

Intangible Borders and Inevitable Conflicts in Amitav Ghosh's
The Glass Palace and The Shadow Lines

Arnika.S

(17PEN002)

Thesis submitted to

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women,

Coimbatore-641 043

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master's Degree in English

April 2019

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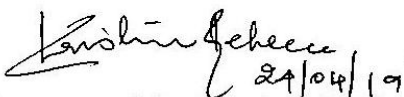
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Signature of the Supervisor



Signature of the Head of the Department

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Chapter I

Introduction

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Indian English Fiction today is dominated by the second generation of postcolonial writers, who are born after decolonization. They write with more dynamism, distinctive voice and vigour. They have a higher level of self-reliance than colonials. Writers like Salman Rushdie, Upamanyu Chatterjee, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh have liberated Indian English Literature from the colonial yoke. The honour received by them has put Indian English Literature in global gaze. 'Post colonialism' or 'postcolonial' is a set of theoretical approaches which center on effects and consequences of colonization. It is the decolonization of the mind. It challenges the received and ideologically determined paradigms of power relationships and frees the colonized people from the gaze of colonizer.

Post colonialism forms a powerful intellectual group which renews the perception of people. It alters the understanding of different socio-political, economic, literary and cultural aspects of modern period. It may also refer to the status of a land that is no longer colonized and has regained its political independence. The term 'Post colonialism' would seem to label literature written by writers living in countries formerly colonized by other nations. Broadly it refers to the ways in which race, civilization, culture, and human identity are represented in colonized countries in post-independent period. In the twentieth century, countries like India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada and Australia have won independence from their European colonizers. Bill Ashcroft in his book *The Empire Writes Back* (2002) points out, "More than three quarters of the people living in the world today have had their lives shaped by the experience of colonialism"

(30). The art and literature produced in these countries after their independence have been labeled as 'postcolonial' and hence the new term 'postcolonial literature' has come into existence. Shortly, "Postcolonial literature" suggests "de-centering of colonial literature".

Postcolonial literature became popular in the 1970's. Postcolonial writers are born in Indian soil and they write in English. It is a language that has found its strong base in Indian colonies. Later on, Globalization has deepened its roots in India. English has become a transnational language, through which people living outside the boundaries learn about India. In India, English is no longer being seen as the language of colonials. This affinity for the language has led to the origin of 'Indian English' which has become India's own language. Earlier, literature produced in English language has been used as a medium to support the imperial British Empire. Postcolonial writers have started writing literary works against imperialism and colonialism using the same language. In a multilingual country like India, English has been being used as a tool to connect people before and after independence.

Postcolonial writers have started to speak about the untold sufferings of the displaced people. There are many issues like accommodation that is to be faced by the migrants. Many factors contribute to the making of one's identity. It is a complex process, in which the conception of the people about themselves and their environment, the organization of their social life, and the constitution of their ideological world are important ingredients. Fitting themselves into the social order becomes a very big challenge for those people. The construction of identity as well as subjectivity has to undergo certain multilayered processes. Hence, in characterizing present identity, history

is often fore-grounded as the most dominant factor. Their memories of oppression under the colonial regime have become the subject for postcolonial writers.

Myths, memories, symbols, rituals, ideals and histories play important role in the formation of a 'cultural identity'. Identity is not a static affair, since it is socially constructed. It is also subject to historical changes. It makes a decisive contribution to the enhancement of an individual's sense of selfsameness. Haunting images of loss and helplessness loom as a large signifier of gloomy past in people's mind. These signifiers constitute the somber mood which leads to the periods and processes of significant transformations in human history. Postcolonial writers portray the lives of the 'lost' human beings and generally describe the feelings of bereavement and states of withdrawal. The portrayals of the lost and the consequent helplessness may sometimes help human beings to have a remarkable capacity to fill the gap by being able to adapt themselves with new circumstances and experiences. Historical and social changes, working through the psychological mechanism of loss and humiliation, thus lead to the widespread feeling of being a victim.

The problems involved in the formation of subjectivity and its consequences on identity are some of the most disputed issues in contemporary postcolonial writing in English. Most specifically in the context of South and South-East Asia, factors like social unrest and political immaturity usually tend to dismantle the very notion of identity. Displacement is the other major issue that people have to undergo when some communal riots happen in their native land. Salman Rushdie in *Imaginary Homelands* writes that the effect of mass migration has been the cause behind the creation of radically new types of people. These people root themselves by their 'otherness' which is common among many

people. Many create their identities on the basis of their Geographical location. Some create their own social group based on the ideologies they possess.

A nation can gain its political form only in the context of its geographical territory. However, the territory of a nation is not a given but culturally conceived, politically constituted and discursively constructed. The knowledge of territory depends upon social experience, ever changing according to one's immediate surroundings. K.N. Panikkar writes, "In the same territory that forms the limits of a nation a highly fragmented knowledge of geography exists, which validates the entire concept of territorialism" (92). Indian post-colonial literature displays a kind of literary imagination and linguistic inventiveness of writers who are based in a transnational and multicultural world. There are many people who are forced to adopt multiple cultural identities often dictated by socio-political and historical forces. The idea of a postcolonial literature carries certain specific meanings such as the legacy of the colonial regime and struggle for independence with a view to regaining the 'lost' inheritance. In such situations, the basic question that needs to be discussed relates to the predicament of the common people whose sufferings are not recorded. There are many people who are forced to denounce their own history and identity by the same nationalistic and territorial forces.

In the recent times, a great body of historical fiction has emerged on the literary scene. "Many Indian English novelists have turned to the past as much to trace the deepening mood of nationalism as to cherish the memories of the bygone days" (Dhawan 13). History and Past shapes the future of the individual. *Midnight's Children* starts out from India of 1947. In this, Rushdie highlights a facet of identity that characterizes the novel in terms of cross- cultural interactions and divided loyalties between Hindus and

Muslims, India and Pakistan, etc. that exemplifies his intended opinions. Postcolonial works are mostly centered on the turmoil in sub continental political history at the crucial moment of Independence and Partition. It can also be seen from psychological perspective. Psychoanalytical principle can be applied to understand the consequences of various traumatic experiences of the people who have suffered a lot in terms of home, relatives and land.

Some of the major voices and writers of postcolonial expression include Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981), Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1982), Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *The Glass Palace* (2000) and so on. These writers write to establish their individual identity in literature which is independent from their colonizers. There is a tendency among the Indian postcolonial writers to often start with the notion of 'homelessness' which symbolizes a historical condition as well as an existential predicament. Hence, collective memories have always been recognized as vital elements in the subsequent construction in the idea of nation or nationalism, understood in terms of specific places and definite territories. Nationalism cannot be seen as symbolizing only culture and identity, since it is sometimes reduced to being just an argument for holding power in the state.

Amitav Ghosh, one of the major voices of the post colonial literature, can be considered at once an insider and outsider. In his novels, most of the settings are in Indian borders. Borders and lines that are drawn by humans in Geography and in their own minds play a great role in his novels. As an anthropologist and historical researcher, Ghosh's interest lies in the human history and predicament. His concern is about the way

religion, tradition, history and politics exercise a predominant role on determining the human history. Amitav Ghosh's works share few things in common. They are mostly based on the impact of broad historical movements on individuals. The characters in his work are caught up in certain events beyond their control. He also focuses on the importance of connections between the past and the present. "Ghosh explores Vedic concepts of Maya (illusion) and transcendence to question the possibility of Western Realism" (James 52).

Amitav Ghosh published his first novel *The Circle of Reason* in 1986. It has won the Prix Medici Etranger, which is considered as the top literary award of France. It has also become the New York Times Notable Book of the Year 1987. In 1990, his second novel, *The Shadow Lines* won the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award. In the same year, it also won the Ananda Puraskar Award in Calcutta. His novel *The Calcutta Chromosomes* which is published in 1996 won the Arthur C. Clark Award. *The Hungry Tide*, which comes under the genre of Eco literature, won the Hutch crossword Book Award in 2006. His novel *Sea of Poppies* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2008. Amitav Ghosh has been awarded the prestigious Padma Shri by the Government of India in 2007.

National history always ignores the existence of individual 'pasts' in its records. Consequently, the people having or sharing a sense of history can be appropriated and fitted into the contemporary narrativisation of their own specific pasts. Monolithic history does not recognize the local or the individual. It defines nations, cultures and people only in terms of totalities. Ghosh has managed to invent a form of writing which repeatedly returns to individual lives that frustrates appropriation into specific subjectivities. Amitav Ghosh's novels have some recurring themes. They include- the role of individual in the

broad sweep of political events; the dubious nature of borders, whether between nations or people; the role of memory in one's recovery of identity in the march of time; the role of artist in society; the importance of narrative in shaping history. His fundamental interest is in people, in individuals and their specific predicaments. In his novels, history provides instances of such unusual and extraordinary predicaments. Amitav Ghosh's novels are both Indian and global in perception and treatment. They represent a fresh trend in today's post-colonial literature. "His novels may be noted for their simultaneous probing into the chronicles of nations and private lives. It focuses on the reality of the fictional and the fictionality of the real" (Kundu 66).

