



Twist of Fate: Into the Complications of Partition and Loss in *Shurjo's Clan* by Iffat Nawaz

Tirthankar Laskar, Guest Lecturer, Department of English, Women's College, Agartala, Tripura, India.

 <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-3417-7076>

Book Review

Introduction

Shurjo's Clan by Iffat Nawaz is an eerie horror story with tenderness for the spirits that cause the haunting. A nostalgic home in Dacca in the 1970s is described at the beginning of the novel. It has two floors: a first floor and a second floor. The heroine Shurjo, the adored child of a joint family in the new nation of Bangladesh, has her room on the floor in between. Evocative descriptions of a lovely, perfect existence with family dinners, music, and a loving father who records his daughter's every word on a tape recorder first captivate us. But the spirits show up right away. In 1971, Shurjo's father lost his brothers Shoku and Bhiku in battle during Bangladesh's independence struggle. Moreover, it appears that Shurjo's aging parents and father Babu will always be plagued by these twin tragedies. Bela, Shurjo's mother, has a troubled family past, which further complicates things. Shantori, Bela's mother, committed suicide by plunging into a well when she was a little child. The residents of the Gandaria mansion are haunted by these tragedies until the spirits appear during the day. With wonderful inventiveness and painful insight, Iffat Nawaz unravels concerns of sorrow, belonging, identity, and family in her lyrical and evocative writing, establishing a unique voice. The primary question raised by this debut work, with its captivating blend of unfathomable realism and mysterious otherworldliness, is how we may honour the past without allowing its scars to consume us. The novel has been divided into three sections, comprising twenty-one chapters that tell the story's plot. In addition, the inventive and gripping novel combines magical realism with detailed historical knowledge to create a whole new picture of how sadness is passed down through the generations and how our ancestors' traumas and memories continue to influence us even now.

Iffat Nawaz presents people coming from the "Unknowing Realm"

The grieving family is happy to exchange their losses for an odd life where, each night, their departed loved ones enter from the land of the dead, also known as the Unknown Land, into the Known World to spend countless hours together laughing. They vanish in the morning, leaving the surviving individuals to deal with their days in misery. It may be argued that the family consciously chooses to live in memory of the deceased, giving them a place in their life each night and letting their sorrow permeate their own. Nevertheless, when the infant Shurjo is born in this gloomy, abandoned home, the story takes a horrifying turn. Her parents are in a difficult situation. Shall they cast away the spirits of their departed loved ones to create space for Shurjo's bright future? It's not scary to see the spirits. It is quite sad and tragic that they feel the need to stay a part of the family.

In response to Shurjo's father's suggestion that his little daughter would not benefit from growing up in a home haunted by spirits, his younger brother Bhiku, who passed away at the age of 18, "lowered his head, then looked up, his eyes a still pond." "Would you like us to depart?" The dead's attempts to convince Babu and Bela to let them stay in their lives are almost funny. If they are permitted to continue visiting Shurjo every night, they swear to be joyous and energetic. In the end, the little youngster finds it too difficult to listen to the depressing tales of her family



members who had passed away, exactly as Babu had predicted. Her parents find out too late that she is traumatized by these horrific characters in her life—a suicidal maternal grandmother and two young uncles who lost their lives for her nation of freedom. The ghosts' threat comes from their desperate need to share their memories with their family, even if they have no desire to harm the living humans. They want to make sure that their family members are affected by their grief. The living characters are left permanently traumatized as a result of this procedure, making it hard for them to lead regular lives. Shurjo's father Babu states, "We experience a sense of loss every morning." They are confined to their memories, reliving their pasts and allowing their loved ones to freely inflict emotional harm on them.

Iffat Nawaz's Historical Analysis and Storytelling

Though most of them are unsuccessful, every character in the book tries to get away from the haunting. As Bela tries to start again, we see the resemblances of her mother's sadness returning to plague Shurjo, her kid. Babu attempts to leave his parent's house and his home with his wife and children to flee the ghosts of his brothers, but the spirits pursue him. Shurjo, the intelligent kid of a new nation, is their only hope. The story shifts between horror and fairy tales, presenting fresh approaches to the historical fiction genre. Moreover, Daisy Rockwell also mentions - '*Iffat Nawaz weaves together the historical and the personal, the mundane and the metaphysical, to create a touching and beautifully written novel of Partition, migration and dislocation*'. In the story, Shantori falls in love with Bhagirathi, the river from her youth, akin to a fairy tale figure. After her husband and she are forced to flee Calcutta because of rioting during Partition, Shantori hates her new country and looks in vain for the river she left behind when she was a youngster. She eventually jumps to the bottom of a water well as a result of her quest. The sight of the slain characters Shoku and Bhiku attending supper each evening mirrors the repeated memories of 1971 told by Bangladeshi households.

The novel's opening chapters narrate each character's history in an almost necessary family history, reciting the stories that Bengalis use to trace their mythology, such as Nawab Siraj-ud-Daula, the Partition, the Calcutta riots, and other frequently told tales, as if defining our identities and backgrounds is a prerequisite for telling any story at all. The struggle with identification plays a significant role throughout the whole book. It can be discovered that the sentimentality around identification is what drives the characters' unhappiness when a cruel classmate accuses Shurjo of her family not being Bangladeshi since her grandparents immigrated from India. Shantori, Shurjo's sad maternal grandmother, feels like a stranger in a foreign land, a fugitive who has fled her home, and the very act of being uprooted saps her desire to survive. Shurjo proclaims that she doesn't need to demonstrate her patriotism because "her family had added their flesh and blood to the soil of the country," but we can see that she bears strong resentment towards this sacrifice and that, in the end, she is unable to live in the nation that her father and uncles battled to establish for her. The world's laws are clear, just as in any well-written horror tale. From the outset, the protagonists wonder why the dead have returned unexpectedly, what their mission is, and how they plan to depart. Fortunately for Shurjo and most gratifyingly for the reader, the mystery is eventually solved, even though it takes two generations. Therefore, Anees Salim mentions Iffat Nawaz - '*A brave new voice. A deeply captivating saga. Shurjo's Clan announces the arrival of an immensely talented and evocative writer*'. Anyway, it is a literary journey of loss at the times of partition.

Book Details

Author: Iffat Nawaz

Publisher: Penguin Random House India



ISBN: 978-06-70096-98-5

Publication Year: 2022

Pages: 244

Author (s) Acknowledgement / Funding: Nil

Author (s) Contribution Statement: I / We have employed ethical writing methods to write this article.

Author (s) Declaration: I/We declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



The content of the article is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.

OPEN ACCESS 

Article History

Received: July 24, 2024 **Accepted:** July 27, 2024 **Published:** July 31, 2024

Copyright: © 2024 To author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under CCBY 4.0 Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits all unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium by giving proper attribution to the original author and source.

Data Availability Statement: The study utilizes primary and secondary sources of data and can be available from the author if requested.

Citation: Tirthankar Laskar. "Twist of Fate: Into the Complications of Partition and Loss in *Shurjo's Clan* by Iffat Nawaz." *Literary Musings*, Volume 2, Issue 1, July 2024, pp. 47-49.
