

***EXTRICATION OF EVES-A PARALLEL STUDY ON
AMITAV GHOSH'S THE SHADOW LINES
AND
MANJU KAPUR'S DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS***

Dr. Rema. V.

Assistant Professor
Dept of English & Other Foreign Languages
SRM University,
Ramapuram, Chennai

Dr. T. Sridevi

Assistant Professor
Dept of English & Other Foreign Languages
SRM University,
Ramapuram, Chennai

Amitav Ghosh occupies a prominent place of pro-woman approach . He never presents his women as either radical feminist or as the stereotypical images of Sita and Savithri. They are the characters of real life and his novels portray the women characters in a realistic manner. His fiction portrays the two images of women: women as a life giver, sustainer and continuer of the race as against women in search of an identity. As like him, Manju Kapur hates to be called a feminist writer, though all her fictional works project feminist concerns. The entire scenario in her novels is feminine. All of her heroines are middle-class educated urban Indian women struggling to establish themselves with their own independent identities in the patriarchal setup of which they are part and parcel. Hence, this paper levels a parallel study on how the Eves in both the novels extricated themselves from their predicaments in family and society.

Amitav Ghosh and Manju Kapur provide a conspicuous space for women's emancipation and struggle for equality. But the stories and backgrounds of the forties fittingly suit as the backdrop to drive home their approach and attitude to this endemic issue. This chapter deals with three generations of women, with their, similarities and dissimilarities of values, mindset and relationships.

In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, women break the pattern of sexuality and take their place equally with men. *The Shadow Lines* sets in the period between the early 1900s and the late 1900s. The unnamed narrator's grandmother, Tha'mma is an educated, bold middle class woman. She has disciplined children and made coherent family. She is part of the group of women who went outside their homes to work in the beginning of the 20th century. Ila is different from that of other characters in *The Shadow Lines*. She hates the Indian culture of the male dominated society, where she can't live freely, so she has left alone to Western countries to do what she pleases .

Virmati in *Difficult Daughters* is the prototype of the liberated woman but unfortunately a difficult daughter for an educated but tradition bound Indian mother. Virmati who has hungry

for knowledge and reorganization infringes all man-made boundaries against modernity and family custom. Virmati's daughter, Ida, who belongs to the post independent generation, is strong and clearheaded. She breaks up her marriage as she is denied maternity by her husband. The forced abortion symbolizes the termination of her marriage.

The first generation protagonist in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* can be compared with the first two generations' women, Kasturi and Virmati in Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters*. Kasturi follows the ancient rules and patriarchal society, and she compels her daughter Virmati to concede the family tradition. She reckons that a girl must be trained in all things for a suitable match and she should have studied the domestic lessons with more care than that of her education at school. Similarly Virmati also does the same with her daughter like Kasturi.

Like Kasturi, Tha'mma also has her own dogma on the rearing up of the male members in her family. According to her, the things that the world will go haywire if women were not there to keep their men folk straight and upright. She has her own notions of a responsible man. Anybody who fails to live up to her notions is an utter failure in life. She thinks that a responsible man is one who can find a good job for himself, no matter how he has come with it, and settle himself in the customary way of a married man. So, Tridib in her opinion is a wastrel. Being moored in Indian traditions, she could not approve of any man or woman living in European style. Hence, she dislikes Mayadebi's husband as he is ultra-modern in fashion. For the same reason Ila is also detested.

Virmati is a second mother to her ten other siblings. Her conduct with brothers-sisters is very rigorous, hard and fast. Perhaps, she has heavy responsibilities on her shoulders, and never enjoys according to her own desires like the other children. "She never rested or played with us, she always had some work. She was so keen to study, *bap re*" (5). After a long struggle, Virmati has the happiest and most attractive period in her life as the headmistress of a girls' school in Nahan, the Capital of Sirmur, the small Himalayas state. It is there she achieves the greatest degree of control over her life: there also rules she has to obey, but she is able to teach inside an ordered framework and her performance wins her a deserved respect in the school. She attains a near-exemplary level of female autonomy.