Amitav Ghosh novels mostly revolve around the psyche of people. Indians tend to have unquestionable belief and they do not apply logic in practical life. Religion has made them irrational and it has stopped them from thinking. Indians consider the river Ganga as a sacred river, but they are not bothered about the purity of it. The unhygienic condition that exists in India has killed many people. Amitav Ghosh logically questions the superstitious beliefs that Indians have through his novel *The Circle of Reason* (1986). Balram is a rational thinker in the novel who is expert in phrenology. Phrenology is the study of finding the mental abilities and characters of people through the size and shape of people's head. The novel ultimately deals with the horizon that exists in people's mind. Mrs. Verma is one such character in the novel who is very much concerned about Indian way of living. She rejects rationalism and has always been different from the other characters in the novel. On the contrary, Balram admires scientists like Saha and Jagdish Bose. Shortly, the novel is a battle between irrational thinking and logical reasoning.

The Calcutta Chromosome is a novel loaded with accurate geographical details. As the title itself denotes, the characters in *The Calcutta Chromosomes* are mostly from Calcutta. All the characters in the novel are in search of something. The novel is adventurous and it is considered by critics as a kind of mystery- thriller. It has many scientific facts to be in accordance with reality. It depicts a clear difference between east and west. East is attributed to religion and spirituality, whereas west is associated with science and technology. The attitude of colonizers is also brought in by Ghosh in the novel. The colonizers have always considered the natives of the colonies as inferior to them. Ross, one of the characters in the novel does not even know the names of the natives working under him. Many Postcolonial writers have written about this attitude of colonizers in Literature.

Ghosh has tried to suffuse his sense of belonging through his novels. He also writes about National identity, landscape, rituals, national culture and tradition in the novel. All these form the post colonial fiction in the texture of *The Shadow Lines*. “The very title of *The Shadow Lines* relates to a key concern of post colonialism, which is of borders and boundary lines and their illusionary nature” (Nawale 14). The title emphasizes on obscurity of existing borders. Postcolonial criticism examines man made borders as efforts to identify particular groups as against another group. This is predominantly true of India as an independent nation with the partition of 1947. This partition has drawn imaginary lines in the map. Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* seems to move effortlessly across national boundaries. The lines are far more than just the margins created by politicians. It suggests that they are also the lines of segregation that separate colonized and colonizer.

The characters and situations in Amitav Ghosh's novels are fictitious. "The story is interwoven around actual historical occurrences, but the text in itself is not historical" (Bannerjee 41). The human society all over the world is fed on stories which are fictitious. A novel cannot only be seen as a story. A novel is not merely a fiction because it has a theme, situations, characters, dialogues and vision. All these are amalgamated into one to produce something which takes readers into a new world, may be a world of spirits and fairies, fancies and fantasies. But it never allows the reader to lose sight of the hard realities which he has to confront in daily life. A novel is something of a mirror in which man sees his image of himself in the society in which he is living. A novel is a picture of society on a large scale. Amitav Ghosh has also showed his own vision of life in his novels. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is a compendium of several attitudes which are constantly in conflict. The conflicts in the novel are superfluous and transient. He has established the permanent truth through the novel.

The characters in his novel are not the pictures of any individuals. They are types with individual characters. In his novels the characters emerge from situations. They are connected with the plot consisting of several events. "Amitav Ghosh's novels brim with interesting themes set against fascinating historical backdrops" (Hawley 1). *The Shadow Lines* has a complex plot, since the narrator, travels into the past and future simultaneously to describe events which highlight particular aspects of a character. As the narrator is too young to have the knowledge of the past years of his great aunt, he has drawn on the versions of others. He does it to make a full picture of a character along with the history of the country. A novel or a play aims at presenting characters, and every novelist has his own way of presenting characters. Some of the novelists become the part

of the events. Some comment on every event and character but some novelists allow the characters to speak their past and future aspirations which travels in accordance with the social events that happens in the country.

“The majority of Ghosh’s writing focuses on exploring geographical and social boundaries” (Das 152). In *In an Antique Land*, he tells about the cultural ties between India and Egypt. This novel speaks about many languages, cultures, countries and continents. It also focuses on the riots of 1964 which has killed many people living across the border in the name of Nationalism and freedom. In *The Shadow Lines*, history is evoked to interpret personal lives and public events for the understanding of the present. History recollected from memory, and past events at both personal and political level, surfaces from individual perspectives. In this attempt, past is always placed critically in relation to the present. It is the past events that govern the thoughts of the people. The characters in the novel also see truth from the eyes of elder people. The unnamed narrator of *The Shadow Lines* comprehends persons, places and events from the perspectives of Tridib. The narrator thinks that Tridib tells the truth. In the Postmodern era it has become possible to talk of multiple truths and realities since no simple perception of reality is true and complete. It is rarely based on objectivity. Since perception varies from person to person historical interpretation of reality tends to be incoherent. History is always ambiguous. When a large number of people believe in something, it becomes true. Facts are not taken into consideration when people’s prejudices play an important role in the society.

His novel *The Glass Palace* vehemently criticizes the forces of territorial battles and how they play a determining role in shaping the fate and future of the individuals. At the beginning of the novel, King Thebaw is sent to exile by the British forces in 1885.

The novel shows how the people in the novel are evolving through various forces. In other words, *The Glass Palace* examines the individual, psychological dilemmas posed by colonialism and the consequent outcomes. One of the main characters in the novel, Rajkumar lives in Mandalay, then the capital of Burma. He is raised under the patronage of a Chinese businessman. Rajkumar eventually becomes a wealthy businessman. At first he is flippant his own self, but he gradually becomes a changed man. His childhood love for Dolly becomes a factor behind this change. The character of Rajkumar shows how 'past' can shape the 'Self' of an individual in the present.

The Glass Palace includes royal personages like King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat and the Burmese princesses; and commoners like Dolly, Rajkumar, Saya John and Uma. However, what unites them all is colonial oppression. Due to oppression, they are all forced to leave their own country. They are all given a temporary place to live by the British Empire. They have displaced themselves in the new places of settlement. One of the servants of the Queen, Dolly thinks that she will be considered as a foreigner, if she returns to her homeland, Burma. The consequent existential predicament has united all these characters. By dwelling on the little details and focusing on the ordinary lives, Ghosh has actually created certain 'interior histories' as the signifiers of present psychological anxieties and predicaments.

The Glass Palace relates to a multiplicity of experiences and tells the story of diverse individual lives. The characters attempt to shape them into neat and definable identities. They work their level best to reduce the possibilities of being historically generalised. The changes that the characters experience are actually shaped by their own specific history. The same changes are also functional in shaping their identities at

present. The greater forces of colonial domination have led the royal authority into exile. They long for freedom and it lies dormant inside the minds of the Burmese people. The consequent distrust of the dominant political system submerges the individual perception of history and reality as less important and invalid. They have started to have false perception of freedom and borders. This is also reflected through the character Tham'ma in *The Shadow Lines*.

In the novel, Ghosh gives a new twist to an old theme of partition. The lines symbolically represent all such lines that divide nations and peoples in the name of nationalism, religion, language and caste. What is new in the novel is that the novelist denies the very existence of these lines and hence calls them 'shadow' or illusory. This makes the novel debated whether it is about the meaning of political freedom in the modern world or an escape from the reality. However, the ground reality is that there exist dividing lines as the narrator's father tries to explain to his mother the boundary between India and Bangladesh. But eternal reality is that there is no dividing line as such. Artificial lines have been created by men between countries and peoples and have been dismantled by them as per their convenience. So, two realities are running parallel in the novel. It does not follow the linear development but has multiple layers of themes and complex narrative structure. The unnamed narrator weaves together the multiple stories of three generations of two families: Mayadebi and Mrs. Price, past and present. The novel also depicts private and public life childhood and adulthood. Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* is rich in historical events. It strongly criticizes the forces of territorial battles. These battles play a strong role in determining the fate and future of the individuals in Ghosh's works.

The Shadow Lines appears to be structured on a pattern contrast between imagination and reality, present and past, childhood experiences and an adult's response to them. The two sets run almost parallel to each other. This is a recurrent device used in this novel and it gives a cinematic effect. It metaphorically serves to expose the illusory nature of the dividing lines between the present and the past. It manifests itself in the two love affairs in the novel—first between Ila and Nick that culminates into marriage, and the second between Tridib and May. Each is an attempt for freedom from the past. But it is shown how absurd and futile is such an attempt for freedom. Ila leaves India for she wants to be free from the middle class orthodoxy but is caught in the same net in England. Her dream of free world backed by the colonial consciousness is shattered when she is married to Nick Price. He betrays her because he does not want to be seen walking with an Indian. Here colonizers' consciousness comes acutely on surface. This incident surface into the memory of the adult narrator many years after when Ila takes him down the cellar and weeps and tells about Nick's betrayal. Here again the past shapes the present. Further, the relationship of May and Tridib also explodes the myth of freedom.

Amitav Ghosh has chosen to remain out of scene and allowed the narrator to give first-hand knowledge of what he sees, and what he gathers from different sources. He gathers knowledge of the past of the older characters. He makes his own observations about them, to present a life-size picture of the characters around him. Sometime one character speaks about the other to reveal himself and his views about the other character. As the narrator's grandmother says that Ila is a harlot, it is revealed that she is not in tune with modern society. Thus the writer builds characters by reporting words and actions of each one of them. The nature of certain characters is misinterpreted by few characters.

