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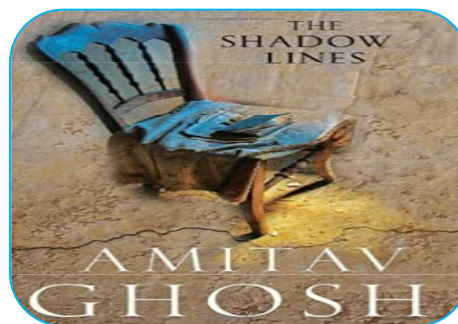
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## THE SHADOW LINES BY AMITAV GHOSH: A BILDUNGSROMAN NOVEL; A STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

*The Shadow lines is a very famous novel by Amitav Ghosh . It is a novel which has multitudes theme into the Partition, Patriotism, Youth versus Maturity and the growth of narrator from immaturity to the maturity. This novel can be called Bildungsroman novel as we find the growth of a narrator's character from his youth to adulthood. If we define the term Bildungsroman, we can call it a novel is dealing with one person's formative years or spiritual years. It is a special kind of novel that focuses on the psychological and moral growth of its main characters, from his or her youth to adulthood. We can cite a number of examples of such novel right from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to this day. Some eminent novelists are Voltaire, Charlotte Bronte, Charles Dickon, James Joyce, Margett Mitchal and Harpedly, there are a few writers to mention in huge work of their novels. We find Bildungsroman used as a technique used in the themes of their novel. In the novel of AmitavGhosh in title 'The Shadow Lines' we find the same technique being used for the plot of the novel. This paper is a humble effort to study 'The Shadow Lines' as a Bildungsroman novel.*



**KEY WORDS:** - Bildungsroman, Critical apprehension, Youth, Maturity, Immaturity.

### INTRODUCTION

The Shadow Lines is a novel by AmitavGhosh. It is a sterling beautiful novel and is considered one of the master piece ever produced by Indian English Writers. The novel is most around the issue of political freedom and the spirit of nationalism but at the same it focuses on the personal experience of the narrator of the story. It is a story of a boy, the narrator, whose name is not disclosed in the novel, the unnamed boy who stays under

the shade of Tridib, and he considers him as an ideal. It is also the story of a person who has faced lot of social and political turbulence. The narrator as eight years old child pursues England Ila and Tridib have done slowly he grows up, his power of understanding enhances, his mental faculty get developed, his mental and intellectual horizons are broadened and extensively deepened as well. At the age of 26 he is able to

realize the truth when he becomes fully mature. In this way, the novel 'The Shadow Lines' is a story that marks the physical and intellectual growth of the narrator. It can, therefore, be called a Bildungsroman novel.

### NARRATOR:

The Shadow Lines is a thought provoking novel which has secured Sahitya Akademi Award by an Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh. In 'The Shadow Lines' novel here unnamed narrator

slowly occupies the maturity in his thought from the immaturity. Hence we can undoubtedly say that his imagination and intellectual understanding was nothing still he tries to remember all things and built out of intricate crisscrossing web of memories of various people. The novel's story begins when the narrator who was eight years old in 1939. His father's Aunt Mayadevi and Saheb (her husband) had gone to England along with his son Tridib. At that time Tridib was 29 years old and looks ancient to the narrator. The narrator explicitly follows Tridib. Sometimes his grandmother refuses to meet Tridib. His grandmother advises him not to waste his valuable time to Tridib. Amitav Ghosh says,

“ I had nothing to go on, I had decided that he had looked like me. But my grandmother, when I asked her, was very quick to contradict me.”  
(Page No. 3, 4<sup>th</sup> Paras. 11<sup>th</sup> line.)

The narrator's grandmother knows that Tridib did not have good work. He always engaged in the story telling. Tridib was wasting his valuable time giving advice whereas he was doing the Ph.D. The narrator does not know about the imagination and did not think about his imagination. But Tridib stands with him and tries to understand about imagination. Being eight years old, he struggles to come closer to Tridib whereas he considers him ancient. Tridib, who teaches the narrator about the imagination and tells him about the stories whereas the narrator did not only hears it but merely looks at Tridib. After hearing it, another imagination is created by Tridib in the mind of the narrator.

