



## 'GUSTAD' AND 'TRIDIB' – STUDY OF TWO DIASPORIC CHARACTERS IN SUCH A LONG JOURNEY AND THE SHADOW LINES

**VIVEK DINKAR KHABDE**

Asst. Professor, (English),  
S.S. Dhamdhare Arts and Commerce college  
Talegaon Dhamdhare Tal- Shirur, Dist- Pune.  
(MS) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*Such a Long Journey and The Shadow Lines are written by two eminent writers Rohinton Mistry and Amitav Ghosh respectively. Both the novels deal with the theme of diaspora, partition, belongingness, issues of identity and crisis arising out of it. The study of the two protagonists in these novels bring out certain aspects regarding diaspora by the authors. The Shadow Lines deals with the issue of India- Bangladesh partition and the communal conflict arising out of it and it's impact on the common people. It shows the effect of partition on the common masses who suffer due to the decision of partition taken by the government. Such A Long Journey is about the diasporic life of a Parsi family. The protagonist Gustad struggles with the adverse circumstance in his life – his son's education, the compound wall, the feeling of insecurity in India, etc and at the end of the novel acknowledges the worth of the life journey which he undertakes.*

**Key words-** Diaspora, identity, conflict, partition, memory etc.

#### INTRODUCTION

A true traveller, an anthropologist, a well known author Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is a rich document of Indian history of partition and its impact on common masses, and their suffering. Amitav Ghosh's writing has the elements of cultural and political India. Ghosh has

VIVEK DINKAR KHABDE

1P a g e



travelled to different countries and have trodden distant territories. Colonial power structure, cultural fragmentation, materialism, modern civilization, growing separatism are the striking elements of Ghosh's writing. He focuses on these issues with wit, satire, irony and perfection. His writing exhibits his orientation towards globalization. His writing is multicultural and is multiethnic, and presents the insecurity of people of diaspora and the people affected by partition. His novels are not mere record of events in history but it is the fusion of both fact and fiction.

The narrative of *The Shadow Lines* moves from World War II to 1964 conflict in Pakistan. The novel encompasses major events in history like 1963 and 1964 Dhaka and Calcutta communal riot and India and Pakistan war in 1965. His writing deals with history, memory, violence, loss, travel and diaspora. Amitav Ghosh's writing is not restricted to national boundaries but goes beyond all cultural, national boundaries. His writing is also marked with Bengali touch – words, accents and registers which exhibit his strong association with the nation. *The Shadow Lines* was published in the year 1988. The novel deals with the issues like partition, its impact on common masses, diaspora, belongingness, issues of identity etc. The novel is written at the backdrop of partition, the second world war and communal conflict of Bengal and Calcutta around 1964. Thamma and Tridib are the central characters.

Thamma has firm faith in nationalism and nationalistic values. She is unable to comprehend the idea of partition of nation. While travelling, she was searching for the line which separates two nations between India and Bangladesh. She shuns the idea of partition. Tridib is a cosmopolitan, global citizen who advocates going beyond national boundaries and exploring something novel and exciting. The novel has the strong element of memory. 'Memory' has a significant place in the diaspora literature.. Most of the incidents in the novel are part of character's memory. Tridib has memories of his visit to England and can tell the narrator the places exactly as he has seen. The narrator also found the details unerring when he goes to England.

*Such A Long Journey* is a novel about a Parsi protagonist Gustad and his family. Rohinton Mistry's fiction has attributes like colloquialism, satire, story telling tone, a fine fusion of past events with the present situation of life. The plot of *Such a Long Journey* intermingles with the sub-plot. His novels exhibit themes like love, friendship and politics. The language of Mistry's novels is straightforward, uses local words, does not hesitate to use slangs in the sense that he lays bare everything which he sees and experiences. Mistry expresses the stark realities of life. Gustad struggles at personal, familial and societal level in his life for a respectable, happy life. Mistry raises concerns about the life of Parsi community in post-independent India. Mistry finds Indira Gandhi's government as a dictatorial regime. Gustad's experiences stands for the diasporic Parsi community's experiences in India. He has strong belief in his Zoroastrian faith. He dedicated himself for his family's welfare. Gustad is



tormented and is a tortured individual at the hands of his destiny and adverse circumstances. A desire for a affluent life as he lived in his childhood, the education of his son Sohrab, the illness of his daughter Roshan, his son Darius' attraction towards Rabdi's daughter, Gustad's friend Major Bilimoria engaged Gustad into a money laundering scam though unknowingly which complicates Gustad's life. The problems at his residence in the Khodadad building, the issue of the building compound wall, the feeling of being marginalized in India, feeling a threat to himself and his family in India as a Parsi diasporic community, feeling of loss of identity, being deceived in friendship and the problems arising out of it were the issues Gustad was struggling with.

Gustad's travels to Delhi, the death of his colleague and friend's death and the death of Tehmul- a resident of Khodadad building had shown Gustad many facets of life and matures his vision towards life. He could not be one with the local culture and atmosphere and is troubled by his family issues. He tries to raise his family according to his own wishes, seeks his son to take admission in prestigious institution like IIT but to his utter disappointment his son refuses to take admission in IIT and desires to go for arts course. Gustad's daughter Roshan is sick for a long time and is a cause of worry for Gustad as he could not give her advanced medical treatment due to financial constraints. Things started getting worse for Gustad as his family lost their fortune in a mishap and further the remaining property was lost by his uncle. The post-independence period was even more worse for the Parsi community when the British left India. Parsi community was affected when the nationalized by Indira Gandhi's government. They were at the core of banking sector in India. Gustad and his family had lost their fortune, which they enjoyed during the British period in India. As Mistry's novel *Such a Long Journey* focuses on the diaspora issues like marginality, rootlessness, identity crisis etc, Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* focus on the impact of political decision of partition on common masses. He underlines the fact that common masses are affected due to the political decisions taken by the political parties where the people are least taken into consideration and in a way they become the victim of it.

In both *Such a Long Journey* and *The Shadow Lines*, the diasporic issue of home has significant place. Khodadad building in *Such a Long Journey* and the ancestral home in Dhaka in *The Shadow Lines* has elaborate description. Home, dwelling place has significant place in the life of a diasporic individual or migrant's imagination, where he feels safe. Gustad is possessive about the Khodadad building as majority of the residents residing in the building were Parsis. The compound wall of the Khodadad building is symbolic of safety and security feeling for the Parsi community. Every infliction on it was supposed to be a threat to the community itself. Hence, when the municipality tried to collapse the building compound wall, Gustad becomes restless and considers it as a threat to their existence. In *The Shadow Lines*, the grandmother Thamma has strong affection towards her ancestral home in Dhaka which is now in Bangladesh after partition. The ancestral home is now abandoned and only



left with their uncle Jethmoshai. Thamma has childhood memories of the ancestral home in Dhaka and so desires to go back to visit it and also to bring back their uncle Jethmoshai. The journey to Dhaka was not at all easy and describes the perils of partition.

Both *The Shadow Lines* and *Such a Long Journey* became a strong commentary on the suffering of the diasporic community and the people affected by the partition.

## REFERENCES

- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Shadow Lines*, London: Faber & Faber, 1991.  
Mistry, Rohinton. *Such a Long Journey* London: Faber and Faber, 1991.  
Bharucha, Nilufer E. *Rohinton Mistry: Ethnic Enclosures and Transcultural Spaces*. New Delhi: Rawat Publications, 2003.  
Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*, New York: Routledge, 1994.