There comes the interplay of Reality and Imagination. Reality and Imagination comes very frequently in the novel. In *The Shadow Lines* the narrative does not have a linear progression. Events do not make a progressive succession leading to a coherent development. Memories and events are retrieved from the past to give meaning to the present. The author employs a zigzag movement in time and place. Past and present become concurrent to make a move towards the future. The narrator weaves stories one after the other that generate out of his memory.

Problematizing can be seen on yet another plane in the novels of Amiya Ghosh. His novel focuses sharply on the futility of divisions in the minds, maps, or between nations. These divisions become decisive forces when sentiments are attached to them because they are basically shadow lines, imaginary and illusory. Equally futile are the concepts of nationhood and nationalism since anyone can draw any number of lines anywhere dividing the nations into further and further segments. It is these boundaries that decide the geographical territory of a nation. “Besides nationalism, the novel attempts to grapple with issues of secularism and communal politics” (Rao, “Eloquence” 143). This bitter truth is revealed more harshly through a woman character, Tha'mma in *The Shadow Lines*. Tha'mma, the disciplinarian cum nationalist, grandmother of the narrator thinks and believes strongly that it is the bloodshed of a people in a war alone that could make a nation. India is yet to emerge as a nation in this sense.

Tha'mma's strong sense of belonging, her fervent nationalist feelings is all at once shattered when she comes to know that her 'home' Dhaka is now distanced to her. Dhaka has become a part of Pakistan. She is shocked to find that her nationality has come so messily at odds with her identity. Dhaka, partitioned long ago, is now alien to her. Her

sense of pride and nationalism get problematized, and ironically, she develops antagonism towards the same people and place. The nation, which once she had worshipped, has now become a hell to her. The idea of boundaries between countries is vague and unintelligible to her. She realizes that our sense of freedom is involved in killing 'the other' before 'the other' kills us. Similarly the wall between the families of Jethamoshai and his brother remains there even after all the members leave the house. This fortified her idea of borders. Past, history, events and history plays an important role in shaping her attitude towards borders.

The personality character is revealed by what he does or says. The language of a man reveals his culture, mood and his way of thinking. Therefore dialogues form a very important part of the novel. For example, speaking in local dialect shows that the character is not well qualified. It also shows that the character is primitive, simple and old-fashioned. On the contrary, if the character speaks in political jargon, one will immediately know that he has interest in political matters. Similarly, the dialogues tell the readers how strongly or softly the character has reacted. In *The Shadow Lines*, the dialogues and speeches of the narrator's grandmother reveal the fact that she has no idea about the pursuits of the people living in England and other countries. Her language is condemnatory. The narrator in the novel is for most of the time a spectator. His language therefore retains its normal tenor.

In *The Glass Palace*, many characters speak Hindi. Hindi is used by British officials to communicate with Indians. Hindi is referred as "Hindusthani". Many Burmese have started to learn Hindi to do business with people belonging to other state and country. This also shows the evolution of Hindi in Burma. Uma, collector's wife speaks Hindi when she comes to meet the Queen. Queen Supayalat knows Hindi very well, since she has always

engaged herself in business dealings with officials. Queen Supayalat and King Thebaw speak fluently in Hindi than Indians. She has surprised many people by her fluency speaking Hindi. Queen considers speaking Hindi as something superior. She even appreciates Uma for communicating in Hindi. British Government has also taken many steps to educate the princesses' of Burma. Also, In *Sea of Poppies*, Hindi and English are mixed.

Finally, a novel is a vast picture of the society while a story presents only one aspect of it. Naturally, the novelist has to present a vast variety of characters and events and links them together in a natural order. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* has succeeded in presenting the truth that human society cannot be divided by shadow lines of nations, colour or even races. Indians and Britishers, Hindus and Muslims and Christians are shown to have the same basic emotions and instincts. It deals only with the higher strata of society. But the emotions and instincts are the same. There are characters like the Chaudharys who are in diplomatic service of India and in U.N.O. At the same time, Amitav Ghosh finds opportunity to present even the emotions of rickshaw-puller in Dhaka. The writer has erased the shadow lines between the lowly rickshaw-puller and high-class academician, Tridib.

A novel is not a history of events, nor is it a lesson in Geography, yet the places and people are presented in coordination with subtle interplay of reality and illusion. The opening of *The Shadow lines* establishes the close correspondence between the memory and imagination. Many characters in the novel live in imagination and neglect reality. This is because of the mental blocks and borders. Psychologically, they are not ready to accept the truth. They find shelter in imagination as it keeps them away from the external world. Few characters accept reality and give more importance to the sense of seeing than the sense of hearing. Those characters are very practical and they do not bother about the past and

memory. Few characters are evolved from being imaginative to a more mature person. In short, the novel has succeeded in presenting the truth that the human society all over the world has unifying emotions and feelings. In the same way, characters are being evolved in *The Glass Palace*. But the distinctions of castes, colour and creed have divided people into small units which are constantly at war with one another.

People strongly believe that the national boundaries are the result of liberation. But they come under some other governance in the name of liberation. Gaining independence from rulers has become a collective concept. But, the boundaries increase violence when it is seen from an individual perspective. As a result, Peace, Harmony and Humanity become invisible. Countries that are engaged in terrorism are termed as uncivilized. This is discussed in the article “Geopolitical boundary narratives, the global war on terror and border fencing in India” (2009) by Reece Jones. Binary world view is a thinking process that sees all places as either good or bad. In order to put one’s own country into the idea of being virtuous, the other is termed as “violent invader”. Thamma is a character in the novel *The Shadow Lines* who possesses this characteristic. Belongingness and the concept of generalization play a great role here. People belonging to a nation where terrorism is encouraged is seen as an evil to the society. Naturally, people become the victims of territorialisation.

Places and people outside the border may share the same linguistic and cultural heritage. Initially, there are probabilities of cultural ties between them. But when a line is drawn, the ties are always broken by expanding the fencing of the borders. As a result, a nation becomes a closed and bounded container where the citizens are expected to abide by the law of the nation. Reece Jones has written about the border that exists between

India and Bangladesh in this article. He has substantiated his stand by telling about the cultural ties between the Indian state of west Bengal and Bangladesh. Though they share the same culture, Bangladesh is seen as an enemy nation by the people of west Bengal. This conflict has also led to the signing of treaties by the Indian Government with United States. Parliament of India has also passed Prevention of Terrorists Activities Act (POTA) to ensure the security of the borders. This has become crucial due to the continuous attack in the borders.

“Agents of exception: border security and the marginalization of Muslims in India” written by Reece Jones tells about the Border Security Force (BSF). Initially, borders are constructed to ensure the protection of the people. In one way, Borders have been a hindrance to illegal activities like smuggling. In the other way, Borders have started to destroy the livelihood of the people. It has affected the life of a common man to a greater extent. Many small scale farmers living along the border have become homeless due to the expansion of fencing. Border has also become a threat to the people. The narrator’s childhood incident of travelling in the school bus tells the readers about the stress that he undergoes in a very small age.

Amitav Ghosh’s novels have many reasons for travel. This is pointed out by Claire Chambers in the article “The Absolute Essentialness of Conversations: A Discussion with Amitav Ghosh”. Travelling and migration is always associated with Globalization in the current trend. But people have always been travelling for several other reasons like economic, religious, personal and educational purposes. This can be seen in *The Shadow Lines*. The family of Tha’mma and her relatives will be constantly moving from one place to another. There are few characters like Ila who likes foreign

land. In the same way, in *The Glass Palace*, King Thebaw and his family will be exiled to Ratnagiri by the British Government. Ghosh's setting of the novel includes places like Egypt, Dhaka, Burma, Malaysia and Indian borders. In his novels, he has crossed the boundaries to explore people and places. He has used many Western characters in *The Circle of Reason* to acknowledge Western Science. He has also given credits to Indian scientists like C.V Raman, Jagadish Chandra Bose. Thus, his novels are global in perception and it has crossed boundaries.

Amitav Ghosh has said that he has given more importance to reality in his novels. Historical evidences are mentioned and he has explained how it has affected the life of a common man through fictional characters. He is fascinated by the real world and is not carried away by fantasy. Thus his novels question whether the boundaries are real or imaginary. Literature has recorded many events related to national boundaries. V.S. Naipaul has touched upon it in his works. He says that national boundaries have increased the patriotism of the people. People also believe that a nation possesses a particular ideology. It is the borders that determine the ideology of particular set of people. For Example, India is known to many as a land of culture, Holy Scriptures. India is associated with Justice and ethical values. Migration and travelling across the borders becomes a normal concept when it is seen from the perspective of travelling theory. Treatment of minorities in a country makes it a sensitive issue. The sense of belongingness and rootedness gets into the minds of the people. It makes them to "affiliate" themselves to a nation where they are born. These borders can also be seen in literature.

The Enigma of Arrival (1987), written by V.S. Naipaul, is considered as Transnational Fiction by many critics. It argues that Nationalism is needed to make one's own identity. It is the borders that make distinctions between various national cultures and heritages. So, boundaries are essential for people to fit into it. Paul Jay tells that the "Transnational turn" that is seen in literature is a result of Globalization. He also argues that Globalization has led to a borderless nation. Since, Globalization concentrate only on the economy, it has brought the world closer. Taking part in International trade is considered as a privilege in this global era. It mobilizes cultural exchanges between nations. So, Paul Jay argues that Globalization is an empowering force, when it is seen from a critical perspective. Also, many critics have said that V.S.Naipaul has gone beyond physical boundaries in the novel *The Enigma of Arrival*. In this novel, identity is something that is self-discovered by the protagonist.

