



# BRUTAL LESSONS OF LIFE ARISING OUT OF DEPENDENCIES PORTRAYED IN “SEA OF POPPIES” BY AMITAV GHOSH

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**Abstract-** Dependency starts as soon as life begins. Each and every person is dependent on someone or something arising out of need, love, respect etc. Being a new born child, one has to depend on parents for their physical needs. From the age of 5-20 years, children have to again depend upon them for their educational, medical and financial needs. One has to depend upon society for existence from all grounds. This dependency loop is the main source of life, which pushes people beyond boundaries with its brutal command and one has to obey the command with heads down in their entire life. One, who tries to revolt against their dependent authorities, life plays a cruel role in bringing them to their knees. The classic example arising out of blind belief and dependency is shown by writer Amitav Ghosh in his novel *Sea of Poppies*. It is not only that the poor people are subject to difficulties, the rich also come face to face with problems. When a rich person turns poor, the situation is more horrible and subject to many kind of harassments and one has to do many compromises in life. Deeti, one of the protagonist in the novel *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh, had surrendered her life to her husband and is dependent on him for herself and her daughter's life. The death of her husband turns her life upside down. Neil Rattan Haldar, another protagonist in the novel *The Sea of Poppies* goes through such a tough time and struggles to come out of it. This research is an eye opener to people, who are living their life on dependency loop. Everyone have to become independent up to maximum extent and not blindly believe on anyone, even if they are their near and dear ones, like their family members or friends.

**Key words-** Life lessons, Dependency, Blind belief, Amitav Ghosh, Sea of Poppies, Deeti, Neil Rattan Haldar, British Rule, British Trade, Ruling Kingdom, Opium, Opium Trade.

## 1. Introduction

Most of the people are fascinated with the rags to riches stories and the struggle associated with it. But only few are aware about the pain of riches to rags. The people, who face this kind of situation are subject to physical, financial, mental and emotional pain, which is beyond imagination. Many of them try to end their life upon facing this kind of situation. There are only a few like, Neil Rattan Haldar, in the story of *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh, who have the courage to fight against it with submission. This is the journey of a King, who is turned into a slave due to betrayal of a English businessman on financial grounds. Finance is the lifeline of every human being and if it is strong, then one can lead a comfortable life, but when the financial condition worsens, uncomfortable situations and needs pop up in life, which is difficult to be faced.

The pathetic journey of innocent people is very painful. It breaks them down emotionally to an extent that they stop believing in positivity in life. Their mind is filled with negativity and they start to live their life on complete dis-belief. This trend is not good for the society. Situations of difficulty is like a sour medicine in the life of people, which they have to drink for their better future. Every struggle in life is a stepping stone for a better future. Our life is a combination of all the struggle that our ancestors have done till date and one has to continue the legacy for their next generation.

Dependency comes from colonialism. Whenever a country is invaded by outsiders and they take control of its people, it is a bitter experience for the host nation. Rulers have always tried to impose their own culture and tradition on others, which may be contradictory to someone's existing practices. In this case, a conflict arises, but due to colonialism, many people are bound to obey the orders of the rulers. India was ruled by British for many years and it was a black period for the people under them. Rule is not only over the land or people, it is about the domination on the ideologies, culture, traditional practices, belief system etc. These are the roots of a human being, which is observed by them from the childhood. Hence, when they are tied with dependency loop of invaders, the soul is severely affected.

## 2. Life of protagonists in *Sea of Poppies*

Two of the main protagonists in *Sea of Poppies* are Deeti and Neil Rattan Haldar. One, from a poor family with barely any financial assets and the other, a king from a royal kingdom. Life does not bother about rich or poor; when the hammer of dark fate falls on anyone, they have to face the wrath of it. People have to confront with their fate, which leads to indefinite solutions. Situations of dependencies make people cry in many points of time in their life. Pathos are generic to both male and female. Each of them have their reason for suffering in adverse situations.

