

SEEKING THE SELF : A STUDY IN AMITAV GHOSH'S THE SHADOW LINES

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ABSTRACT:

Amitav Ghosh is considered as one of the eminent modern novelists in English. The problem of alienation plays a vital role in his novels. His characters offer struggling with identity crisis and quest for freedom. They are mean and menial. In his novels, historical memories account for the concept of freedom and its connotations in this disillusioned world. His quest and alienation leaving pervasive thinking. Thus, Amita has investigated the meaning of freedom for us in his novels.

Keywords : *Quest for freedom; Alienation; Contrasting culture; Existential problems.*

Amitav Ghosh, an outstanding novelist has tried to examine the impact of alienation in his characters. His characters, are visible struggling with identity crisis. His *The Shadow Lines* depicts an effort to make us free from customs and orthodoxical relations. As a creative artist, he has approached three generations and two contrasting cultures for the readers. He faced during the rioty of 1984. *The Shadow Lines* has a vivid picture of the culture divide, common struggle and misunderstanding lead to a state of crisis in India. It is a line between people and nation that is an illusion before us. It is a depiction of a family who live in Dhaka before partition of India. They have to shift in Kolkata. The novel has two divisions—*Going Away* and *Coming Home*. Here the novelist tries to understand the various nuances and meaning of political freedom. Owing to nuances we have to disillusion again and again.

The story of the novel reveals refugees from East Bengal to cross path with the prices from London including a history of the two world wars—Indian Independence and the Hazratbal incident, Srinagar. The novelist has tried to present the impact of politics on the lives of ordinary people. Mr. Tresawson goes through Asia before setting in Kolkata; Tridib, the child narrator's cousin goes to London for his post-graduate studies during war. Illa, the narrator's cousin moves to London. Illa has dreams of being married with Nick Price. After that Nick's elder sister accepts Tridib's invitation to India as she was in affair with him. This plan gets fiasco to concretize as Tridib got a tragic death to save the incantious English woman. Thamma, the narrator's grandmother has glorified political freedom and she opposes to Illa. In this way, she is independent from the western cannon.

The second section of the book reminds us the narrator as a chronicler. He has tried to understand the partition and political freedom of India. Here we get different viewpoints of nationalism and political freedom emerging through characters. In one hand, political freedom corresponds with the social order but on the other its perspective leaves man's urge for freedom against the conventions. In addition to political freedom, other concepts of freedom are also prevalent here.

To, Ghosh, the grandmother thinks that Illa's yearning for freedom is to lead a life without any constraints at morality. Like a child. Illa yearns to identify with other girls and

boys in the intellectual school. In school, she is a victim of racism. Owing to racism, she has to face the emotional trauma. In this circumstance, she tries to establish herself in the west. She loves Nick Price but she hears of Nick's infidelity and rejects him.

Broadly speaking, we get an inference that the novelist conceives the images of freedom here. The political identity, the social identity and the psychic identity of any individual are not reparable. It is only with the realization of the space of individual's expectations. The novel offers the depiction of the violence and crude barbarity. In this connection we get a good remark about the novel :

The Shadow Lines takes in the was devastated London... East Bengal and the riot hit Calcutta and embodies a major critique at the psychological make-up at contemporary man that thrives on violence. (Taneja, 309)

Tridib appears as the central charcter of the novel. He is the narrator's uncle who is also a very skilled storyteller. As an adult, he is the only one in his family to get an international job. He also tells the narrator's stories about the year. The novelist has presented him :
Tridib..., who had given me worlds to travel in and eyes to see them with.

(The Shadow Lines, 22)

The Shadow Lines captures perspective of time and events, of lines that bring people together. Here lines are clearly visible from one perspective and nonexistent from another. The novel appears very ingenious and we get an eminent remark about the novel

The Shadow Lines received great acclaim, despite its challenging style. It is not a book that can be rea quickly or haphazardly, given the Narrator's tendency to switch cities, years and sometimes even decades, all in the same paragraph. But read carefully, the novel is an ingenious, occasionally frustrating resting strucutre-much like memory itself.

(The Shadow Lines Summary, Supersummary.com)

Significantly Tridib watched may price as a little boy. By the time, he meets may in India in 1962. Having met to him, Tridip realizes may concretely with all excitement. In this way, we find that the narrator's close interaction with may who accompanied Tha'mma, Maya Devi and Tridib to bring his grandmother's uncle Tethamoshai from Dhaka to Calcutta. The novel demonstrates the mingling of people across international borders and the narractor's jig-jag journey.

Certainly *The Shadow Lines* keeps many cannotations. It is the author's commentary on the aritificial nature of cultural, ideological, geographical and psychological borders that represents us to disregard in favour of boader humanism. The narrator is nameless but the novelist enters as a research scholar in the book.

Work Cited :

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