Diaspora is a result of migration. People become nostalgic when they move away from their homeland. It is because of the boundaries that exist in Geography and in their mind. *The Circle of Reason*, one of the novels of Amitav Ghosh occupies a unique place in the field of postcolonial diasporic life. It depicts the condition of people who have lost their homes. They are displaced and they eventually become migrants in search of livelihood. This novel shows how boundaries play an important role in shaping the economic status of an individual. This is recorded by Brinda Bose in scholarly studies on the novels of Amitav Ghosh. The novelist foregrounds in the novel the various socio-economic problems faced by the Indians abroad due to illegal migration. Migration becomes illegal because of the lines drawn between the nations. Besides this issue, the novel handles certain ideological issues of post-independent Indian society.

Amitav Ghosh directs the people towards the configuration of new social forces with a progressive outlook that tries to overcome the burden of the past. So, Amitav Ghosh uses Globalization as a tool to justify his stand. Boundaries have always been in the minds of the people which have also led to certain Gender issues. Post- independent era in India is rocked with social inequalities, acute feelings of caste and creed, and gender discrimination. Patriarchal dominance that exists in Indian society has led to various feminist issues and corruption in public life. The post-independent society in India has protracted a hermetically sealed mentality for non- acceptance of any progressive idea. In the early part of the novel, Balram, a self professed Nationalist tries to make the Indian society get rid of germs and mental sickness.

The progressive plans of the protagonist are intervened by a police officer, a petty politician and a local landlord. This shows how much people are discouraged when they work towards progression. The school of practical Reason established by him for the spread of vocational education is razed to the ground as a result of personal acrimony. A misguided police officer, Jyoti Das, is a product of the socio-political degradation of Indian police morale. The marginalized section of the society works a lot for their livelihood. They run from pillar to post to earn their bread. They also try to shake off the cultural, casteist and patriarchal burden of the past in their diasporic life. They eventually arise on a new foothold. But it does not last longer due to their lack of identity. They are seen only as refugees in the new land.

In characterization, Ghosh does not opt for high social class. The marginalized people in the society seem to have acquired prominent place in his novels. For example, in the novel *The Circle of Reason*, Sambhu, a marginalized person, remains unrecognized

among master craftsmen. Alcoholism drives him to lose his expertise in weaving. Disregarding the caste barrier, Balaram helps to arouse the hidden spirit of Sambhu by requesting him to become the teacher of his nephew. This shows the quality of Balaram, who has erased all the boundaries that exist in the society. He sends his nephew, Alu as an apprentice to Sambhu's house to learn weaving. In Balaram's opinion, Education can be received through work experience. For self-reliance, he avers, India ought to implement the policy of promoting cottage industry. The improvement of the poor and the downtrodden can be substantially achieved through the spread of cottage industries. He has also touched upon Globalization through this.

Many incidents in *The Circle of Reason* explain the readers about the mindset of the people. They like to live within the boundaries and they have also set certain boundaries in their mind. They respect a person only based on the identity they possess. They are also keen on finding someone's identity. One day, the master weaver chances to know Shambu's secret identity from a merchant of Nuakhali. He is hardly able to check the flood of tears from his eyes. The same night Sambhu leaves for his hamlet and stays in his village to teach people the secrets of Jamdani. But the reply to him: "A crow falls out of the sky if it tries to teach peacockery." This shows the sick mind of people. The boundaries that they have drawn in their mind in their mind have always kept them away from empathy. In this novel, Balaram's wife opposes him for being rational. People only praise a person's and not his talent. This discouraging attitude of the people is the reason for the destruction of cottage industries in India. They consider western products as superior and they don't give importance to local business. Balaram's efforts are directed to revitalize the supine talent of Sambhu, which he has lost in alcohol. So, he pays him

regularly even though Sambhu initially shows no zeal to teach Alu. Sambhu's self-degradation and non-utilization of his expertise symbolizes the case of many artisans in India who receive no boosting from the society to popularize their handicraft. This shows how boundaries in the minds of the people have ruined the livelihood of such artisans.

Boundaries that are drawn to women in the society have also found a voice in Amitav Ghosh through his novels. It is pointed out by Smita Shukla in the article "Representation of Women in Amitav Ghosh's Select Novels" (2015). She says that he sees novel as a meta-form that transcends boundaries that circumscribe other kinds of writing, rendering meaningless usual workday distinctions between historian, journalist, anthropologist, etc. As a writer, Ghosh continues to have his Bengali legacies and is extremely sensitive towards issues of political importance, as well as cultural significance. Ghosh's narratives are drawn from life and are successful in creating a connection between the multicultural postcolonial societies. His novels give voice to people traditionally regarded as silent. His characters are complete human representations with shadows of grey. American anthropologist, James Clifford in the article "The Transit Lounge of Culture" (1991) says, "Ghosh's writing draws attention to the complex roots and routes that make up the relations between cultures: everyone is on the move, and they have been for centuries: dwelling in travel" (Shukla 76).

Feminist criticism questions the long-standing, dominant, patriarchal attitude and male interpretations in literature. It challenges traditional and expected male ideas about the nature of women and about how women feel, act and think. It thus questions numerous prejudices and assumptions about women made by male writers. In interpretation of feminism, a controversial issue is whether women are represented in the

novels of male authors. The Indian perspectives of Feminist theory perhaps longs to grow and develop to be used as a tool for intellectual enquiry. While some critics argue that only female authors can write honestly about feminism, others contend that male authors can also write about feminism. Boundaries are also drawn to writers, when they speak about woman.

Ghosh's representation of women has traces of his Bengali legacy and his women tend to be responsible, emotionally stronger and more practical in nature. They are traditional but are ready to accept the change. This shows the strong roots that they possess. They represent cultural constriction of Indian society and are successful in striking a balance between their modern and traditional roles. *The Hungry Tide* represents strong women characters. It represents four contemporary women. The life of these major female characters is governed by the time and history which impacts their lives profoundly. Piya is a central character and she represents modernity as she is an American by descent. "She was a foreigner; it was stamped in her posture, in the way she stood, balancing on her heels like a flyweight boxer, with her feet planted apart" (HT 03). Moyna is another self dependent woman in the novel who has aspirations of rising high. Even though her financial condition is not very good she wants to live life with respect and dignity. She works as a nurse and wants to become a doctor. She wants to teach her son so that he can lead a better life. This woman has erased all the boundaries drawn by the society and has succeeded in her life. Amitav Ghosh has always represented such strong women in his works.

The objectives of this project are:

- to bring out the dubious nature of borders, which exist between nations and people

- to explore the theme of connectedness among human beings in the face of social struggles, ethical dilemmas and personal challenges

- to reflect the ideology of Colonial Desire and Hybridity and

- to bring out the sense of brotherhood that exists between people belonging to different countries.

Chapter One gives an introduction to the works of Amitav Ghosh. Chapter Two deals with the Borders of Identity and also with the pain of displacement and rootlessness in the individual due to colonialism. Chapter Three presents the blurring borders with reference to the concepts of Nationalism, political freedom and personal freedom. Chapter Four summarizes the above mentioned Chapters and it brings out the illusionary nature of Borders.

The Shadow Lines, in the opinion of the eminent critic A.N. Kaul, is concerned with the theme of crossing of frontiers- especially those of nationality, culture and language. It covers three countries- India, East Pakistan and England. In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh acknowledges no separate national or cultural realities. For him, all such demarcations are shadow lines, arbitrary and invented divisions. While crossing the border, the grandmother cannot see the line dividing the countries. Partition of the Indian subcontinent is the most traumatic experience in the recent history. The event has been the focal point in many Indian novels. Novy Kapadia's article *Communal Frenzy and Partition: Bapsi Sidhwa, Attia Hosain and Amitav Ghosh* deals with the genre of partition novel. D.K. Pabby in his article "Theme of Partition and Freedom in Khushwant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*" brings out the futility of

drawing lines across a nation to form two nations, one having an East wing, which is separated from its west wing by over a thousand miles.

Chapter II

***The Glass Palace* – Borders of Identity**

CHAPTER II

THE GLASS PALACE – BORDERS OF IDENTITY

The Glass Palace begins with the journey of Rajkumar. For his age, he has travelled a lot. His native is Chittagong, and he has lived in Akyab with his parents. After losing his parent, he has come to Mandalay in search of a job. Though Akyab and Mandalay are in the same country Burma, Mandalay has seemed to be a different atmosphere for him. It is primarily because of the way they treat him. Initially, people in Mandalay start to judge him by his skin colour. Rajkumar's curiosity about visiting the Glass Palace is questioned just because he is an Indian. People like Ma Cho have certain stereotypes in their mind, and they have never thought of coming out of it. "you fool of an Indian, you coal-black kalaa?" (7). It shows that Ma Cho finds Rajkumar's Nationality through his complexion. Throughout the novel, in many instances he is seen only as an Indian. Though most of the Asian countries have utmost similar culture and habits, society differentiates one from the other on the basis of Nationality. This happens to many characters in the novel. There is a mention of Arakan in the novel. It is a coast where Burma and Bengal collide. Amitav Ghosh points out that nature has provided landscapes for people to live, but Humans have separated it.