Being unknown about imagination his mind develops as psychology and reaches the maturity in thoughts. In such a way the narrator attains the development of maturity in thought which can best be seen only in the Bildungsroman novels. The novel does not only pretend to tell a story of narrative but also built out an intricate crisscrossing web of memories of various people. This maturity of thoughts also discloses the psychology of the mind of the narrator. In the childhood he gets it and this matures in the adulthood. Sometimes we think that it is possible to everyone. The narrator minutely recollects all the small things of the childhood which has been developed in his adulthood.

### **His growth from childhood to adulthood:**

As we know, every child is engaged in playing in the childhood as a child likes to play and hears the story and imitate elder's action as his grasping power is very fast. The Mother plays a crucial role in his upliftment of a child. She convinces him with the help of stories so that knowledge and amusement can both be obtained. But we cannot perfectly say how much a child will remember from all these exercises and how much he will utilize it in the adulthood. As we see in the Amitav Ghosh's novel 'The Shadow Lines' here the narrator remembers all his childhood things. In the childhood his mind has not acquired the maturity but it is accumulated for the adulthood as guiding principles. Although, Tridib realizes him about his imaginations, no clear cut indication we get. Since the narrator made it clear that both himself and Tridib are looking alike, it is a supposition of how the narrator has idolized Tridib and more and more wants him to be like him as far as possible. It is all the more important for the narrator to recognize Tridib at his own age (narrator) irrespective of the truth, though Thamma has denied his opinion. The narrator listens to Tridib in the childhood and recollects all the information whenever he needs. When he went to a particular place, he recollects information which has been said by Tridib. Here we have to understand that the narrator carefully listens in the childhood and implements in the adulthood. He knows nothing before the Tridib. But after the discussion with Tridib, his memory expands very much. We can say that the narrator gets the maturity after some years while he could not analyze in the childhood. It means that he does not get the maturity in his teenage age but he gets in the adulthood. So, it happens only in the Bildungsroman novel. As Amitav Ghosh says,

“ I could not forget because Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eye to see them with, she, who had been travelling around the world since she was a child, could never understand what those hours in Tridib's room had meant to me.”  
(Page No. 22, 2<sup>nd</sup> Para.)

We can conspicuously say that the narrator does not realize about the imagination which was existed in Tridib. But Tridib gives the bulk of imaginations. The narrator sees through the eyes of Tridib. Here we have to understand that the narrator previously remains nothing but experiences about the stories and other places made him perfect. As soon as he contacts to Tridib, as a result of it the narrator's experiences becomes mature. He did not see any place and did not go there. After listening the stories from Tridib, he systematically explains, it seems as if he has personally gone there and has seen it. He listens minutely a world travel story through Tridib and he very sharply mentions it another persons. Here we get the maturity of thoughts rather than previous ones. It means that the narrator has an eligible person to talk about the different topics which have been ascribed by Tridib, whereas he had not attended. Without any travelling in the world, he could reach there, which could be possible only because of Tridib. He taught him how to make use of imagination in his work. No doubt, Tridib was the guide to the narrator.

The narrator knows that his niece Ila was always travelling in it. She availed the benefit of it. Again we can say that the narrator's mind developed in the childhood to adulthood. In the childhood he knows little but as soon as being closed to Tridib he attained perfect maturity of thoughts.

According to Critic analysis is mentioned in the following.

"Tridibi was the narrator's guiding spirit and mentor, who taught him how to use his imagination with precision who gave him worlds to travel in and eyes to see them with."

