Postcolonialism as Reflected in Amitav Ghosh’s *The shadow lines*

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**INTRODUCTION**

Amitav Ghosh is included among the emerging post independence authors of India who cover a wide range of contemporary issues in their works. He is one of those post colonial writers who express in their works an awareness of the earnest longing, the painful struggle and the hopeless defeat of the populace of the subcontinent in their post independence phase of development while they strive to make a mark in the world. Ghosh was born on 11th July 1956. His childhood was a phase of development while they strive to make a mark in the world. Their heart and soul were colonised perpetually. Even in their post independence period, they have failed to get rid of the colonial values. The fact is that colonialism imprisons not only the native but also their indigenous cultures as well. Now the painful reality is that these nations have got a hybrid culture and are struggling to have an identity. They can neither erase their aboriginal cultured values nor can, wholly cut themselves off time missing events as causing dislocation and migrations which result in hybrid identity.

His second novel *The Shadow Lines* is my topic of discussion which, I will strive to interpret from a postcolonial view point. “The shadow lines is perhaps the first Indian novel in English wherein the memories of Bangal’s cleavage are psychologically explored and given a unique spin in the narrative by interrogating the arbitrariness of cartographic determinations.” The novel revolves around a Bengali family and narrates their past and present experiences which are related to broader national and international concerns. Their lives change entirely as a consequence of Bengal’s Partition and the Pakistan Civil war of 1971 which led to the creation of Bangladesh and it contributed to the second generation of Partition novels. But unlike others novels it does not have a linear plot and travels back and forth in time and spaces. The character belongs to different times as well as diverse nationalities. This Sahitya Academy Award winning novel is set against the backdrop of Swadeshi movement. Second world war, Partition of India and communal rites of 1963–64 in Dhaka and Clacutta. “In an essay published in 1995, Ghosh stated that he got inspiration to write this book from the anti Sikh riots of 84 in the Delhi. He says: ‘It became a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them.’ The narrative of the novel is split in to two parts: ‘Going Away’ and ‘coming home’. The story is about a boy who grows up in...
Calcutta educated in Delhi and then shifts to London, thus witnessing different cultures and social values. His Indian family is closely in connection with an English one the Prince family of London. Silvia Albertazzi judges the novel from post colonial perspective and concludes that it voices almost all postcolonial concerns of our period, namely “the search for identity, the need for independence and the difficult relationship with colonial culture, the rewriting of colonial past, an attempt at creating a new languages and a new narrative form and the use of personal memory to understand past.” The shadow lines witness the uniqueness every “Post colonial intellectual suspicious of his own nationhood has to face the sadness of not having any identity at all.” Ghosh makes use of the 1970s / 808 theoretical vocabulary which ultimately deconstruct the nationalistic identities put forward in opposition to imperialism. Through the character of Tridib the author attempts to represents those millions of individuals who have lost not one but two identities: one the Western identity imposed upon India over 150 year of British rule; and second the post independence Bharat Meta identity construction as a substitute of the Imperial Raj. This sense of lost identity of the contemporary generation is allegorized through the characters of who instead of dinging to their native cultures stive to come on equal terms with the colonizers social values, the result reflects in their split personalities which find solace neither in the native atmosphere nor in the imperialist’s. Ila is one of such characters who devalues her own cultural heritage and strive to be a part of the western world. She proudly narrates about her sexual expsits in London and the freedom it offers. She wears western dresses and dances to the pop music just to make sure that it will guarrantee her social recognition and acceptability in English society. In the process, she shocks her native people particularly the Grandmother by her western dresses and, Robi and the narrator by her awkward behaviour in a hotel in Calcutta, where she wanted to dance with a stranger, when Robi prevents her, she shouts; “Do you see why I have chosen to live in London? It’s only because I want to be free of your bloody culture.”

An another aspect of their mental colonialism is revealed where the colonized populace having an ideal picture of their dictator’s nation. They look forward to it as something very valuable and imitate it to the extent possible, and ever if they get a chance to be close companions of the colonizer or visit their country, they feel obliged. The irony is that they do not comprehend the fact why the western ruled over them for such a long time. Their imprisoned mentality strengthened their ruler and made him superior. But even after so many years of independence the situation remains the same as before. On one such occasion the boys were listening spellbound to Tridib’s description of London. Later he tells the narrator; “If you believe anything people will tell you; you deserve to be told anything.” the fact is that these two cultures cannot be merged. Young generations desires to assess their culture by the slandered of western culture is emhasised in the narrators effort to “size himself up in relation to Nick Price in the mirror.”

An another aspect of postcolonialism us depicted through the grandmother who is anxious enough to secure her grandson from western influences, which she finds in Ila, whom she consider misguided. The grandmother also admires the West for reasons like “its spirit of nationalism, sacrifice and courage.” But on a parallel level she is devoted to her national heritage which she dreams to develop in the coming generation. For the same reason, she encourages her students to cook food of different states of India so that they can feel the rich cultural heritage of their mother country.”

Thus, the “postcolonial identity of marginal groups.” displacement, nostalgia and loss of languages and culture” are the prominent issues discussed by Amitav Ghosh in his landmark novel The shadow lines. To conclude the novel postcolonial understanding of “higher social elites like Mayadebi and Saheb” and people like Ila who still cling to the western culture s. People like Mrs. Price represent a changed attitude of the Empirists, who treats Mayadebis’s husband on equal terms and addressed his as “Saheb”. Similarly, she treats the narrator and Ila as equals and her children May and Nick also feel pleased to associate with Indians. The reality is that the relations are changing gradually between the colonizers and the colonized while the loss of identity of the contemporary generation, its nostalgia, its swinging between two cultures is those aspects of postcolonial India which have been emhasised by Ghosh in The Shadow lines.

REFERENCES