

The Shadow Lines A Novel

the shadow lines is a highly innovative complex and celebrated novel of amitav ghosh published in 1988 it received the prestigious sahitya academy award in the following year not only literary critics but also some noted litterateurs have acclaimed it for what it has been able to achieve as a work of art its focus is a fact of history the post partition scenario of violence but its overall form is a subtle interweaving of fact fiction and reminiscence it is a novel in which amitav ghosh has been able to realise his artistic conception through an art form which is cohesive however it remains somewhat inaccessible to some readers they are particularly mystified by its non linear mode this volume of critical essays on the shadow lines is being presented in the hope that it will enable the reader to gain an insight into the meaning and structure of the novel in the first part of the book the contributors bring out the various aspects elements of the novel the second part has essays which look at the novel from some current critical perspectives feminist post colonial and historicist but the emphasis of these essays is upon practice and not theory the idea is that the reader learns about a specific approach by seeing it applied to the the shadow lines the third part has a single but significant essay the shadow lines in context which relates the novel to ghosh s other works both fiction and non fiction though the book is primarily addressed to the

student it is hoped that it will interest the common discernible reader as well

a stunning novel following two families one british one bengali from the new york times bestselling author of sea of poppies the new republic opening in calcutta in the 1960s amitav ghosh s radiant second novel follows an english family and a bengali family as their lives intertwine across the generations in both tragic and comic ways the narrator indian born and english educated traces events back and forth in time from the outbreak of world war ii to the late twentieth century through years of bengali partition and violence observing the ways in which political events invade private lives in an ambitious funny poignant saga a k ramanujan amusing sad wise and truly international in scope the new york times book review

contributed articles on shadow lines novel by amitav ghosh

while amitav ghosh has written a number of novels his best known is the shadow lines a novel on the theme of partition that has been translated into many languages of the world the volume aims at an overall assessment of this classic novel of ghosh

a young and inexperienced sea captain finds that his first command leaves him with a ship stranded in tropical seas and a crew smitten with fever as he wrestles with his conscience and with the increasing sense of isolation that he experiences the captain crosses the shadow line between youth and adulthood in many ways an autobiographical narrative conrad s novella was written at the start of the great war when his son borys was at the western front and can be seen as an attempt to open humanity s eyes to the qualities needed to face evil and destruction

exposing the idea of the nation state as an illusion an arbitrary dissection of people ghosh depicts the absurd manner in which your home can suddenly become your enemy

the shadow line a short novel based at sea was first published in 1916 it depicts the development of a young man upon taking a captaincy in the orient with the shadow line of the title representing the threshold of this development conrad also extensively uses irony by comparison in the work with characters such as captain giles and the ship s factotum ransome used to emphasise strengths and weaknesses of the protagonist

only the young have such moments i don t mean the very young no the very young have properly speaking no moments it is the privilege of early youth to live in advance of its days in all the beautiful continuity of hope which knows no pauses and no introspection one closes behind one the little gate of mere boyishness and enters an enchanted garden its very shades glow with promise every turn of the path has its seduction and it isn t because it is an undiscovered country one knows well enough that all mankind had streamed that way it is the charm of universal experience from which one expects an uncommon or personal sensation a bit of one s own one goes on recognizing the landmarks of the predecessors excited amused taking the hard luck and the good luck together the kicks and the half pence as the saying is the picturesque common lot that holds so many possibilities for the deserving or perhaps for the lucky yes one goes on and the time too goes on till one perceives ahead a shadow line warning one that the region of early youth too must be left behind this is the period of life in which such moments of which i have spoken are likely to come what moments why the moments of boredom of weariness of dissatisfaction rash moments i mean moments when the still young are inclined to commit rash actions such as getting married suddenly or else throwing up a job for no reason this is not a marriage story it wasn t so bad as that with me my action rash as it was had more the character of divorce

almost of desertion for no reason on which a sensible person could put a finger i threw up my job chucked my berth left the ship of which the worst that could be said was that she was a steamship and therefore perhaps not entitled to that blind loyalty which however it s no use trying to put a gloss on what even at the time i myself half suspected to be a caprice it was in an eastern port she was an eastern ship inasmuch as then she belonged to that port she traded among dark islands on a blue reef scarred sea with the red ensign over the taffrail and at her masthead a house flag also red but with a green border and with a white crescent in it for an arab owned her and a syed at that hence the green border on the flag he was the head of a great house of straits arabs but as loyal a subject of the complex british empire as you could find east of the suez canal world politics did not trouble him at all but he had a great occult power amongst his own people

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