The Glass Palace deals with the events that have disturbed the peace of Burma. Burma remains silent and the safest place to the people of Burma before the sailing of the British fleet in Irrawaddy. The Navy has put the people of Burma in a stressful situation. It has mostly affected the life of the middle-class people. Many people in Mandalay are dependent on the stalls for their livelihood. Ma Cho is one among them. The invasion of the British has made them stay in their houses. Then, 'A Royal Proclamation' is issued

under the King's signature. Everything in Mandalay has become normal after the release of the Proclamation. In one or the other way, the people of Mandalay are emotionally connected to the king of Burma. They would have not even seen him closely, but they have become energetic after reading his words of proclamation. A new wave of Nationalism has come into their minds after the British fleet.

Queen Supayalat is one of the crucial characters in the novel. She is an empowered woman who administers the external affairs of Burma. She likes to walk with dignity and self-respect. In the beginning of the novel, she slams the Indian empire for being inferior to that of British. She tells that she cannot consider the British as masters. She warns that Burma would become another slave nation of British. Queen Supayalat believes that the British Government intends to extend their territories. Borders are generally set by the British Empire to do business. The kings of the country are not expected to interfere in the dealings of the British Government. This is common in most of the British colonies. Burma is not an exception to the rule of the British. They have initially come into Burma for wood. Burma is famous for timber all over the world. Eventually, the British Government has taken over the entire timber business of Burma. They have framed their own rules and have also altered it according to their convenience.

The King of Burma, Thebaw, is very much keen on collecting taxes. The British Timber Company has followed it for a few days, and then they have stopped paying tax to the king of Burma. This has resulted in the disruption of allies between Burma and the British Government. Queen Supayalat does not allow them to ruin the natural resources of Burma. This has led to the war. This has disturbed the peace of the nation. British Empire has destroyed the kingdom of Thebaw for wood. In British rule, Companies have

started to own the natural resources of Burma. Flags of the companies are displayed while transporting the timber in ships. This shows their tactics of doing business across borders. British have promised to construct Roads and Railways in the name of development. Queen Supayalat has always been proud of her kingdom since it is the wealthiest country of Asia. Queen Supayalat knows very well that the British will soon rob all the gems and natural resources of Burma. She worries for her people who are going to remain ignorant under British rule.

Queen Supayalat's forethought has become true. The entire king's family has become prisoners of the British Government. The Burmese could not match with the firepower of British. Two-thirds of British's soldiers are from India. British have taken Burma under their control by defeating King Thebaw using Indian Soldiers. So, they are taken to exile by the British. People of Burma have started to feel empathy with the king of Burma in their departure. Many town people have disliked her for being arrogant and violent. Her cruelty has killed many people. But, she has gained respect at the time of her exile. "It was as though a bond had been conjured into existence that had never existed before" (34). Rajkumar has not seen this kind of emotions in India, because the land has been conquered by the British for a century. He has not seen any emotions beyond friendship and family. He says, "Imagine how strange this was: there they were, looting the palace and at the same time paying homage to the Queen!" (143). It shows the psychology of the common people of Burma. Though many are hesitant to speak up, they do not like being ruled by a foreigner.

Thebaw, the king of Burma is also very much worried about his people. He knows how the British treat colonized people. Rangoon consists of many Indians than Burmese.

They are brought there by the British to pull rickshaws and carry night soil. It is because Burmese do not do menial jobs. Most of the Burmese know to read and write. They make money through their education or by establishing stalls. In Burma, there is no one to work in docks and mills. So, the British have brought Indians to Burma to do such works. He asks, "Why? Why this furious movement- people taken from one place to another, to pull rickshaws, to sit blind in exile?" (50). Now Burma has become a colony of the British Empire. British have extended their border, and it is going to be a burden for the people of Burma. The king fears that the borders would make his people work in exile like Indians. He is scared that it would make his people rootless. Queen Supayalat says, "Yes, look around you, look at how we live. Yes, we who ruled the richest land in Asia are reduced to this. This is what they have done to us, this is what they will do to all of Burma" (88).

Borders have helped labour contractors to search for labourers in India. Baburao is one such contractor who earns money through hiring workers for menial jobs. Since Burma is being captured by the British; contractors have used it as an opportunity to make money. These workers are mostly employed to work in the Teak Camps. British Government frequently uses the word 'Freedom' to persuade the people of its colonies.

In the same way, these agents hire workers by speaking about liberty and the wealth of Burma. Baburao says, "In a matter of a few years they will earn back enough to free themselves of debt. Then they will be at liberty to return or stay in Burma as they choose" (126). Humanity has no place in this trade. Humans are exported and imported from one country to another just like goods. Many Indians are unaware of the consequences behind the borders. They have accepted to go to Burma for employment.

The most affected people are these workers who have migrated to Burma for money. Uma questions Rajkumar, “Did you ever think of the consequences when you were transporting people here? What you and your kind have done is far worse than the worst deeds of the Europeans” (247).

The defeat of the Burmese Army has mainly affected the maids of Queen Supayalat. Most of the maids are orphans. They are all purchased by the Queen’s agents from the Northern kingdom to work in the palace. Since they are orphans, few maids are sent along with the king’s family to exile. Borders that are drawn by the British have made them move from one place to another because they know very well that they cannot fight against the British armed forces. They have always considered “Glass Palace” as their home. Having no other go, they have left their Glass Palace and have walked along with their masters. But, they have started to think of getting back to their home (Burma). They are not used to the atmosphere of their new place of exile (Outram House). Borders cannot change the sense of feeling that they have towards Burma. Rajkumar while explaining about his first meeting with Dolly, he says, “a kind of forlornness in her eyes” (141). Though they are lonely in the new place, they have to accept it. Their home has become a temporary camp just because of the Borders drawn by the British.

On the other hand, Borders are of great use for the British Government, since they can shift powers from one to the other. They can recruit soldiers from many parts of the world, as they extend their territory. Many Indians have supported colonialism since Borders have also increased the employment opportunities of the people of India.

Hundreds of years ago soldiers had fought out of religious belief, or because of allegiance to their tribes, or to defend their kings. But those

days were long past: now soldiering was a job, a profession, a career.

Every soldier was paid and there was none who was not a mercenary.

(347)

Though they are uneducated, they are given the job of sepoy's in the British Army. But, they are not able to understand that they are paid very less. Saya John says, "For a few coins they would allow their masters to use them as they wished" (29). British have started to establish many Teak camps along the borders of Burma. Teak has become the main fortune for the British to invade Burma. "A tree that had felled dynasties, caused invasions, created fortunes, brought a new way of life into being" (71).

British Timber Company employs forest assistants, the company officer in charge of the camp. Forest assistants are mostly English men. This shows the sense of superiority of the British over others. These officers cross the borders, leaving their motherland to work for the company. Though they cross boundaries, English men gain respect. It is because they are always kept in the position of authority. But, it is not the same case for others. Workers in the teak camps are treated like slaves. Teak Camps are temporary places to them since it is built only to transport the logs. The other revolution that has come in the plantation industry is Rubber. Demand for rubber has risen due to the increased usage of automobiles. Rubber parts are essential for cars. The two main challenges for this business are land and labors.

People of Malaya plant rubber in their land, but they take labors from outside the country. "A large number of people had already gathered there, most of them Indians"(216). There is a popular saying, "Every rubber tree in Malaya was paid for with an Indian life" (233). Rubber Plantation would not be possible in Malaya without Indians.

Even in Malaya, Indians are discriminated on the basis of colour. Ilongo is the son of one of the Plantation workers. Everybody in the Plantation calls him 'Morningside's village idiot.' Their life has become hectic and uncertain. No one is going to bother for the labors since they are from outside the border. Credits and money go to the person who owns the land. Very few Nationalists like Uma have understood the plight of these workers.

Plantation workers have initially come to earn money. Poverty has brought them there, but they are again reduced to slavery by the Borders around them. "The British Colonial Government was looking to India to supply coolies and workers for the plantations" (183). There is no difference between the Colonial Government and these landowners. Owners of Rubber Plantation call themselves as liberators. It is their empire, and they have framed rules for it. Mathew says, "There's law, there's order, everything is well run" (233).

Owners justify their stand by telling that the workers are well fed. Mathew says, "And they're a lot better off than they would be if they were back where they came from" (231). They use the worker's past situation to justify their present condition. But the terror on the worker's face, when the manager shouts at them can never be justified. Workers have the same life here, which they have had in their Motherland, but their situation has become even worse due to the lack of Freedom of Speech. Uma feels that the manager should be kind towards the workers. One should not be hard handed to make them work. They will obey, even if it is said in a kind and proper way. The workers have always listened to Ilongo. "He had no need to raise his voice or utter threats in order to gain respect: they trusted him as one of their own" (323). They have tried to link themselves to people belonging to their Motherland. The British Government has

promised to give freedom and liberty to the common people of the country. But, in reality, the working class people are exempted from it.

Geographical Borders can never change the mentality of masters towards slaves. The boundaries are very strong in their minds and it cannot be erased easily. Uma argues that Rajkumar has the same mindset after becoming a successful businessman. She shouts, “Do you think nobody knows about the things you’ve done to people in your power- to women and children who couldn’t defend themselves?” (248). Plantation workers are the most affected during the Nationalist movement. “In Malaya, the only people who lived in abject, grinding poverty were plantation labourers- almost all of whom were Indian in origin” (346).