Amitav Ghosh's 'The Shadow lines' to story of an Indian family, an English family in the transnational day of 1966 ARDHEARDHENDUD. Blogspot.com)

According to critic we can say that he (Tridib) had given him (narrator) eyes to see them with her (Ila) who had travelled across the world since his childhood. The narrator was at a loss to understand what those hours were meaning to him. The narrator always tries to see the world through the story of Tridib. He had very much gained the knowledge of Tridib's story and used it. Being the previous information from Tridib's story narrator always attempts to give his opinion on different issue. He heard it and remembered and after some years in the age of his youth he uses it. Whatever he heard in the past it, resembles in the present where narrator remembers all these things. The effect of the past exists in the present. His full maturity of thought develops in the adulthood. At the age of 25 years the narrator remembers all the information of childhood and it uses or tries to implement in adulthood. In other words whatever he heard or saw in the past here tries to mingle with the present. Although, there is no connection from the present. It creates the feeling of nostalgia in which a person only thinks a past of place and time and recollects all the past. However, the narrator makes an effort to match it but it is impossible to match the present. In such a way there is no linear sequence. According to Critical comments on Amitav Ghosh's 'The Shadow lines' in the following.

"Since the central concern of the novel is not what had happened, and the meaning emerges only when the past and present are considered together, the narrative does not have a linear sequence."

(Quotation-2 Critical analysis of Amitav Ghosh's 'The Shadow Lines, to story of an Indian family, an English family in the transnational day of 1966 ARDHENDUD. Blogspot.com)

When the narrator collects all the information from the past and it is mixed in the present their meaning does not emerge. Being a small boy he has to follow everyone of their family. His grandmother tells him about the drastic situation of her old period instead of a boy who has not occupied 10 yrs. After the death of the narrator's grandfather she had to struggle for his livelihood. She was stranding in difficulty having money to purchase essential commodities of everyday life. She never surrendered herself to circumstance while she stands strongly and faced it. When she told about her sister viz. Mayawati, she was the richest woman and her husband Saheb has a good name in government institution. Thamma (narrator's grandmother) self respecting woman and she never likes to stoop

down before anyone for her selfish gains. She was prepared to undergo the circumstance what so ever they may be. But the narrator's grandmother did not desire to take help of her sister and sister's husband as it would bring down her status. She thinks that if she takes the help of her sister she will come under the influence of her sister and it would be disgraceful for her. These things have clearly been mentioned before by the narrator. After listening her thought the narrator realized that the narrator's grandmother has self respect, determination, and strong willpower to do something in the worst situation and to prove herself iron wall person. If a man has any complicated series of problems but he has the strong will, strong determination, strong motivation, he will undoubtedly overcome the situation and come out from the plights. Such an attitude has been developed in the minds of the narrator. It has thus been clear as to how the Bildungsroman novel shows the graph of maturity of the narrators. Without any confusion we can say that this theme has been created through the narrator's attitude of maturity. As Amitav Ghosh says,

“ I could guess at a little of what it had cost her then to refuse her rich sister's help and of the wealth of pride it had earned her, and I knew intuitively that all that had kept her from agreeing at once was her fear of accepting anything from anyone that she could return in exact measure.”

(Page No. 36, 37, 7<sup>th</sup> Para. 2<sup>nd</sup> Line)

In the light of all these clarification, a guessing could be drawn as to what it costs her then while refusing the help of her moneyed sister due to her vainglorious egoism. Having known intuitively that all the factors which kept her away from agreeing at once because of the fear of accepting anything from anyone which was expected to be returned in its adequate measure. He thinks about his Grandmother when she had nothing in her hand after the death of her husband. She did not accept the help of her elder sister. She strongly and dashing stood erectly bold and faced all the circumstances. Meanwhile the narrator stays while being in the childhood, he was asking to his mother about Ila when she was coming home. His mother never thinks about his feeling and she discloses it. As mentioned in the following lines.

“ She had left me defenseless, naked in the face of the  
Unthinkable, adult truth that is not transitive, that one may  
need without oneself being needed.”

(Page No. 48, 6<sup>th</sup> Para. 2<sup>nd</sup> line0

Having been given away by Mayadebi she had made it public and then forever, due to inequality of his requirements, she had called Ila and given all powers and thus the narrator having been left totally indefensible, with unthinkable adult truth which a person needs, which is not transitive.