As Virmati's, Tha'mma's life also has been a struggle all through her life to find the ground under her feet. Like Virmati Tha'mma is also born and brought up in a joint family in Dhaka. "Their own part of the house was quite large and, in my grandmother's earliest memory, it was very crowded. Theirs was a big joint family then, with everyone living and eating together: her grandparents, her parents, she and Mayadebi, her Jethamoshai- her father's elder brother- and his family, which included three cousins of roughly her own age, as well as a couple of spinster aunts"(134). She has started the career as a schoolteacher and rises to be the Principal of the school by climbing the ladder of seniority and retires from the post as a very successful Principal.

In Virmati's joint family, her cousin Shakuntala, has been the source of inspiration for Virmati, through her studies, teaching and taking part in the political-Ghandian Movement. Understanding Virmati's predicament, Swarna Latha has made an effort to make her realize how she is wasting her life in mistrusting relationship. She said, "Marriage is not the only thing in life, Viru. The war- the Satyagraha Movement... taking jobs, fighting, going to jail. Wake up from your stale dream" (139). At times Virmati has also to be Swarna and wished, "maybe I

could like Swarna from inside secretly” (124). Virmati herself recognizes as, “I am not like these women. They are using their minds, organizing, participating in conference, being politically active, while my time is spent being in love” (142). Tha’mma also wants to be on the side of his terrorist classmate to take part in the nationalist struggle. Being a woman, she couldn’t take part in the freedom struggle. Yet after she has come out of her patriarchal oppression, she sacrifices her only necklace which she has kept as the last remembrance of her husband to the war fund. “I gave it to the fund for the war. I had to, don’t you see. For your sake; for your freedom. We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out” (262).

Thus both the women protagonists who have been taken from an analogous study prove themselves sincere, educated, devoted and hard workers. Both of them have not been given up their self-confidence and even after the loss in their life, Virmati after an abortion and miscarriage and Tha’mma after the death of her husband. Tha’mma has experienced patriarchal oppression through her widowhood as well as Virmati has experienced it through her marriage. What happens to Tha’mma and Virmati is, no doubt that the most representative destiny of the Indian women. But Tha’mma has transformed herself as a successful new woman by breaking all the obstacles on the road of her success, whereas Virmati seems to have her own room but at the bottom she falls by returning to a wrong choice relationship that has already brought her nothing but suffering.

The next phase of parallelism can be leveled on Ila in *The Shadow Lines* and Ida in *Difficult Daughters*. Both the names seem to be similar in pronunciation but there is a slight variation in the spelling. Similarly, both of their lives seem to be alike but they are dissimilar in their attitude towards life. Both of them belong to the young and modern generation. They have received modern education and had much exposure to the society, especially independent in both thought and action. When compared to Ida, Ila is one step forward in the above mentioned exposures. Still, Ila has failed to prove herself as the New Woman as she is not ready to come out of illusion, loyalty and mad love for Nick. But Ida fights for her own identity, dignity and self confidence by rejecting the family norms and her husband for he has forced her to go for an abortion.

Predicament of women has been existed from the period of Adam and Eve and it continues till the present day.No matter how much the Eves are much educated , modernized and well exposed to the society, their psyche decides whether they have to extricate themselves from their familial and traditional bond or not.All the Eves whomever are discussed in this paper are facilitated with the above mentioned provisions,still only Ta’mma’s and Ida’s psyche allow them to come out of their familial and social boundaries. In the case of Virmati , at least she has tried to extricate from her magical and illusioned marriage bondage. But Ila who is the most educated , ultra modernized and well exposed eve can't extricate from the clutches of of her madness on Nick though she knows and eyewitness his adultery. The psyche of Eve’s like Ila and Virmati tells them that keeping their angelic qualities are more important than that of living their own life. Thus extrication is only possible for the Eves like Tha’mma and Ida who kills the angel inside them can only walk on their own road of self identity and individualism.



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