

**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE SHADOW LINES*****A.R. Sri Gayathri,<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract**

Amitav Ghosh is a prominent novelist of contemporary Indian English Fiction. Ghosh women characters are unique and they do not come under the term “stereotypes”. He represents women as leading spirits. The women of Ghosh start their life as puppets but they end up with empowerment, courage, and identity. His novel portrays women in a realistic manner. They boldly fight against the miseries of the world like subjugation, widowhood, loneliness, and injustice. Through the women character Ghosh try to explain the emotional world of women and help the readers to understand the feminine sensibility. This paper traces the representation of women in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. This novel is considered as the masterpiece of Ghosh. It is a family saga explains the large span of a period of three generations. It also explains the role of women in the life of the protagonist. Thamma is a revolutionary character, has strong nationalist feelings. She became refugee during the Indo-Pakistan war. Ila is a modern civilized woman with a stubborn attitude and wants to be free from Indian tradition and culture. May is also a revolutionary character in the novel. They are not only revolutionaries but also regenerators of life. This paper pictures how women can be empowered so that they may attain self-reliance in the figure.

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Regenerator, Revolutionaries, Stereotype.

Literature is considered as the mirror of society, it is suitable for Indian Diaspora too. Diasporic writers write in relation to the culture of their homeland and at the same time they adapt and negotiate with the cultural space of the host land. Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta on July 11, 1956, in Bengali Hindu family. Now he was living in New York with his wife Deborah Baker and his children Lila and Nayan. He spent most of his life in other countries. His frequent travels and stay in a different nation has helped him to assimilate the lively hood and characteristic of varied people. He has not left a chance passion his writing where he could fill his gathered experience and expertise. Amitav Ghosh is a prominent novelist of contemporary Indian English Fiction. Ghosh women characters are unique and they do not come under the term “stereotypes”.

He represents women as leading spirits. The women of Ghosh start their life as puppets but they end up with empowerment, courage, and identity. His novel portrays women in a realistic manner. They boldly fight against the miseries of the world like subjugation, widowhood, loneliness, and injustice. Through the women character Ghosh try to explain the emotional world of women and help the readers to understand the feminine sensibility.

This paper traces the representation of women in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. This novel is considered as the masterpiece of Ghosh. It is a family saga explains the large span of a period of three generations. It also explains the role of women in the life of the protagonist. Tha'mma is a revolutionary character, has strong nationalist feelings. She became refugee during the Indo-Pakistan war. Ila is a modern civilized woman with a stubborn attitude and wants to be free from Indian tradition and culture. May is also a revolutionary character in the novel. They are not only revolutionaries but also regenerators of life. This paper pictures how women can be empowered so that they may attain self-reliance in the figure.

Tha'mma, Ila, and May are the major characters. The narrator has a close relationship with these characters. Tha'mma was the strict, disciplinary and brave grandmother of the narrator. She also represents the idealism and enthusiasm in the novel. She also became a widow at the young age of thirty. She was forced to leave Dhaka her birthplace to a culture which later becomes her home. As a disciplinary character, she leads her family with strict rules and regulations. She always feels that time is like toothbrush, "time was like a foot brush: it went moldy if it wasn't used" (TSL 4). Being young the narrator was not able to accept the concept of time in his grandmother's point. According to Tha'mma time is not for wasting, it is for working. Tha'mma is a representation of the ideal woman in which king Solomon in his book of proverbs, chapter 31 describes "the wife of noble character" in verse 27.

Tha'mma was fragile and sharp in her judgments. When she came to know that his grandson went to have a drink she wrote a letter to his principal requesting to expel him from the college for his shameful act. This shows that she strictly follows her rules and regulation. She was a very righteous woman. Tha'mma's life was surrounded by school, students and her disciplinary rules. But after retirement, her life turns towards a new dimension. She had been very careful in using her time without wasting it, but now she finds nothing worthy to engage with. So to escape from boredom and wastage of time she decided to take a new mission of rescuing her aged uncle Jethamoshi from Dhaka who was leaving as a refugee in her ancestral house. She decided to go back to Dhaka her birthplace to rescue her uncle.

