



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN AMITAV GHOSH'S NOVEL 'THE SHADOW LINES': UNVEILING THE TRUTH BEYOND SHADOW

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ABSTRACT :

Amitav Ghosh's Partition Novel 'The Shadow Lines' explores gender-based violence against women. The novel critiques patriarchal norms and focuses on silencing of women voices. Gender-based violence against women is vividly portrayed in the novel. Amitav Ghosh has dealt with a complex and minute exploration of identity, culture, history and violence. The main focus of the novel is gender-based violence against women. The novel reveals subtle yet significant portrayals of violence, oppression and marginalization of women. Patriarchal norms, female agency and gendered spaces play a significant role in the novel. Amitav Ghosh critiques the patriarchal norms which instigate gender-based violence against women. Ghosh intends to ring the death knell of gender-based violence against women through the portrayals of powerful women characters like Maya and Ila who strongly stand against male dominance and challenge traditional gender roles and social totem and taboos. Amitav Ghosh's main focus in the novel is the true picture of intersectionality, silencing of women voices and memory and trauma. Ghosh's novel presents a rich and thought-provoking analysis of the gender-based issues surrounding violence against women. The article investigates the novel and explores the true picture of violence against women beyond shadow lines. The article aims to explore the reality of gender-based violence against women and its far-reaching consequences which remain under shadow.

Keywords: *Gender-based violence, Traditional gender roles, Intersectionality, Shadow lines, Patriarchal norms.*

I.Introduction:

Amitav Ghosh is a poet, colonial novelist, essayist and non-fiction writer. He is widely known for his complex and critical exploration of identity, history, culture and social justice.



He deals with historical and cultural context, multiculturalism and diversity, magical realism and experimentation and strong sense of place. Amitav Ghosh's novels are based on historical and cultural context of South Asia, India and Bangladesh. His novels also focus on deplorable condition of women. His notable literary pieces are 'The Shadow Lines' (1988), 'The Glass Palace' (2000), 'The Hungry Tide' (2004) and 'Sea of Poppies' (2008). Ghosh's works critiques the legacies of colonialism and nationalism focusing on the ways in which the mentioned ideologies have shaped today's modern world. The forms of gender based violence in 'The Shadow Lines' are Domestic violence, sexual harassment, forced marriage and displacement of refugee experience. Amitav Ghosh attacks the then patriarchal norms and forms very sensitively in the novels. 'The Shadow Lines' explores the intersections of gender, class and religion. The title of the novel is very significant because the title symbolizes the blurred lines between reality and fiction. It also symbolizes the hidden realities of gender based violence. The novel 'The Shadow Lines' deals with post independence India and partition. The novel focuses on the cruel aspect of partition. Amitav Ghosh talks about the torture unleashed upon women. The novel is rightly called a partition novel. The novel aptly presents the situation of middle class families of the then time. Women characters in 'The Shadow Lines' are very strong. The women in the novel are deprived of various opportunities. This study attempts to explore gender based violence against women in the novel 'The Shadow Lines'.

II. Objectives of the Study: The objectives of this study are -

- 1] To explore women characters in the Shadow Lines.
- 2] To show gender based violence against women.

III . Methodology:

This is an explorative study. Analytical method has been followed for the exploration. The study is based on secondary data. The researcher has followed a critical study of the text. Male dominance on women and gender based violence against women has been explored in the study. Feminist literary theory and post colonial literary theory have been applied in the study. Thematic analysis and examination of the key themes relating to gender based violence have been conducted.



IV. Analysis and Discussion:

Amitav Ghosh has vividly portrayed women characters in distress in his novels. 'The Shadow Lines' deals with male dominance on women and gender based violence against women. 'The Shadow Lines' is a partition novel which very aptly depicts gender based violence against women. The women characters in 'The Shadow Lines' are multidimensional and complex. They play a crucial role in the plot of the novel. The key women characters in the novel are Maya, Ila, Tridib's mother, Mrs Price and Shaheen. Maya, the protagonist's grandmother, is a pivotal character in the novel. Her will power is strong and she is independent women. Maya has experienced the grass root reality of partition of India. Ila, the protagonist's cousin, play a key role in the novel. Her beauty and intelligence are remarkably noticeable. She is struggling women who is found fighting for occupying her own place in the world. Tridib's mother is a kind hearted gentle woman. She plays a crucial role in bringing the protagonist's life in the broad delight of the society. She is the embodiment and expression of comfort, warmth and security. Mrs. Price is a woman who is a British. She marries a Bengali man. She plays a supportive role in exposing the protagonist. She fights to navigate the cultural differences between her own culture and her husband's family. Shaheen plays a significant role in emphasizing the symbol of the changing time. The women characters in the novel appear as women with strong will power and they have capability of making their own decisions. Amitav Ghosh explores in the novel the complex relationships between the women characters and their families. The women characters in the novel are caught between cultures and identities. 'The Shadow Lines' is a description of the trauma and partition of India. 'The Shadow Lines' begins with a mention of Tridib and comes to an end with unfolding the mystery of his violent death during the communal riots in Dhaka. The novel moves round a growing boy who lives in the shadow of Tridib. 'The Shadow Lines' unveiled the truth about gender based violence against women. The novel attempts to bring the truth under shadow to light. Ghosh challenges the patriarchal norms and expectation of the society. The women in the novel 'The Shadow Lines' are found in distress. Amitav Ghosh gives a wide platform for women voices. The women in the novel are affected by gender based violence. It is worth mentioning that 'The Shadow Lines' is a powerful critique of gender based violence against women.

