



Amitav Ghosh' The Shadow Lines as The widened Wings - A study on the Mosaic of Emotional Elements

KEYWORDS

social milieu, identity quest, women suffering and humanism

B.Arokia Lawrence Vijay

Assistant Professor of English, Kumaraguru College of
Technology, Coimbatore-641049.

Dr. M. Leelavathi

Assistant Professor and Head, Postgraduate and
Research Department of English, LRG Government
Arts College for Women, Tirupur 641 604.

ABSTRACT

The best medium that reflects the society, the changing dimension of human beings consciously and unconsciously and the manifestation of the social order is obviously a novel with no doubt. Novelists portraying such ideal reality, certainly occupy a distinctive position in the literary arena. Being a renowned anthropologist, author, travel writer, essayist teacher and novelist, Amitav Ghosh occupies one of the most dominant and the prominent place in Indian Writing in English. His works carve a deep impact within the reader. The Shadow Lines, the second novel pictures lives of people before and after independence along with the effect of partition. This research article aims at portraying the novel as a blend of multiple themes as the exact picture of the social milieu, sustained identity and quest for identity, women as the strength in building others and humanism.

Introduction

Amitav Ghosh' all literary work has gained highest recognition not only amongst the general public but also in the academic field all around the globe. This recognition has fetched a numerous constructive literary criticism which motivates more people to rely on his fiction. The Shadow Lines, the second novel of Amitav Ghosh has won the Sahitya Akademi Award. The title of the novel can be considered as one of the most philosophical title and has multiple ideas to convey that *The Shadow Lines* does not mean the shade alone whereas the struggle and the strength that all human beings have in their life with light and darkness. This research article aims to bring out the multiple genres and themes. Many consider man as the weakest creature in the world especially women. Amitav Ghosh is able to overrule the idea and present man and women as flag bearers of strength and suffering as a major ingredient to life. The novel which is divided in to two parts is given by an unnamed narrator who tells the story of three generations of two families. Ghosh is able to weave all the events and the characters to display exactly the reality of social milieu, strength of women, the search for identity and the identity sustained and also humanism in every individual.

Social milieu: The reality with the soul.

The order of the society is a common phenomenon that exists within the living community and especially as per the status quo recognized and accepted by the community. For example middle class community has a set of unframed or unapproved rules where they believe that those set of rules will govern them to have a happy living and a life of morality. Accepting and believing others are done with the unapproved and the unsaid rules. This ground reality of the social order is often witnessed in the novel. Robi with great opposition disagrees Ila's behavior in the Hotel when she drinks and wants to dance with a business man. Robi makes it clear that girls there never used to behave so. Thamma also disapproves Ila's clothes and looks which is not to the Bengali Middleclass origins.

Tridib, the narrator's cousin very much believed to be very secretive as others never believe because he was a son of a diplomat and to Thamma a wastrel. People around him took the least consideration to believe what he says. Once when Tridib attempted to say about his relationship with the Price family and their daughter May who was studying music at the Royal College of Music, people around him mocked at him and passed unhealthy comments." There was a howl of laughter and a chorus of exclamations: You fraud, you liar, you were just making it all up, you haven't been anywhere . . ." (12). Similarly, Thamma too has a negative opinion on Tridib. She never grants permission to the narrator to spend time with Tridib believing

that the narrator too may go waste by being with him. Thamma believes that Tridib though doing Phd, does not do any proper work and lives on the money of his father. The presentation of all the major characters in the novel stands as a proof in depicting the social reality in particular the middle class community.