In other words narrator did not expect such a behavior from his mother as was doing with him before Ila and this situation creates the bitter feeling of hatred towards his mother who was not trying to accept anything or understand his conditions. His mind was transferring into the degradation of feeling and humiliation which he realizes it. Here we get the different types of feeling which the narrator does not like. It has happened in the childhood and it is remembered in the youth age. At that time of asking to his mother he did not think what it will be the result of it. After getting in the youth age he remembers all things he realizes that should not have happened to him. In other words in the childhood it takes it very lightly but when he remembers in the youth age he realizes that he should not have behaved like that. On the basis of it we can say in the childhood he did not get maturity in thought whereas he got it in the youth age. When the narrator heard that Ila was not coming home, he does not feel better and he was asking about Ila to his mother. Whenever a boy fills in the love of Ila his eyes was searching Ila whereas she denies about it. Still he hovers over to Ila. This thing germinates relationship of love. Amitav Ghosh says,

“ I lay on my back, staring up at the ceiling, and as the hours passed I saw Ila again and again as she was when she stepped out of that car at Gole Park, eighteen years ago, on that morning when she wrenched me into adulthood by demonstrating for the first time, and forever the inequality of our needs.”

Page No. 123, 16<sup>th</sup> Para.)

The narrator was staring up and after an hour, he noticed that Ila was frequently getting out of the vehicle. At the age of eighteen years when she has been ripped. She has entirely converted into adulthood and it shows inequality of her needs. Here we have to understand that narrator compares two things from present to the past. Before 18 years whenever she comes to Calcutta at that time that the narrator did not feel. The narrator goes into the past. This type of thing creates the nostalgia in which a person does not satisfy from the present it always thinks about the past. A person mixes the past with present and thinks that way and endeavors to convince to the past things as per his conscience. After attaining physical maturity, he was not feeling better now and here we find inequality of thought. In the childhood they were absolutely small and they play with each other and they do not hesitate to say anything but in adolescence, a person grows mature so as to differentially between wrong and right and this chooses a propitious path of life. Today she has been entirely transformed into a full fledged mature citizen. Here we again get the maturity in feeling both mentally and thoughts. This physical change naturally happens due to adulthood.

As a result, he is attracted her and directly and indirectly he falls in love of her. In the childhood he did not think as he is thinking today. Again his mind or his understanding gets mature. As the narrators is not senior to Nick. He is thirteen years old boy whose hairstyle has so much attractive forms. In the childhood the narrator and Nick used to go to school and come to home. With some important work the narrator's father left for London. He met Mrs. Price and she gave the whereabouts his family house and then he was looking for Nick who was busy to hanging the tie. He did not then take the help of narrator's father. After doing his work the narrator's father asked him as to what would he like to make in his life? Nick briskly retorted then that he would like to make as his grandfather i.e. Tresawsen directs. Looking and listening to this, it is clear how he was so much impressed to Nick. The narrator's father never asked the narrator about his goals as it is much more based on one's proficiency and inclination of the incumbent's mind set up. As Tridib told him about Lionel Tresawsen family which place he hails from, how he has reached his goal. He married to a widow woman who previously has twice kids. Lionel Tresawsen also travelled around the world.

The narrator listened all this about Treswsen family from Tridib. After ten years obviously the narrator and Nick have been physically changed. When Ila told about Nick's physically personalities here he tries to recall the memories which have been heard from Tridib. Now the narrator takes the help of those memories and mingles with that personalities and guesses about Nick how much he has been changed during this period. When his mother and Nick and tell him about Nick. Without any hesitation the narrator asserts that he was very much familiar with him. As Amitav Ghosh says,

"I said: I'm not meeting you for the first time; I've grown up with you. He was taken aback. That must have taken some doing, he said drily, since I grew up right her, in boring suburban old West Hampstead. I've known the streets around here for a long to, I said."

(Page No. 60, 61, 7<sup>th</sup> Para. 4<sup>th</sup> Line.)

The narrator stated that it was not the first time that he was meeting with Nick. As Ila told narrator about Nick and narrator so much listened from his mother and May. Nick was quite grown up with narrator. He told him about his work which was doing. Both are staying in one city i.e. sub urban old West Hampstead. Both the personalities are staying but there difference is different. It surprises to everyone that the narrator knows the information which Tridib told him through the story.