4.1.Portrayals of the Women Characters Facing Gender-Based Violence in the Novel:



Thamma: The narrator's strict grandmother is the pivot of the family and it is very interesting to note that her word is the low in the household. Thamma lives in Calcutta Gole Park where she presides over her family. Through the characterization of Thamma, Ghosh makes a touching comment on people's dangerous life stories. People have lost their spaces- literal, emotional and spiritual because of partition. Thamma spent her life in a joint family in Jindbahar Lane in Dhaka. She was brought up when Indian national movement was acquiring a militant note. She is short-tempered with a deep sense of freedom, proud, stubborn and strong willed. She goes to Calcutta to work as a teacher after being widow. Her memories about her ancestral house in Dhaka are lucidly and vividly passed on as colorful story to her grandson. Thamma is character who becomes victim to emotional abuse by her husband. Her husband is a dominant an unemotional person who takes little care of her wife. She is neglected and abandoned by her family members because of their own interest. She is a patient woman who is coerced to remain voiceless about her experiences and perspectives. Her experiences during the partition of India and its impact on her family are very shocking. Her traumatic and shocking experiences and memory are profoundly interlinked with the exploration of the impact of partition of India. Patriarchal norms perpetuate gender based violence against women like Thamma. Thamma challenges a good many patriarchal norms though Thamma is a strong and resilient woman. She exercises agency and autonomy in her own life. Ghosh in the novel explores intersections of gender, caste, class, religion. Thamma gathers experience of gender based violence. In many cases Thamma's voice is silenced and she remains marginalized in the context of violence and trauma. Thamma's house is a symbol of confinement and restriction. Thamma is trapped by patriarchal norms and social traditions. The garden depicted in the novel wherein Thamma spends much time symbolizes freedom and escape. Partition of India has also a suggestive meaning. It stands for trauma and displacement. However the novel exposes Thamma as a powerful portrayal of gender based violence against woman.

Ila: Ila is the daughter of Tridib's elder brother. She is almost sixteen when she came from India. Ila emerges as a victim of cultural dislocation and maladjustment. She is a Diaspora. That means she is rootless and she fails to connect and cultivate her roots. Ila's cosmopolitanism is superfluous and shallow. She is not particularly rooted in any culture. In Thamma's eye Ila's looks and her clothes are inappropriate to a Bengali middle class origin.



Thamma does not allow her grandson to associate himself with Ila because she regards Ila as a whore. She thinks that her haircut short like a bristle on her toothbrush and her wearing of tight trouser look like a free school street whore. Ila lives in a house in London with a group of people who are activist in various movements. Ila runs to Nick's room and spent in her room whole night. Later on Ila marriage Nick Price as her childhood illusion is founded on the infallibility. Her marriage is a complete disaster. She is fallen in a position where from she cannot explicitly express the facts related to her marriage. Ila's character is very significant in the novel. She gathers experiences and perspectives which are deeply adhered to gender based violence, trauma and memory. Ila becomes a victim of sexual harassment and objectification even her cousin considers her as an object of desire. She falls prey to emotional abuse by her own family members. Her family members do not give priority to her likes and dislikes rather they give heed to their own needs and desires. Independence and freedom of her life are restricted by her family members, she is not free to think freely to lead her life freely. Her choice and decision are pressurized by the elders of her family. Her family controls her life as she is a woman. Ila gathers experience of partition of India and its aftermath. Gender-based violence unleashed upon her life is the result of patriarchal binary. She challenges many ode situations created by patriarchal norms but Ila is a strong minded woman. She maintains situation and leads her life in her own way. The intersections of gender, class and caste depicted in the novel play a significant role to gather experience of gender-based violence. Sometimes, Ila's voice is suppressed and she looks marginalized. The mirror used by Ila in her room stands as a symbol of self reflection and introspection. The photographs of Ila and her cousin symbolize that the complex relationship between family members. The city depicted in the novel stands for modernity and change. Ila is an embodiment of gender-based violence.