When she decided to go to Dhaka she was excited to see her birthplace. When she enters Dhaka she realized that it has become the capital of East Pakistan. Then she understood how alien she had become to her birthplace. She realized that Dhaka is her birthplace and Indian is

her nationality. She was worried to see the people whom she had been willing to sacrifice her life once and there are enemies now. After meeting her uncle in her ancestral house she requests him to leave the place but he not ready to leave the place. The Indo – Pak war starts, during the time of war she lost her uncle. She was brutally broken. Reusing of her uncle and going to Dhaka was her sole plan and so she was responsible for the loss of her blood relation.

Because of huge loss, she cannot cope up with the reality. To save the life his family members she decided to donate her chain with a ruby pendant which she wears the moments of her late husband to the war fund. Through Tha'mma's character in the novel author delivers the most powerful message *that the absurdity of drawing lines which arbitrarily divided people when their memories remain undivided*. In spite of all Tha'mma remains a fine revolutionary character in the novel.

Ila is another important character in the novel. She is a woman of modern civilization, she wants to be free of tradition, of culture, of duties, and of everything. She is very stubborn in nature and lives in her own world. She is a typical portrayal of a modern, beautiful and attractive girl. She dresses like a foreigner and doesn't care about the India tradition. When she feels boring she takes Robi her uncle and the narrator to the night club. She also pretends that the rich guy in her class was her boyfriend. By saying this she triggers the narrator possessiveness and makes him feel jealous for her. She feels the true love of the narrator and his honesty towards love but she fails to acknowledge it. She is also a victim of an inferior complex, so she fails to understand her true self rather she forces herself to accept the illusionary world that she had created for herself.

Ila is a replica of the reality of modern women. Many who are obsessed with western ideologies are torn between 'who they are' and 'who they think they are' just like Ila. Such women constantly battle against their identity crises. Ila, though had traveled to different places failed to proclaim and exhibit the richness of her culture. If only she had done so then she would have been the most striking character. Her character teaches the reality of life –one who misunderstands western ideologies and leads a ruinous and unsatisfactory life. She represents the typical western style woman in a post-colonial female perspective. Ghosh through the character Ila brings out the insatiable desire of Indians to ape western culture that began during postcolonial times and is continued till today.

May is another revolutionary character who gives respect to both tradition and modern culture. May, Tridib's love-across-seas is a unique representation of women. May is a complete contrast to Ila. She lives a very disciplined and humble. May is a complete contrast to Ila. Tridib is madly in love with May for her character is more unique than her appearance. She is simple, sober and humble. The trace of her character is revealed when she awakes her brother Nick Price from the illusion he has created about his business in Kuwait. She is a very

understanding and a compassionate person, she insists Nick be truthful and responsible for his every deed.

May is sensitive and conscious of her actions. All the more she is morally committed to Tridib. Her solitude had taught her the essence of life – Love – and also her feeling of guilt had restricted her to contented living. May looks into the narrator's heart, understands and identifies Tridib's characteristic in the Narrator and finds solace in his arms. Thus May is relieved from the guilt that had constantly been pricking her until the revelation dawned on her that Tridib's death is a sacrifice.

Ghosh's women play an inevitable and integral part of the novel. In the patriarchal society, Tha'mma proves to be a victorious woman of leading an independent life. Ila though seeks refuge in the western culture to be free proves to be chaste and May is more righteous. In a society where women are dependent on men for protection, these women characters daringly decide to be independent and emerge victorious in deciding their future.

In the current scenario, the women are fighting for equal rights at par with men, against subjugation and harassment, Ghosh's revolutionary characters in the novel teach the importance of education and empowerment. The courage to fight for the upliftment of people shows the self –determination and hard work which moves them towards their future. They not only uplift themselves, but they also stand as a role model through their revolutionary attitude. Thus Ghosh creates his women characters as revolutionaries in his novel.

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