Women: The Strength

Amitav Ghosh has taken utmost care and effort to portray all the women characters in spellbound manner as the strongest part than men. The narrator's life is influenced by three major characters, Tridib, Grandmother Thamma and Ila. The narrator's grandmother is an ideal example and personification of strength in women. Her greatest strength is her education and the employment that she has. Thamma's courage as a young woman to support in achieving freedom is a representation of determination and courage. The words that she utters make a strong note on the insight of courage to fight against the British. "I would have killed him. It was for our freedom: I would have done anything to be free." (39). Thamma is seen as a source of strength in the family where she has a good control over almost all the deeds in the family throughout the novel. She did not appreciate the narrator to spend time with Tridib because he is a wastrel, he wastes time in the street corners gossiping with the people gathered there. She wants to spend time very effectively. May price is another example of being courageous at the same time her struggle after the loss of Tridib is the other end of coin but she is able to recover from it. The narrator portrays May more sensitive and humane. Her character is shown totally different from Ila.

Identity: Lost and Gained

The major identity crisis is faced by Thamma. When she is supposed to fill in a form about her nationality, with no hesitation she fills it as Indian but when the part place of birth is to be filled the question of national identity strikes and confusion is the result. Question of identity crisis is the result for Thamma. Narrator has fond memories about Tridib and he is able to create an identity in the narrator. Tridib was a hero to the narrator. The identity and the impact that the narrator gets about Tridib is remarkable. Narrator strongly believes that his cousin is a source of inspiration and motivation and he ensures that Tridib has given much more to go ahead. "Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with" (20). Here, in this novel and in this relationship, the question of identity is viewed in a entirely different perspective. Tridib's identity is seen negative by many but the narrator is smart enough to accept his cousin and creates a positive and a vibrant identity. Ila deliberately question the identity of the culture when she is in the Grand Hotel. A contradict idea of being, comes into argument between Ila

and Robi. When Robi demands Ila to behave as in the culture, Ila retaliates saying "Do you see now why I've chosen to live in London? Do you see? It's only because I want to be free... Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you." (89). All the mentioned identity issues have their own loss and sustainable. Tridib in the eyes of the narrator is seen with full of identity enriched. Ghosh is able to succeed in bringing the multiple perspectives of identity.

Humanism : The Existing Support

Almost all the characters in the novel are offered as mere examples of humanism. Thamma though she disagrees with Tridib because of being idle and wasting time in the streets, she has a humanistic concern towards him. Her fondness for Tridib has its own value and strength. She welcomed Tridib into the house and prepares omelette. "My grandmother would hurry into the kitchen to make him an omelette - a leathery little squiggle studded with green chillies, which would lie balefully on its plate, silently challenging Gastric to battle. This was the greatest sign of favour she could show..." Tridib's death is given in various angles by different people, but the reason for his death is all the concern he had for rescuing Thamma's uncle Jethamoshai. His attempt to save Khali and Jethamoshai has resulted in the brutal murder of Tridib. Khali and Jethamoshai's relationship is also a perfect example of existence of humanism. Jethamoshai once had a great hatred for Muslims get shelter from the same. Acceptance of others as they are is yet another act of humanism in *The Shadow Lines*. May Price' concern for the dog presents her apprehension for treating dog as important and a life.

Conclusion

Brook Taylor in his essay has mentioned that "he acknowledges violence and intercultural strife and the impact it has upon individual human beings, but presents alongside it an optimistic sense of the possibility..." (49). Ghosh has portrayed the setting of the novel extremely well where all the characters are kept on moving and travelling where they encounter with understanding which leads to accepting certain things to a extend. Though the novel moves around the historical perspective and violence, Ghosh has presented the ground reality of relationships, human emotions, their expectations and the outcomes of these.

Reference

1. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal Publisher, 1998.
2. Krishnaswamy, Santha. *The women in Indian Fiction in English*. New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1984.
3. Mishra, Binod. etal. *Indian Writing in English*. New Delhi: Atlantic, 2006.
4. Thieme, John. "Amitav Ghosh." *A Companion to Indian Fiction in English*. Ed.
5. Pier Paolo Piciuccho. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2004.
6. Bhatt, Indira and Nithyanandam Indira. *The Fiction of Amitav Ghosh*. New Delhi: Creative Books, 2001.
7. Dwivedi, O.P. *Fiction of Amitav Ghosh: An Assessment*. Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2010.