Mayadebi: Mayadebi is the protagonist's grandmother. She is a strong and independent woman. She plays a significant role in shaping the protagonists understanding of his family's history and cultural heritage. Mayadebi is portrayed as a strong woman. She faces various challenges through her life. She gathers experiences of the traumatic partition of India. She is deeply rooted in her cultural heritage. She contributes much to pass on the family's history and traditions to the next generation. She is depicted as a complex character with a rich emotional depth. Matyadebi can be treated as a symbol of the enduring power of family and



cultural heritage. The house in the novel stands for family and cultural heritage. The garden in the novel is symbol of beauty and tranquility. Mayadebi has experiences and perspectives which are deeply intertwined with the themes of gender-based violence. Her husband makes her fall in a trap of his emotional abuse. Her husband has no soft corner for his wife. Negligence, disowners are shown to her. Many times remains voiceless under patriarchal norms.

Women characters in the novel are represented as courageous as men since they fight the challenges of widowhood, poverty, injustice, and gender-based violence. All the women characters in the novel are strong and they are revolutionary in spirit. The women characters are portrait as a live give and a leading spirit of the fiction. Ghosh portrays the women and their experiences with sympathetic realization. Amitav Ghosh attempts to explore the emotion of women that help the readers to understand women psychology. His women characters are unique as his women do not go with the term stereotypes. Thamma, Ila, Mayadebi- all are Ghosh's strong women those who are different from other fictional women.

V. Conclusion:

Through the women characters Amitav Ghosh delivered the most powerful message of the futility of creating a nation or state, the absurdity of drawing lines and alarming situation of gender based violence. Amitav Ghosh's women are stronger than other fictional character. 'The Shadow Lines' presents gender based violence in multifaceted dimensions. The women in the novel are not depicted through overt act of brutality. They are presented with subtle cultural, emotional and social dynamic which shape the lives of a women in a patriarchal society. The novel reflects the deep rooted gender inequalities that women face in both personal and public life. Through the women characters like Thamma, Ila and Mayadebi, Ghosh measures the impact of gender-based violence, physical, sexual and emotional. 'The Shadow Lines' is written against the background of shifting political borders. The partition of India is the pivotal event in the novel. The politics of nationalism and national identity dominate much of the text apart from this; Ghosh's attention is concentrated on gendered experiences the women characters gather. Gender-based violence is manifested in the novel through the emotional and psychological torment and torture faced by women. Ila, an



important women character in the novel is found disconnected from the larger narrative of the political change and she confronts with the pressures of societal expectations. She suffers from the confinement of traditional femininity. The patriarchal socio-political context limits women's agency and opportunities. Ila's suffering in the novel is not physical. Her suffering is generated from her internalized societal role which makes her bound to strangle her desires and aspirations. Amitav Ghosh in the novel investigates Indian society during partition and explores the theme of violence through the lens of emotional neglect and psychological manipulation. The tension between the protagonist's aunt and uncle exposes the quiet form of control which stirs personal relationships and collective relationships. Not physical but emotional gender-based violence shapes the lives of the women in the novel. Tridib's mother is presented as powerless under the patriarchal authority. Though strong in mind Ghosh's women in the novel are found vulnerable subject to gender-based violence. Patriarchal structure of the society is the main cause of the gender based violence exposed in the novel. 'The Shadow Lines' presents the women characters as victim to the patriarchal norms and forms. The novel is an exploration of gender based violence. The novel showcases deeply rooted historical political and social fabric of the society. It is very clear from a critical study of women characters that the novel is the illustration of how gendered violence transcends physical harm and extends into emotional, psychological and societal domains. Amitav Ghosh has aptly handled the gender issues and portrays women characters in distress emotionally, culturally and socially. Amitav Ghosh's 'The Shadow Lines' presents women's shift from traditional binary to modern cultural need. Ghosh's women character's in the novel are obviously the victims of gender-based violence but it is to be kept in mind that his women characters are active, rebellious and responsible human beings. They take strong steps to overcome all obstacles in their personal as well in their society life. Ghosh's women in the novel 'The Shadow Lines' definitely suffer from gender-based violence but his women character's are modern and revolutionary.

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