Deeti is a house-wife, belonging to a poor labour family, who did not even have sufficient money to repair their old roof of their home. Her husband was opium addicted and was not caring towards her and his daughter. The difficulty of life does not end here, but begins with the death of her husband. A widow is seen by most of the men with erotic feelings that makes her subject to humiliating situations. All the feelings, expectations, fantasies, dreams, desires of a good future takes a toll on a woman, who loses her husband at a young age. *Sati* system was prevalent during those times, where a woman had to be burnt alive with the corpse of her husband. She had surrendered herself to the society whom we are depended on, who decided to make her a *Sati*. But, fate comes in her way in form of Kalua, who takes her away from the burning base and promises her a good future. She had to leave behind her small daughter and move away because the society would not let her alive, if being caught. The last words of Deeti's small daughter asking her mother "Please bring me bangles when you return back" bring tears in the eyes of a helpless mother and the readers of the novel. Her journey towards an endless hope begins on the ship *Ibis* which is ready to take her to the ugliest and darkest part of Mareeach where her life is destined to be a slave in exchange of a handful of food only.

Neel Ratan Haldar, is the *zamindar* of Rakshali. He belonged to a family of wealthy people, who trade money with businessmen and earn profit. One of the traders, Benjamin Burnham used to borrow money from Neil's father and trade with it. He used to give them a share of profit after the business. Neels' family became depended on Benjamin and apart from the profit also started to borrow money from him, which they expected to be deducted from their further share of revenue. Everything was going fine till Benjamin's business was in flourishing trend. A time came, when

Benjamin started suffering losses and began to look more source of funding.

Benjamin asked for his return of loan from Neel, but Neel instead had expected money from Benjamin to continue his legacy in his kingdom. Seeking no ways of getting money from Neil, Benjamin offered him to surrender all his properties instead. He even threatened to pursue legal action against him if he refused to obey his wish. Neel is accused of forgery by Benjamin and was arrested, depriving him of all the luxuries he had, and was sent to seven years of jail in Mauritius. Blind belief and dependency again hit hard on one of its believers, which is the hard reality of life. Neel's wife and son was taken care of by one of his servants. The last words of Neel's wife was "Do not die" nailed in the hearts of Neel, which was going to pierce him every time he thought of surrendering his life to humiliations. People living like a king have often ego related issues and cannot take up humiliation even to a smaller extent. This is the test of Neel ahead to survive the dark side of his life.

### 3. Opium Trade

Dependency on rulers is one of the concern, but apart from that there are many other dependency loops, where people get addicted. One of them is the Opium, which mesmerizes people and make them realize about a false satisfaction and relief. This has destroyed and ruined many life and their families. People accept opium as a remedy for the hard work and take it as a medicine or relaxation methodology, but the least do they know that they are killing their intelligence of mind to a false happiness. Opium is made out of the Poppies planted on illegal basis in rural places, forest etc. They were openly grown and traded across nations. This drugs not only make people dependent, but also makes a hollow in the nation. People become careless, lazy and even turn into criminals for acquiring these drugs.

Suddenly, China decided to put a ban on drugs in a very serious manner in its country. The immediate consequences were not comfortable because people from top to bottom were associated with the opium trade. The big traders would incur heavy losses, middle men would lose their livelihood commissions, government officials would lose these bribes and eventually the consumer will become medically unfit for some time due to habitual problems related with drugs. Once things become

dependent, it is difficult to live with it and it is much more inconvenient to live without it.

Habits become very strong if they are practiced for a long time. There are many drug rehabilitation centers created by governments, NGOs etc. to help in bringing the addicted people back to normal track. Dependency on bad habit, bad people, bad rulers will ruin the life of people in long term. Good education, motivation and living with positive people will help in creating a good independent individual who is self-reliant and becomes an asset to a growing nation.

### 4. Life after disaster

After escaping from the cremation ground, Deeti tried to find a companion in Kalua and expected to live her remaining life with him. The decision was hard, but she did not have any choice of her own. She had faith in God that one day a new sun will rise in her horizon and bring all happiness to her. Working hard for income is different from being a slave to someone. People like Deeti are very determined, hardworking and loyal and they deserve to be rewarded in the same manner. But, destiny decided to take all her hard work and give them pain in return, by giving them an offer of slavery in return of a loaf of bread. The dreams, desires and fantasies are all shattered in their soul for entire life. She heads forwards towards a sunrise, which is full of uncertainty to her.