Whereas the narrator grew up with Ila in boring sub urban old West Hampstead, he enunciated that he was well conversant with the street over these for long. Whatever he got the information from the past, he uses it in the present. This quote discloses the maturity in thought.

### Realization of the truth:

In the childhood the narrator carefully listened to every word from Tridib. Sometimes the narrator fails to make out meaning of borders and events of 1964. He was speechless but always thinks positively that one day we will discover about it. Whenever these things remind things him, he keeps silence. So many times the narrator's mind was in dilemma as to what action should be taken to



discover and what action should not be taken. This question arises before him. He took fifteen years to discover about it. He comes to know about the reality of events and truth whereas, in the childhood he was not aware of it. In this way we can say that the narrator's mind has fully occupied maturity. However, he suffers a lot of psychologically problems. As Amitav Ghosh says,

"I was a child, and like all the children around me, I grew up believing in the truth of the precepts that were available to me I believed in the reality of space. I believed that distance separates, that there is a corporeal substance, I believed in the reality of nation and borders; I believed that across the border there existed another reality."

(Page No. 241, 1st Para. 8<sup>th</sup> line)

The narrator asserts that he used to like children around him in his childhood. He was brought up with a staunch belief in truth of precepts which were available to him. He further says that he has been believing in reality of space. The national safety was of a paramount importance to him and he believes in reality of nation and his borders.

As we come to know that there was events of struggle in 1964 in which people try to keep mum and do not share their thought together. There were spread the rumours of country. Nobody talked on burning issue. People desired to stays in silence and there was gap between the word and the worlds. They did not have the courage to find out the truth of behind. This entire tragic situation shows the truth of that crucial time of our country which was stored by the narrator while he was in the teenage age. He was not aware of it. After attainment of young age he came to know the real picture of our country and he remembers all this things. He came across another reality at the border as he believes. In the childhood, the narrator heard Tridib's story very cautiously. By listening this story, his understanding all the more got strengthened. He could this make out difference between borders and partition and their reality.

The narrator did not know about the Tridib's death. Likewise his father convinced him that Tridib died in an accident in Dhaka. The narrator is not aware of the death of Tridib. Whatever mentioned about Tridib he accepted. According to that he creates the image of incident. But his curiosity creates knew no bounds and raised so many questions. At last he comes to know the reality. He comes to point of the truth as the years pass on. On the basis of the same, we can say that his maturity develops into adulthood. As Amitav Ghosh says,

"My father put a hand on my shoulder and said: Listen, there's something I have to tell you. A very sad thing happened while you were away in Durgapur, Tridib died in accident in Dhaka."

(Page No. 263, 6<sup>th</sup> Para. 6<sup>th</sup> line)

In this way he believes and accepts that whatever happened in Dhaka was as per God's will. As we know that how the narrator finds out the truth and how he reflects it after knowing the truth. The narrator's father having laid his hand on his (narrator's) shoulder and put a light on the reality that Tridib had died in a mishap in Dhaka, when the narrator was on a visit to Durgapur. He (narrator's father) took up a pause and deliberately stopped down. Perhaps, narrator's father may be expecting that the narrator would have been in the outburst of tears having been weakly sentimental. But for the narrator, the word 'Dead' was merely a word to be connived as such words are associated with film and also found in the comic books.

The novelist shows the picture of High Profile man who is working in the Government Department. No doubts he was very much familiar in his field. This picture also we get in today. People are busy in their personal life. They do not have time to their family as Tridib's father has not. He has not personal filial affection or feeling to his son i.e. Tridib. Tridib knows about the parents. There is not good relationship between them. Here we get the culture of two countries i.e. India and London. So many people go to foreign countries to earn money and they forget their family of Indians. They do not like to come to their motherland. This scenario is created in the novel of 'The Shadow Lines. The narrator did not know about the Tridib's family. His father told him about Tridib's death and his father at he silently accepts it. Tridib's father, being an important officer in the Government Department, he had made up his mind to conceal the reality and the 'death' matter has to be given top secrecy. The

narrator assured that he would not discuss and disclose about Tridib's death to anybody. This is how his belief in the narrator totally stopped talking on this topic. Thus, the narrator comes to know that people only show their apparently showy sympathy and attachment to the deceased person whereas they do not have their real sympathy. After getting in 25 years the narrators remembers all things he compares and analyses in that situation and he comes to conclusion that the people do from the formality point of view only . He knows the reality of relation. As Amitav Ghosh said,

