

Feminist Movement in Post-Colonial Indian English Literature

Kaushal Rajendra Dighavkar

Research Scholar

Email: kaushaldighavkar@gmail.com

Abstract:

Women's movement in Post Independent India took a lot more different turn than of Pre Independent India. It was not merely about getting out of home, but demanded gender equality, labour reforms, women's contribution to society, eradicating the patriarchal behavior in India. The fact was women wanted their place as a free individual in Independent India. Literature became one of the mediums to support women in India. Specially, many Indian English writers came forward and wrote about the struggles of women in India. How they were oppressed and how they tried to break those chains. Through poems, short stories, dramas and novels we have seen many strong women characters who resembled the real women characteristics from Indian society.

Keywords: Post Independent, gender equality, patriarchal, Indian literature, Indian English writers, women characters.

Introduction:

In this paper I will be focusing on the novels written by Amitav Ghosh about women and their lives in post independent era. These works depict the psychological suffering of the frustrated women and continuous struggle for a better life.

After the independence India was going through many changes which were a agathokakological in nature. Economic crises, boundary issues with neighboring countries, identity clashes all these problems were emerging as a new democracy was surging towards a better future. How would women fall back in this situation? They wanted their rights and too wanted to serve their nation along with men. They built their own identity, they struggle through all the odd situations and achieved all they wanted. Taking their inspiration from pre independent revolutionaries like Savitribai Phule, Mahatma Phule who fought for girl education. "We shall overcome and success will be ours in the future. The future belongs to us" said about women in one of her letters. This helped women to serve their motives in post independent era.

Writers like Toru Dutt, Kamla Das, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Jhumpa Lahari wrote about different aspects of women's life which were not discovered before. Along with them male writes like Nissim Ezekiel, RK Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Amitav Ghosh wrote about their experiences about women's life in Indian society. All those writers through their writings built many women

Received: 19 Sept. 2022

Revised: 4 Oct. 2022

Final Accepted for publication: 5 Oct 2022

Copyright © authors 2022

characters which were kind, loving, strong, who shown all their forms according the situations they were going through. All the characters discovered different moods, needs and struggles of women.

‘The Shadow Lines’

Amitav Ghosh in one of his novels titled ‘The Shadow Lines’ has placed some female characters on the front. Amitav Ghosh wants to portray women characters as leading spirits. Women neither fight against men with their feminine sensibility nor live as subjugated women in the male dominated society. But they try to put their rights as human beings in the society with the help of education, employment and their revolutionary attitudes towards life. Ghosh’s women representation is real life and in a realistic manner. He wanted that reader should explore women’s psychology. Rather than showing the stereotype nature of women he tried to make it rational. Following are the important female character;

Tha’mma in ‘The Shadow Lines’:

Tha’mma is one the strongest character from the novel. As a teenager she wanted to join the revolutionaries to fight against the colonizers. A disciplined grandmother, who didn’t believe in borders and very patriotic in nature. Rather than taking help from her relatives after her husband’s death she stood strong and took care of her family on her own.

Tha’mma is the guardian angel of her family and it is due to her watchfulness that the family enjoys a good life. She wants to give certain moral values to her family. She wants her family not to make compromises with self-respect. These characteristics show that women wanted to prove themselves. They never wanted that someone should show them sympathy or should think that women are weak.

Ila in ‘The Shadow Lines’:

Ila on other side reflects a modern character in the novel character. As a woman of modern culture, she wants to be free of all the cultural boundaries and limitations of radical Indian society. She lives in her own world. She is clever, and is shown as a modern beautiful and rebellious girl.

She doesn’t care about the traditional India aspects and lives her life with her own ways. This makes her different from her people both in thought and culture. Ila is very much concerned with the welfare of the needy people. It makes her to join with the Anti-Nazi League group. Ila works in an organization called Save the Children Fund and is fighting for Indian Immigrants in London. She likes to work for others. All the characteristics make her a liberal woman character which can be looked as symbol of modern Indian woman.

May in ‘The Shadow Lines’:

May is bold and practical character from the novel. She is too much conscious about her work and faults. The poverty in India shocks her and she tries to help the needy people as much as she can.

Received: 19 Sept. 2022

Revised: 4 Oct. 2022

Final Accepted for publication: 5 Oct 2022

Copyright © authors 2022

May is a loving personality. She loves all the living beings and she can't see anyone in pain. When Tridib dies in the riots, she thinks that because of her Tridib is dead. She goes through a long term shock and does everything to get out of that guilt.

May is a virtuous, innocent and pure woman. She is friend to all and harmful to none. It makes her a revolutionary in the novel. She helps others wherever she gets chance and has a positive attitude towards her life. These characteristics make her a blend of both a traditional and modern girl. We can say that both Th'amma and Ila can be seen in May.

'The Hungry Tide':

In the novel *The Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh shows the condition of the refugees who have flooded into the state of west Bengal. The dalit refugees, being penniless and backward, threaten to be a bigger burden on Bengal's meagre resources. Therefore they are dealt with severity.

Kusum in 'The Hungry Tide':

Kusum belongs to tide country but so much different from its usual representative. As a teenage girl who doesn't know about outside world, she travels to new city to find her mother who was victim to a woman-trafficking racket. She too, is surrounded by such dangers. At every step she has to face odd norms of society. She didn't submit to the pressure of Government or society that could not provide her with basic needs of a worthy life. Patriarchy society can't enchain her, she follows her own rule, makes her own decisions and creates her own routes among thousand jeopardy and menace. Of all women characters of *The Hungry Tide*, it is Kusum who mostly embodies the essential spirit of revolution.

Piyali Roy in 'The Hungry Tide':

Piyali Roy, the American citizen of Indian origin is the one of the major characters of the the novel. She does not belong to the tide country but a visitor to the place. Being a cytologist by profession, she has come to the Sundarbans for some research work. It is astonishing that a young woman who is not able to speak and not even understand the language of the place can dare to visit the alien land without any companion or even a translator. Yet her courage and her determination renders her unyielding who would not stop at any condition until she reaches her destination.

Conclusion:

Thus Amitav Ghosh presents his women characters as revolutionaries. They have become revolutionaries in their respective spheres. They also have the courage to fight for the upliftment of the people. Whatever may the conditions are, they tackle them and try to prove themselves. We can see characteristics like loving, caring, and at the same time revolutionary and rebellious in those women. As per my opinion those changes in Indian society were milestones. After independence we can see that women have surpassed men in all fields. I would say that Indian literature can be considered as an inspirational factor for women.

References:

- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 1988. Print.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. HarperCollins, 2005. Print.
- Tiwari, Shubha. *Amitav Ghosh: A Critical Study*. New Delhi: Atlantic publishers, 2008. P.99.Print.
- Krishnaswamy, Shantha. "*The Woman in Indian Fiction in English*". New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1984. Print.

Internet Sources:

Postcolonial elements in Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines"
<https://www.grin.com/document/423886>

Savitribai Phule Quotes.

<https://www.justicenews.co.in/savitribai-phule-quotes-remembering-the-social-reformer-and-indias-first-lady-teacher-with-some-of-her-thoughtful-sayings/>