Social changes happen to humans when they move to a new place. Though they are not allowed to mingle with the local people of Ratnagiri, the children of the king’s family have started to speak Marathi and Hindustani. They speak Burmese only with their parent. Since the princesses are young, they have begun to feel the sense of home in Ratnagiri. Queen Supayalat does not get any sense of belongingness in the Outram House. Queen is not permitted to go anywhere because the British think that it would disturb the peace of Burma. She has gone only to very few places in Ratnagiri. But Princesses do not understand the history behind their stay in Ratnagiri. To them, the Outram House is a new place of comfort. Business people of Malaya have started to learn Tamil since there are many south Indians in the plantation industry. “They were all Indians, from the South: Mathew had learned to speak their language- Tamil” (200). Language is the first thing people learn when they cross borders. In some cases, Language unites people and helps them to establish their identity in a new pace. In the

same way, Saya John wears western clothes when he goes to meet the Forest Assistant. Common people are forced to adapt themselves to the changing colonial situation.

Though the King's family is sent to exile, they are being respected by the people everywhere. For example, Thebaw is greeted with a gun salute and a guard of honour in Ratnagiri. Queen Supayalat has preserved the spirit of Mandalay Protocol. In Outram House, several times she has refused to acknowledge the visit of higher officials. Local people of Ratnagiri have started to send gifts to princesses through the coachman, Mohan Sawant. "Give the Second Princess these Mangoes. They're alphonsoes from our garden. Give the little girl a handful of this dried kokum. I saw her asking you about it" (77). The public has always had a curiosity to know about the King's family. It has happened in Rangoon too. Dolly has gone to Burma after her marriage. In Burma, many have taken an interest in enquiring about the King to Dolly. "This was a subject of universal interest in Burma, and Dolly's sharing of the Royal Family's exile made her something of a celebrity herself" (185). Though they are separated through Borders, no one in Burma has forgotten the king. King has always been seen as a man of their land.

Everything seemed to be safe for the king's family in their places of exile. There is nothing to be worried about since the British has kept them in a comfortable place. Geographical Borders have not disturbed the privacy of the princesses in any way. During their stay in the Glass Palace, they have not been allowed to socialize themselves with the people of Burma. Their status remains the same in the Outram House. Borders that they have drawn around them are visible to the people everywhere. But, it is not the same for the middle-class people. Maid is always seen as a maid. They do not get any special reward or respect. Status of the working class people remains the same. It also

affects them more economically. People who run their family through daily wages are the most affected people in Burma. They do not get any work during the war times and it remains as a hindrance for their survival. They do not bother to know who rules them since it does not change their life in any way.

British Government has appointed few Indian officers to administer Britain's Indian possessions. Examination for the Civil Service is conducted in England. People from middle-Class family cannot afford to write exams since they have to cross borders. Though many Indians are educated, they do not attempt for Civil Service Exam. Man-made Borders has always been a hindrance to the native people of India. IAS has become an unattainable dream for many educated Indians. In this way, the British have set borders around Indians even for employment. Beni Prasad Dey is one such Indian officer who has crossed both Geographical and mental boundaries to get employed in Civil Service. He is appointed as the Administrative Head of Ratnagiri district. Though he is an Indian, he is considered as an outsider by Thebaw and Supayalat.

The King's family dislikes the Collector for two reasons. Firstly, he is being appointed by the British Government to monitor the king's family. Secondly, he is a supporter of Colonialism. The Collector usually defends the British Empire. As a result of it, he has also got into heated arguments with many people. Many people blame the officers for being loyal to the British Government. Dinu says, "People like you- just doing their jobs... You're the enemy" (425). The officers do not have a clear understanding of Borders. The collector considers the British as superior because they have conquered many countries. Most of the countries in the world map are the colonies of British. He believes that the borders decide the power of an Empire. He says, "The

Empire is today stronger than it has ever been. You have only to glance at a map of the world to see the truth of this” (107). He is against the Nationalist movement in India and Burma. The Collector believes that the British have given freedom to the common people of India.

The Collector does not respect or give freedom to his wife, Uma. He wants his wife to flex according to his requirements. He has specific rules for his wife to follow. Until his death, she has been like a prisoner in his cage. Uma thinks that her husband does not understand the real meaning of Freedom. His thoughts are filled with rules that have created borders in his mind. In the same way, the whole world thinks that British government has given freedom for women in India. Women, who are expected to stay at home, have started to earn money for the family, but Uma does not believe that the British have brought this Gender equality in India. She questions, “How was it possible to imagine that one could grant freedom by imposing subjugation?” (189). She is born in an orthodox family, but she is not expected to be confined to home after her husband’s death.

Uma has dedicated herself to a life of politics instead of accepting the usual life of the Hindu widow. Many Women do not come out of the borders that are being drawn around them. Manju can be said as an example of it. She likes to act and she has got an offer to act. She has gone to the studio without the knowledge of her family. After a lot of deliberations, she did not pursue acting. She did not take any efforts to follow her passion or career. She has lived her life within the boundaries. It is a typical mindset of Indian Women. Uma has a clear understanding of Borders that exist in society and between

countries. She tells that Freedom is just a tool used by the British Government to justify their act of conquering other countries.

Arjun, Uma's nephew, speaks against the views of Uma. He is a soldier in the British Indian Army. He is only concerned about his career. He does not bother who rules and who conquers his land. His ecstatic sense of liberation has made him to defend the British Army. Arjun thinks that he is the first generation of educated Indian who enjoys freedom. Initially, he mocks at the anti-war movements that have been led by Mahatma Gandhi. "Why should India, in the name of freedom, come to the defense of this Satanic Empire which is itself the greatest menace to liberty that the world has ever known" (292). He does not understand the subjugation that the British impose on the Indian Soldiers. Many in his family have begun to berate him for serving in the Army. Arjun says, "We are here to defend you" (287). It took time for him to understand that they are being misused by the British to withhold power. He says, "uneducated, unconscious of his motives- should be more aware of the weight of the past than he, Arjun?" (431). Britain has used weapons and manpower to demonstrate its power.

Indians in the army are not respected on a par with the British officers. At times, even Indians do not respect their men. Working under the British is seen as a privilege by Indians. It is not accepted by the Indian officers when Hardy is given the rank of Viceroy's Commissioned Officer. "Crossing a barrier that has become a great divide in their minds" (283). British Government says that the Army is ruled by manuals, regulations, and procedures, but it is not true. "But actually, underneath there are all these murky shadows that you can never quite see: prejudice, distrust, suspicion" (285). Though they could not win a war without the support of Indian soldiers, the British

officers have tried to stop Indians from entering the war. British officers do not want Indians to hold important positions in the army.

The war itself is to enslave other people. This is a competition for supremacy among nations who have believed it to be their shared destiny to enslave other peoples. So, the soldiers are called 'mercenaries' by the people since the soldiers work in the army for money. Hardy thinks that the word 'mercenary' is like degrading them. He says, "The word have the sting of an insult? It's because a mercenary's hands obey someone else's head; those two parts of his body have no connection with each other" (347). Indian Army men are also discriminated by the common people of Malaya. In Malaya, the clubs have put up signs on their doors saying, "No Asiatics allowed." This shows the borders that lie in the minds of the common people of a country. The people of Malaya are against the soldiers though the soldiers guard them. The borders have created hatred in the minds of the people. Indians do not have a permanent place in the army. They do not know which country they are fighting for. Hardy says, "What is it? Where is this country? The fact is that you and I don't have a country- so where is this place whose safety, honour and welfare are to come first, always and every time? And why was it that when we took our oath it wasn't to a country but to the king Emperor- to defend the Empire?" (330) The Queen has a different opinion on the National Movement. The British have promised to give freedom to the people of its colonies. But the Queen believes that the British have never followed the rules. It has framed rules only to conquer nations.

The English alone understand liberty, we were told; they do not put kings and princes to death; they rule through laws. If that is so, why has King Thebaw never been brought to trial? Where are these laws that we hear of?

Is it crime to defend your country against an invader? Would the English not do the same? (150)

King Thebaw believes that time has the power to modify the borders in the map. Borders can vaguely separate people. On the other hand, Borders also have the power of uniting people against a common enemy. British Government knows it very well. So, they always have an eye on the king's family. The collector says, "The king is the one person who could bring the country together, against them" (136). Even after King's death, his body is not taken back to Burma. "They are afraid that the King's body might become a rallying point in Burma" (205) If a dead man's body can create riots in Burma, it shows that human emotions are strong. Time also has the ability to shift powers from one to the other in the business sector. "The teak industry had changed over the last decade, and old-fashioned timber men like Rajkumar had become anachronisms" (273).

King Thebaw's opinion on borders can be justified. Dolly, one of the maids of the Queen, has never thought of returning to Mandalay. She tells that the people of Burma would consider her as an outsider. She has lived all her life in Ratnagiri, and returning to Burma makes no sense to her. She says, "they would call me a kalaa like they do Indians- a trespasser, an outsider from across the sea" (113). She does not even remember the places of Burma. There are things that cannot be changed even through money. Things get changed with time. Initially, she has always thought of returning to Burma. As time goes on, Ratnagiri has become her home. Time and situation create borders in mind. Being alienated from one's mother land is a terrible feeling which no one can bear. To Dolly, in the course of time, Ratnagiri has become her Motherland. After her marriage, leaving Ratnagiri has become too difficult for Dolly. Time can change the borders on the

map and the mind. In the same way, Dolly has tried to explain the current political situation of Burma to Rajkumar several times. But, he has failed to accept it. She says, “Burma of today is not the Burma he came to when he was eleven” (241).