“Tridib's father --is a very important man in the government? He doesn't want people to hear about this ---it has to be kept secret, so you mustn't talk about it. Most of all, you mustn't ask your Tha'mma any questions about what happened. She's already very upset, and it would only get worse if you made her talk about it.”

(Page No. 264, IInd Para. 6<sup>th</sup> line)

While paving our way back from the ancestral house of the grandmother of the narrator the car driver was wilfully forced to stop the vehicle. Out of the mob, he was sure that some of them (mob) had attacked them. Not only this but also they went feloniously to the extent of breaking the windscreen of the window of the vehicle and as a result, the chauffeur got deadly injured. The army security personnel shot his gun at the hooligans but, in vain as they instantly disappeared. The scamper situations have been scattered. As Amitav Ghosh mentions,

“Tridib ran into the mob, and fell upon their backs. He was trying to push his way through to the old man, I think . Then the mob dragged him in. He vanished. I could only see their backs. It took less than a moment. Then the men began to scatter. I picked myself up and began to run towards them. The men had melted away, into the gullies. When I got there , I saw three bodies. They were al dead. They'd cut Khalil's stomach open. The old man's head had been hacked off. And they'd cut Tridib's throat, from ear to ear.”

(Page No. 275, 276, 8<sup>th</sup> Para. 18<sup>th</sup> line)

The grandmother's uncle was chasing us in a rickshaw. A person who had looked after them for so many years is now a rickshaw puller. The mob followed them too. Narrator's grandmother shouted and asked him to drive away and get away from the scene. The grandmother again scarily screamed she said that she could not know what I was doing at that time, and was badly under the impression that I had got everybody killed. Being hero, the narrator was not able to listen it. But she knew the thing going to take place further. There was exclusively a person viz, narrator who did not follow them. He went towards rickshaw and he heard that Tridib was uttering her name (May). He was not caught by mob but also pushed him from behind. He fell down and was thinking that they had stopped the rickshaw in order to take me to the car. The mob attacked the frail old man dragging him down. He then disappeared and only his back was seen. When the narrator saw at the spot, he found three dead bodies were lying dead. The old man stomach was opened and dreadful scene was noticed that the head of old was smashed off. To our enlightenment, they also cut Tridib's throat from one ear to another. This is thus an infinite and clear cut evident that Tridib was assassinated in the scuffle over there. Now-a- days, the reality is one and the rumours are numerous. It so happened in respect of Tridib also. Hence it is quite true that the person left for his heavenly abode in the scuffle. The narrator thus comes to know the truth on the sad and sudden demise of an eminent character i.e 'Tridib'.

## CONCLUSION:

The novel 'The Shadow Lines' is a beautiful ideal one by Amitav Ghosh. It deals with Partition, Patriotism, his growth of maturity etc. Being a special kind of novels it mainly focuses on psychological and moral growth of the main characters. It is mainly based on political freedom and spirit and such allied issues. It is hence enunciated that the author deserves a wide complementation. The central theme is around the character Tridib's death. Utter secrecy had been maintained with regard to his death. It was almost ambiguous. Some people do not believe that he is dead. Some said that his vehicle was attacked by the hooligans and in the uproar, he was assassinated. At the young age of twenty six,

the author of the novel could realize the truth and became fully mature. The narrator's mother was not lovingly behaving with him under the suspicion of Tridib's death and views him always with an eye of suspicion and thus a feeling of hatred cropped up between them. The narrator had insisted for not giving publicity to this matter as it is vital one.

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