti's words he remarks:

He said words are cheap. Do you think it's easy for a worthless woman like you to die as a sati? Have you forgotten that your body ceased to be pure on the day of your wedding? He said big-big words. But don't depend on me to stop you, if you try to make yourself a sati. Why should I? To have a sati in the family will make us famous. We'll build a temple for you and grow rich on the offerings. But women like you are all words: when the time comes, you'll escape to your family. (Sea of Poppies 158)

Finally Deeti decides to die a celebrated death than to be dependent on Chandan Singh or even to return to her own village, to live out her days as a shameful burden on her brother and her kin. The more she thought about it, the more persuasive the case - even where it concerned Kabutri. It was not as if she could promise her daughter a better life by staying alive as the mistress and 'keep' of a man of no account, like Chandan Singh. Precisely because he was her daughter's natural father, he would never allow the girl to be the equal of his other children - and his wife would do everything in her power to punish the child for her parentage. Deeti think that if she remained Kabutri here, Kabutri would be little more than a servant and working-woman for her cousins; far better to send her back to her brother's village, to be brought up with his children - a lone child would not be a burden. Deeti had always got on well with her brother's wife, and knew that she would treat her daughter well. When looked at in this way, it seemed to Deeti that to go on living would be nothing more than selfishness - she could only be an impediment to her daughter's happiness.

The beautiful picture of motherhood is shown to focus on human feelings as women love their children so strongly they will go through anything to help them, we can compare Deeti's maternal instincts to Toni Morrison's central character Sethe in *Beloved*. Sethe maternal instincts lead her to kill her own child, and almost lead to her own self-destruction. But contrary to Sethe, the misfortunate woman Deeti finds safety of her child before deciding to her self-immolation. "When the boat sailed away, with Kabutri in it, it was as if Deeti's last connection with life had been severed. From that moment she knew no further hesitation: with her habitual care, she set about making plans for her own end" (Sea of Poppies 159). Thus a innocent, poor, woman was forced by her relatives to commit suicide but Kalua an ox-cart driver saves her life as God and she flees with him and starts a new life.

Surprisingly, the nineteenth century was also a patriarchal society and the definition of woman in it was incomplete without the fulfillment of authority and sexuality of a male. Women's blind obedience and their sexual harassment could be easily traced in the works of the Victorian writers. Women were not given equal rights, equal opportunity and equal education:

“Man for the field and women for the hearth:  
Man for the sword and for the needle she:  
Man with head and woman with the heart:

Man to command and woman to obey;  
All else confusion” (Tandon 170)

On the Ibis Deeti took Sarju's untouched food back to the main deck and found that Kalua squatting under the devis and sat down beside him. As she was listening to the sighing of the sails, she became aware that there was a grain lodged under her thumbnail. It was a single poppy seed: prising it out, she rolled it between her fingers and raised her eyes, past the straining sails, to the star-filled vault above. On any other night she would have scanned the sky for the planet she had always thought to be the arbiter of her fate – but tonight her eyes dropped instead to the tiny sphere she was holding between her thumb and forefinger. She looked at the seed as if she had never seen one before, and suddenly she knew that it was not the planet above that governed her life: it was this minuscule orb—at once bountiful and all-devouring, merciful and destructive, sustaining and vengeful. This was her Shani, her Saturn. When Kalua asked what she was looking at she raised her fingers to his lips and slipped the seed into his mouth. She said, “Taste it, it is the star that took us from our homes and put us on this ship. It is the planet that rules our destiny” (*Sea of Poppies* 452). Here we see that Deeti looked at the poppy seed and compared it to Shani who ruled her fate. Being an uneducated poor village woman she was wholly depend upon her fate.

Here we find that how the drugs (opium) reacts upon human beings. Opium degrade their moral values and important to those who wants money and also forget their misery of life and sadness of their fate. On the ship Zachary Reid and the captain’s conversation clears that how opium is useful to reduce the pain of any person and also a beautiful gift of nature. When captain offers opium to Zachary, he said that it is not his business then captain says:

In these waters it's everyone's business and it'll be yours, too, if you intend to continue as a seaman: you'll be stowing it, packing it, selling it . . . and I know of no salt who doesn't sample his cargo from time to time, especially when it's of a kind that might help him forget the blores and bottom-winds that are his masters of misrule. (*Sea of Poppies* 435)

The captain told to Reid that a man’s not a sailor, if he doesn’t know what it’s like to be becalmed in a dead-lown, and there’s this to be said for opium that it works a strange magic with time. To go from one day to another or even one week to the next, becomes as easy as stepping between decks. It was a gift like none I’ve ever known. And like all the gifts that Nature gives us - fire, water and the rest - it demands to be used with the greatest care and caution. There are some, of course, who know with their first taste that they will never leave that smoky paradise - those are the true addicts and they are born, not made. The captain said that I take it for my ills. He tells Reid the most miraculous property of this substance is:

“It kills a man’s desires. That is what makes it manna for a sailor, balm for the worst of his afflictions. It calms the unceasing torment of the flesh that pursues us across the seas, drives us to sin against Nature...” (*Sea of Poppies* 436).