Views on borders can differ from person to person. To Rajkumar, coming to Burma is just a boat accident. He does not have any place in this world and he has no wealth to preserve. He has no family and relatives. So, crossing the geographical borders is not a big deal for a person like him. But, Beni Prasad dey is amazed at Rajukumar’s travel from one country to another. He asks, “What kind of accident carries a man to another country?” (142). The Collector finds it very difficult because he is keen on observing the world map. He thinks that Borders are drawn to make people inaccessible to other countries. In the case of Rajkumar, it has worked differently. He is illiterate, who barely knows to sign his name. He does not bother about the lines in the world map. He has never thought of learning it too. This is the state of many people in the country.

The king’s family in Burma has maintained certain boundaries for marriage. They do not get married from outside their houses. The Collector says, “The custom of the ruling dynasties of Burma was to marry very closely within their houses. Only a man descended of Konbaun blood in both lines was eligible to marry into the Royal Family” (115). Eligibility for marriage is tested only by the blood and not by the character. Princess marrying within their houses is seen as pride by society. They do not encourage inter-caste marriages. But, Queen Supayalat has permitted her daughter to marry the coachman. The Collector is shocked at her decision. He even argues, “consider the Princess’s reputation, consider your standing in society. Your Highness, I beg you to reflect. Is it appropriate that a princess of Burma should link herself to a household

employee, a servant?” (149). Stereotypes that exist in the minds of the people have led to such mental Borders. People set boundaries and they do not accept when the boundaries are erased.

Saya John is another important character in the novel, *The Glass Palace* who does not belong anywhere. He has travelled from one country to another and as a result, he has got mixed identities. He does not have parents and so Catholic priests have taken care of him from his birth. He has been to many countries and people question him of his identity. They wonder because Saya John looks like a Chinese but has a Christian name. Society is not able to understand that he has crossed boundaries. Saya John also speaks many languages, but people are not able to accept him as a person belonging to their own country. Though Saya John is not marginalized by society, he is always seen as a person with no identity. Saya John has a clear understanding of the British and borders. Saya John tells that the British spread evil all over the world by invoking war to extend their territories. Poor soldiers in their colonized countries like India serve their purposes. Saya John asks, “How do you fight an enemy who fights from neither enmity nor anger, but in submission to orders from superiors, without protest and without conscience” (30).

The soldiers work under the officers in the British Army only for Money. Earning Money is their only intention and they do not understand the international politics behind it. Uma says, “Indian soldiers were being used to fortify the empire. Indians being made to kill for the Empire, fighting people who should be their friends...” (247). To them, the Army is like any other company which recruits workers for low wages. They do not even know for whom they are fighting and why they are fighting for? They will set fire to the whole village if their officers order them. But, they are kind-hearted and show gratitude

to everybody around them. Their innocence is being misused by the Army for extending their territory. Hardy says, “They didn’t see things as we do. They were illiterate yaar. You have to remember that we’re the first generation of educated Indian soldiers” (349). In this way, colonialism and Borders have an impact on middle-class people of the country. In every empire, they are the most affected people. Arjun says, “Look at what they’re doing to jews... And if they have their way they’ll destroy the working-class movement everywhere in the world” (293). Uma tells that all the empires are utterly evil.

The Empire uses people who strive for food, shelter, and livelihood. These people are the generation of uneducated Indian sepoys in the British Army. Saya John calls them as ‘innocent evil.’ Rajkumar says, “they’re just tools. Without minds of their own” (30). Many think that the country can only benefit from having men of conscience in the army. “India needs soldiers who won’t blindly obey their superiors” (258).

Many soldiers of the British Indian Army have settled in Canada after their retirement. During their stay in the United States, they have learnt the real meaning of freedom and liberty. They have started many organizations to support the Indian Independence Movement. Borders that are drawn by British have created enmity in the minds of the soldiers whom they once employed. Creating dispute among people in the name of Borders can even make their men turn in the opposite direction. “Perceiving a link between the treatment abroad and India’s subject status, they had become dedicated enemies of the empire they had once served” (222). People have started to resist the empire that has given employment for them during the times of their poverty. There are many who disrespect the Indian soldiers for serving in the British Indian Army. “Do you

know what we say in Burma when we see Indian soldiers? We say: there goes the army of slaves- marching off to catch more slaves for their masters” (288).

Common men of the country have come forward to speak against the British since the British have exploited the human resources of India. British have used Indian soldiers to guard their empire. The tactics of the British is not known to Indian soldiers in the army, but the politicians are aware of the consequences. One of the Congress Politicians asks, “And how does it feel, for an Indian to be wearing that uniform?” (287). Though many people question them, the soldiers have found satisfaction in working on the details of the plans that had been dictated by others. They are made to believe that they are working to free the country from bad kings and evil customs. Gianji says, “We never thought that we were being used to conquer people. It took us a long time to understand that in their eyes freedom exists wherever they rule” (224).

Many women lose their husband at a very young age. This shows the sacrifice that the middle-class people they do for a country, which is being ruled by a colonizer. “They are soldiers too. From the time they are little they begin to learn what it means to be widowed early, to bring up children without their men; to spend their life with husbands who are maimed and crippled...” (290). Indians are not given any credits or token of appreciation for their hard work in the British Indian Army. British Government has thought that Indians would spoil the army if they become officers. For generations, recruitment into the British Indian Army has been ruled by racial policies that have excluded most men in the country, including those from Bengal.

Usually they were just ‘brothers’ but at times they were also much more, even the ‘First true Indians’. ‘Look at us’- they would say,- ‘Punjabis,

Marathas, Bengalis, Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims. Where else in India would you come across a group such as ours- where region and religion don't matter- where we can all drink together and eat beef and pork and think nothing of it?' (278)

An army is a place which creates oneness among people of several social groups, but the borders in the minds of the British have resulted in creating hatred in the minds of Indians. Many soldiers have started to raise their voice against the British officers when an Indian soldier has committed suicide in the camp. A company of Muslim soldiers has proceeded to lay down their weapons, in a show of sympathy. The next day many of the battalion's Hindu soldiers also have laid down their arms. So, the Indians sense of oneness against a common enemy has brought them together as a nation. Indian soldiers in abroad have developed their links with the Irish resistance in America. The thing that they both have in common is the resistance against their empire. They know very well that the common people of the country are misused by the empire for the sake of increasing income.

Teak business has flourished in Burma after the invasion of the British. Many new unknown men have come into the trade. Rajkumar is one among them. Initially, he has started his business by signing a contract with a railway company. It has taken him to greater heights. He has succeeded in achieving his dreams at a young age. D.P Roy says, "Mr. Rajkumar Raha, a name then unknown in the world of teak, had succeeded in underbidding all the major companies. Some of the richest people in the city are Indians, and most of them began with nothing more than a bundle of clothes and a tin box" (134, 135). Though he does not belong to Burma, he has become one of the wealthiest

businessmen of the country. He firmly believes that the economy of Burma would not work without Indian Businessmen.

Rajkumar has not failed to help his people. Bengali Community in Rangoon has benefited from his assistance. He has a special affinity with Bengalis in Burma. These people are united only by their Nationality. Humans have the habit of drawing borders around their social group. This is to keep them connected to a particular section of society. Rajkumar has offered money to reconstruct the temple of Hindu Bengalis. Bengalis have built temples in Burma to establish their religion and identity. Similarly Americans have established colleges in Rangoon. It is disliked by many Burmese people. It has also led to the emergence of 'Identity Politics' in Burma. Arjun thinks that in no way it is better than Nazism. He says, "their whole ideology is about the superiority of certain races and the inferiority of others" (293). Amongst students and Nationalists, agitation has been underway to separate Burma's administration from that of British India.

Many Indians saw this as a cause for alarm, believing that their safety would be threatened by separation. The Nationalists of Burma thought that the British Government has nothing to do with the reformation of Burma. Burma is a place which is reformed and has no caste, but the British used the same word 'freedom' to conquer Burma. Uma says, "On the contrary the Burmese were very egalitarian. Women had a high standing- probably more so than in the West. There was universal literacy. But Burma was conquered too and subjugated" (295). The standard of living of Malaya has always been high. In Malaya, even ordinary people can afford cars and refrigerators. Air conditioners

and refrigerators are very common in Malaya. In India, only Europeans and the richest of rich Indians could afford such things then. The British have conquered Malaya too.

Many Burmese have given shelter for Indians in their houses. There are many people who cherish Humanity. Many Indians have joined together to form a Refugee Evacuation Committee. It is to ensure the safety of Indians living abroad. There are also people who hate Indian blood for no reason. They even hate children who are half-Burmese and half-Indian. They spread hatred everywhere and they even kill the workers. Borders in their mind have resulted in Extremism. Many Indians have become homeless after the riots. It is the property that they have earned keeps them connected to Burma. The native agitators know very well about it. So, they have attacked the properties that Indians own in Burma. Mainly they have attacked the workers of the timber yard since the issue has begun from there. They do not mind even if their riot affects the economy of Burma. Their only motive is pulling Indians out of Burma.