Life after being betrayed by Burnham was too difficult to handle. He was arrested, deprived of all his financial assets, property, family and humiliated in all ways. "Forgerer" word was engraved on his forehead. He was forced to live with a roommate in jail, who was completely in filth. A man who lived like a King from all his childhood was suddenly made a slave under the order of a ruler and that too, without any fault. This hurts more to a person that a guilty one. Whenever people depend on other blindly, fall into this type of trap. Ancestors, all along, educate their wards to be alert and not to trust anyone blindly. Only the people who are trusted blindly know the secrets to betray, else outsiders have less or seldom chance to cheat anyone.

### 5. Sail along with fate

A King is considered to be a king if he inherits the qualities related with his position. And no doubt, Neel had it inside him. Readers of the novel expected him to be broken and shattered. But, in

return Neel took charge of the situation and instead of running away from difficulties, tried to solve it. He cleans the filth of his roommate, Ah Fatt. He does all the physical work like a labor and turns an ugly looking man into a good condition. This is called a responsible person. Even though dependency defeated him, his independent ideologies and determination laid the stepping stone for him to raise in his life on his own foot. This is a lesson to every youth who considers luxury as the ultimatum and difficulties as a curse. But, difficulties, in disguise make people strong in such a way that they are ready to defeat even the toughest battle in their life.

Deeti, too, decided to sing the song of life as and when the situation demanded to her. These kind of people never think to end their life upon facing disaster, but stand forward strongly to defend themselves. The situation in the ship, *Ibis* was completely unhuman, where people were stuffed like livestock in the basement of ship. They were lashed to their back for keeping the ship in movement. The life of those people through the words of book itself looks very painful. People go along with it and live their life in this world. Independent people can create a castle of their own anywhere and at any time like a bird builds its nest after a storm.

## 6. The invisible horizon

Life becomes more difficult, if the end horizon is not even visible. This was the condition of Deeti and Neel in the story of *Sea of Poppies*. They were unsure about their future, whether they will be able to overcome their difficulties in life and lead a normal one which they were used to. This is the real test of a human being. This kind of situation occurs in day to day life also, where a family prays for good marks of a child, marriage of their child, recover out of a disease etc. Some of the situations in life are beyond our control and have to depend on time and fate to get over it.

Breaking the chain of dependencies is the only option to get near the horizon. Dependencies will keep people in tact in a single place and does not allow them to move ahead. Free people can explore more happiness in life rather than those who are locked in the situations of life. Positivity is one of the most important tool in people's mind which keeps them on their toes even in the adverse conditions of life. Walking, crawling, leaping and running are various activities performed according to the need of life to maintain a balance and lead ahead with consistency. Invisible horizon slowly appears with a sunrise after the last sweat of the body is exhausted.

An achievement once in the life of people remain with them for all the generations to come. Freedom fighters, fighting for nation to break the dependency chain of British were jailed many times and humiliated under various conditions, but today these Freedom Fighters are regarded with highest respect in the nation. This is the reward for breaking dependency loop of foreign rulers.

## 7. Conclusion

The brutal lessons of life in adverse situations is a golden nugget in the journey of people's life. These lessons give them strength, power, patience and determination to face the world with confidence. Positive people do not bother about others ideologies and move ahead in life for their prosperity and spread happiness to others. A line has to be drawn to end the dependency on others and become self-dependent. People have to focus on giving more to the society rather than taking from others. No ruler can rule a place for a longer time, if there is a power of revolt burning. It is seen in the history that all of the nations who were invaded by foreigners had to leave that country after a certain period of rule. This is a lesson for people that difficult times or tough times never last, but tough people do. This is shown in the characters of Deeti and Neel in *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh. Even though it is a fictional story, but it reflects the period of many countries, whose people were once in this kind of situations. Nevertheless, they acquired victory or not, it is their saga, which remains immortal in minds of people and history, which is sung from time to time to instill confidence in young children. This small research aims to acquaint people with the disadvantages of dependencies and the remedies to cope up with it.

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