The effect of drugs on human beings is clear which spoils the life of human beings and made them addict. On the Ibis every women were suffering either by their fate or by their family. Ratna and Champa were sisters married to a pair of brothers whose lands were contracted to the



opium factory and could no longer support them; rather than starve, they had decided to indenture themselves together - whatever happened in the future, they would at least have the consolation of a shared fate. Dookhanee was another married woman, travelling with her husband: having long endured the oppressions of a violently abusive mother-in-law, she considered it fortunate that her husband had joined in her escape.

Deeti too felt no constraint in speaking of the past, for she had already imagined, in fulsome detail, a history in which she had been Kalua's wife since the age of twelve, living with him and his cattle in his roadside bier. And if called upon to account for the decision to cross the Black Water, she would blame it all on the jealousies of the pehlwans and strongmen of Benares, who, unable to beat her husband in combat, had contrived to have him driven from the district. There are some stories that returned again and again: for example, the tale of Heeru's separation from her husband was told so many times that they all felt as though they had lived through it themselves. It had happened the previous year, at the start of the cold season, during the great cattle mela of Sonepur. Heeru had lost her firstborn and only child the month before and her husband had persuaded her that if she was ever to bear another son, she would need to do a puja at the temple of Hariharnath, during the fair.

Heeru knew, that a great many people went to the mela, but she was not prepared for the multitudes that were assembled on the sand-flats of Sonepur: the dust raised by their feet was so thick as to make a moon of the midday sun, and as for cattle and other animals, there were so many that it seemed as if the river's banks would collapse under their weight. It took them a whole day to make their way to the gates of the temple and while they were waiting to enter, an elephant, brought there by a zemindar, ran suddenly amuck, scattering the crowd. Heeru and her husband ran in opposite directions, and afterwards, when she knew herself to be lost, she falls prey to one of her bouts of distracted forgetfulness. For hours she sat on the sand, staring at her fingernails, and when at last she bethought herself to go looking for her man, he was nowhere to be found: it was like searching for a grain of rice in an avalanche of sand. After two days of fruitless wandering, Heeru decided to make her way back to her village - but this was no easy matter for there was a distance of sixty kos to be covered, and that, too, through a stretch of country that was preyed upon by ruthless dacoits and murderous thugs: for a woman to embark on that journey alone was to invite murder, or worse. She got as far as Revelganj and decided to wait until she encountered relatives or acquaintances who might agree to take her with them. Several months passed during which she sustained herself by begging, washing clothes and carting dust at a saltpetre mine. Then one day she saw someone she knew, a neighbor from the village; she rushed towards him, in delight, but when he recognized her, he fled, as if from a ghost. At length, when she managed to catch up with him, he told her that her husband had given her up for dead and married again; his new wife was already pregnant. At first Heeru was determined to go back and reclaim her place in her home - but then she began to wonder.

Why had her husband taken her to Sonepur in the first place? Had he perhaps intended to abandon her all along, seizing any opportunity that arose? Certainly he had berated and beaten her often enough in the past: what would he do if she returned to him now? (*Sea of Poppies* 243)

So she refuses the idea of going back to home and joins the ship as indentured coolie. It is since the beginning of the civilization that the biological difference has enabled the males to affirm their status as sole and sovereign subjects; woman's place in society is always decided by men; at no time of history has she imposed her own law. She owns nothing and therefore woman does not enjoy the dignity of being a person. She herself forms a part of the patrimony of a man: first of her father and then of her husband. The Koran proclaims: "Men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence and also because they furnish dowry for women" (Tandon 169). The veiled Muslim woman is still a kind of slave-slave to both, the man and the man-made 'burqa'. The Jews of Biblical times had much the same customs as the Arabs. The patriarchs were polygamous.

Munia's story was apparently the simplest of all: when questioned about her presence on the pulwar, she would say that she was on her way to join her two brothers, who had both left for Mareech some years before. If asked why she wasn't married she would say that there was no one at home to find a husband for her, both her parents having recently died. Deeti guessed that this was not all there was to this tale, but she was careful not to pry: she knew that when the time was right, Munia would tell of her own accord. After sometime Munia told Deeti that it was about a man from Ghazipur, a pykari agent from the opium factory. While visiting their village, he had seen her working at the harvest and had made it his business to pass that way again and again. He had brought her trinkets and baubles and told her that he was besotted with her - she had full trust on him as she was open-hearted and believed everything he said. They had started meeting secretly, in the poppy fields, during festivals and weddings, when the whole village was distracted. She had enjoyed the secrecy and the romance and even the fondling, until the night when he forced himself on her: after that, for fear of public exposure, she had continued to do his bidding. When she became pregnant, she assumed her family would cast her out or have her killed, but miraculously, her parents had stood by her, despite the ostracism of their community. But they were people of desperately straitened circumstances - so much so that they had had to sell two of their sons into indenture, just to make ends meet. When Munia's child was eighteen months old, they had decided to take the baby to the agent's house - not to threaten or blackmail, but just to show him that he had given them another mouth to feed. He heard them out patiently and then sent them back, saying he would provide all the help that was needed. A few days later some men had stolen up to their dwelling, in the dead of night, and set it on fire. It so happened that it was Munia's time of the month, so she was sleeping away from the others, out in the fields: she had watched the hut burn down, killing her mother, her father and her child. After that, to remain in the district would have been to court death: she had set off to look for the duffadar's pulwar, just as her brothers had done, before her. After hearing Munia's story Deeti asked to Munia:

Deeti says: Oh you foolish, dung-brained girl! How could you let him touch you...? Munia sighed- You won't understand. I was mad for him; when you feel like that, there's nothing you won't do. Even if it happens again, I'll be helpless, I know.

Deeti cried: What are you saying, you silly girl? How can you talk like that? After all you've been through; you must make sure it never happens again.

Munia: Never again? Munia's mood changed suddenly, in a way that made Deeti despair of her. She giggled, covering her mouth with her hand. She said would

you stop eating rice, because you broke a tooth once, on a kanker? But how would you live...?

Deeti began to scold: Shh! thoroughly scandalized, be quiet, Munia! Have a thought for yourself. How can you prattle so loosely? Don't you know what would happen if the others found out?

Munia said, making a face: Why would I tell them? I only told you because you're my bhauji. To the others I won't say a thing: they talk too much anyway...  
(*Sea of Poppies* 245)

It is clear that a poor, uneducated, unknown about her physical violence and after it her future, a foolish village girl Munia easily violated by a clever person who destroyed her life and separate himself from her. Through the story of Munia Ghosh also wants to show that how in India the society or the village people punished the family and the poor girl instead of punished the clever young man who destroyed her life.

Sarju was the oldest among the women on the ship. Back in her village, near Ara, she had been a dai, a midwife, but a mistake in the delivery of a thakur's son had caused her to be driven from her home. On her lap lay a large cloth bundle, over which her hands were protectively clasped, as if to safeguard a treasure. She was an opium addict and in her bag there was opium which she gives to Deeti before her death. So we find that opium was the cause of her destruction which leads her destiny.

Paulette Lambert, an orphaned French girl hides and runs away from her benefactor, Mr. Burnham who takes her into his household and then exploits to fulfill his sexual desires. Aspiring to lead a new life, Paulette joins the Ibis under the guise of a Brahmin's daughter. However Paulette emerging as a bold and courageous woman, Paulette represents the women of today who do not believe that women are inferior beings and must remain passive and submissive. Instead she gives a tough fight against the established order and comes up with new concepts of gender identity. Her character shows the conventionally considered unfeminine qualities like courage, independence, intellectual energy, rationality and ambition along with feminine qualities. She has free will to do a difficult work and she is self-determining woman who struggles to obtain selfhood by overcoming hardships, inculcating the strength to survive with dignity and analyzing her problems rationally. She refuses to surrender before anxieties, indoctrination, social conditioning and resultant oppression. Amitav Ghosh through the character of Paulette presents the picture of an extremely courageous woman who faces the problems of her life boldly and also manages to come out of them. Her courage and confidence is evident in a conversation with Zachary whom she requests to allow herself to join the crew. "Paulette repeated, that is my request to you: to be allowed to join your crew, I will be one of them: my hair will be confined, my clothing will be as theirs...I am strong...I can work..." (*Sea of Poppies* 307).

All the societies of the world have phallogocentric, oppressive and discriminatory attitude towards women, irrespective of her color and class. Unfortunately, sin against women begins in the uterus of the woman-the place of genesis. The young daughters-in-law in their twenties or thirties are required to produce babies with phallus only. This attitude of society, more so of women, has caused an increase in the member of female foetal deaths in the past twenty-five

years. The ritual murder of the new-born girls is not an obsolete phenomenon. The infants are smothered even today with sand bags or with their mother's placenta.

The social system "which enables men to dominate women in all relation is known in feminist discourse as patriarchy" (Tandon 170). God has bifurcated sex into male and female whereas man has named in the sex and the fair sex or the superior and the inferior or the first and the second sex. The gender inequality has created unlawful male authority over women. The chief tasks of women were childbearing, rearing, and to satiate every desire of their husbands. This confinement of women made them mere servants of the superior sex. Education is one big question that haunts Amitav Ghosh. According to Amitav Ghosh education is memorization of facts at one level. It is a tool to get a livelihood. It sharpens human sensitivities. It kindles social consciousness in children. Education uplifts living standards of Indian masses and save them from nightmarish depths of poverty, ignorance and disease. Thus we find that through the women characters of his novel *Sea of Poppies* Ghosh wants to focuses on the evils of Indian society or the falls conception of Indian society about women. All women characters in *Sea of Poppies* show the real sufferings of women either by their family or by their society. All the human sufferings are the impediments on their way of success.

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