Rajkumar does not feel like leaving Burma even after the riots. "Burma has given me everything I have. The boys have grown up here: they've never known any other home" (311). Borders that are created by the people have made him an enemy to them. Though he can sense the enmity, he is not able to leave Burma. At some point of time, Rajkumar has understood that time has come for him to move. Borders have made him lose the sense of home that he has for Burma. "What matters is what people think of us. And it's plain enough that men like me are now seen as the enemy- on all sides" (310). Many Indians have even lost their family. Due to the war, the flow of letters has suffered disruptions because of the threat of submarines in the Bay of Bengal. So, the Indians have found difficulty in communicating with their family members, who live across borders. In

some cases, even Money cannot give shelter to people. It has become the state of Indians in Burma. After the riot, even Millionaires have become refugees. King Thebaw's words have become true. Time can shift powers from one to the other. This works the same for business too. It holds power only for a certain period. For example, Rubber has lost its value during the depression. In the same way, the Burmese Independent Movement has affected the Teak Business.

Everywhere it is the common people who get affected due to the agitators. Dolly says, "There's a lot of anger, a lot of resentment, and much of it is aimed at Indians" (240). It is even more dangerous to people like Dolly, who have married an Indian. Humans lack empathy when they draw borders in their mind. They do not bother about love, care, and affection. Dolly says, "Do you know that I spent twenty years of my life in exile, with Burma's last king? Over here you forgot all about us. What little joy we had came from Indians" (240). People who rise in the riot against Indians can never understand all these emotions of Dolly. Borders have made them intrude into other person's personal life. They have failed to understand that Marriage is a personal choice. Many Indians are forced to leave Burma. Moving back to motherland cannot be done easily since they have property in Burma. They have all worked a lot to earn money. They have now started to develop the fear of losing their wealth. They do not even know whether they can make a living in India. Rajkumar says, "And anyway, what makes you think that we'll be any more welcome in India than we are here?" (245).

Uma, during her stay in New York, has found that Indians in New York are strongly connected though they are few. "Indian officers feel strongly about public issues- particularly the question of independence" (416). Though borders exist in between

countries; people try to connect themselves to the new land in many ways. Indians in New York are connected through 'Indian Independence League.' They have also started an organization in the United States. It is called Ghadar Party. Many Indians have joined this Indian Revolutionary Movement. Newspapers are also published in the name 'Ghadar'. Many Indian students in the University of California have published articles concerning the Indian Independence Movement. Though they live away from their motherland, patriotism has made them work for Indian people. Uma has felt the strong connections between them. They do not work only for their Motherland, but to the Human community as a whole. Arjun has stayed in many Indian people's houses during his stay in Malaya. Though many in Malaya have hated Indian soldiers, Indians have given shelter to them. Nationality has connected them. Many do not like soldiers because the people of Malaya think that the soldiers do not act according to their intellect. Alison says, "Arjun- you're not in charge of what you do; you're a toy, a manufactured thing, a weapon in someone else's hands. Your mind doesn't inhabit your body" (376).

Rajkumar has lived most of his life in Burma, and it has become a home for him. D.P. Roy says, "He has lived in Burma so long that he is now more Burmese than Indian and may well be counted as a foreigner" (135). Strong bonds have always existed between Saya John and Rajkumar. They are emotionally connected and they have not set any boundaries between them. Dolly has considered Saya John as her father- in- law. Though they belong to different social group and country, love has united them. Saya John is a person who knows real human values. After the death of his wife, he has lived his life only for his son, Mathew. Mathew has also been in good term with Rajkumar's

family. Rajukumar's children, Dinu and Neel have liked visiting Mathew's Morningside House. An invisible link has risen between all of them- Dinu, Neel, and Alison.

Dinu had gone to Morningside's house to help Alison. After losing her parent, Alison has found it difficult to live in Malaya. She tried to leave Malaya along with Dinu until the end of the war. Being a Burmese, Dinu did not get any place in the train. He says, "This is wartime. We were told that this was an evacuation train. How can it be only for Europeans? There must be some mistake" (424). Though everyone in Malaya is in danger, the British Government has tried only to help the Europeans. This action reflects the mindset of the rulers. The Indian Soldiers are expected to be loyal to the British Government, but the British did not have humanity towards the Indians. People did not know whom to blame for the inconveniences. It is too difficult for Alison who has both American and Chinese blood. The British Government has used Indian men to extend their borders. Now, they have put the same Indians into trouble.

The soldiers are in the same situation in the British Indian Army. The British Indian soldiers are hiding somewhere to escape from the Japanese soldiers. Kishan Singh says, "What is the fear that keeps us hiding here, for instance? Is it a fear of the Japanese, or is it a fear of the British? Or is it a fear of ourselves, because we do not know who to fear more?" (430). Borders have made them to run for life. They are being used as a weapon in someone else's hand. The soldiers are used by an empire, in either way. The Japanese has an intention to conquer the British colonies. It is not to relieve people from the clutches of the British. All they want is to push the British out so they can step in and take their place.

The empire is not going to benefit the middle-class people in any way. Their situation has become the worst during the war. Some have even become refugees in a foreign land. Borders have improved the economy of the nations, but it has not helped people to improve their lives. Transportation of timbers has been stopped during the war by the Government. So the workers did not get any income during the Nationalist Movements in Burma. The Nationalists justify their stand by telling that they work for 'duty, country and freedom'. Though the geographical borders are man-made, the borders in the minds of the people strive to only strengthen the 'identity politics' that is worse than colonization as such.

Chapter III

***The Shadow Lines* – Blurring Borders**

CHAPTER III

THE SHADOW LINES – BLURRING BORDERS

The Shadow Lines has quite a lot of postcolonial features. It also focuses on the sense of loss and disintegration of individuality which is the common ground of postcolonial discourse. The novel is unique and it has many special features. It centers on the life of three generation Indians and it also stretches over three countries. The novel sketches a few historical events like the freedom movement in Bengal, the Second World War, and the Partition of India in 1947, and the communal riots in Bangladesh and India and so on. The action of the novel thus starts with the eight years old Tridib being taken to England in 1939 and ends in 1964 when he is murdered by a street rabble in Dhaka. The novel narrates the actions taking place in 1939-40, 1960-63 and 1978-79 in a chaotic way. The whole plot of the novel is seen through the narrator's memory and imagination. The novel has a single voice and it has the narrator as a participant in the story.

Memory plays a major role in shaping the narrator's imagination. The narrator has a very less knowledge of the events. His knowledge of places and events is a combination of stories from many characters. There are two main characters in the novel who paves the pathways for his imagination. The narrator's grandmother, Tha'mma and the narrator's cousin, Tridib are those characters. He has heard of England from his cousin Tridib, who lived there for some time. The narrator has always been curious to cross borders since many of his relatives are in England. The other character is his grandmother, who is very nostalgic and feels alienated. "Tha'mma is a woman like countless others who experienced displacement and dispossession, struggle and fear and witnessed violence in those horrific days, following the independence and the partition of

the motherland” (Sircar 107). She often tells stories to her grandson concerning her old home town, Dhaka. The narrator sees Dhaka through the eyes of his grandmother.

Tha'mma is a lady with her own concept of life. She has been married to an Engineer with Railways in Burma. Her husband has died of pneumonia. So she has become a widow at a very young age of thirty two. She is in a situation to work hard for her livelihood. She is very broad-minded when it comes to her career. Though she has a border around her, she has succeeded in her profession as a school teacher. She has struggled, all her life to find ground under her feet. She has crossed the border of Gender stereotypes. Her hard work has paid dividends to her. She has got a comfortable living and a family contented with its life-style. She is a very strict Headmistress. She does not like anybody who wastes their time. She does not allow anybody in the house to waste time. She does not even like the sound of the radio. She likes those who are workaholic. She is a disciplinary head of the family. She gives more importance to family ties and moral values.

Tha'mma has faith in old, accepted values of life, and looks down upon those who do not fall in line with her. She is a workaholic woman and she respects her individuality. She gives more importance to self-respect. She monitors the family of the narrator. She has followed certain old values throughout her life. She has only worn white sari, after her husband's death. She does not look at it as an act of discrimination. She thinks it as an opportunity to stay away from this materialistic world. She wants men to learn from women. She is the one who takes important decision in the house. She is the one who decides whether their family should go for a picnic. She is fond of Tridib, but never

expresses it. Because she thinks that giving importance to Tridib will spoil her grandson. She wants her grandson to be brought up in the way she likes.

The narrator has a strong memory of those stories of grandmother and Tridib in his mind throughout the novel. He also encounters many other characters giving importance to borders. There is interplay of reality and illusion when he sees England in his own eyes, since borders can alter things differently. Tridib is an important character of *The Shadow Lines* since he is the mentor of the narrator and occupies the central place in several incidents of the novel. Tridib is doing Ph.D. in Archaeology, on the topic Sena Dynasty in Bengal. He is a recluse sort of a man, happy in his book-lined room. He is always worried about the violence and the war. He tells the narrator, "Do not say a word to anyone and do not come here again for a while- you may be followed by secret agents" (12). Imagination is his forte and he wants nothing to be accepted in its present form. He has fired the imagination of the Borders of the narrator also.

Tridib has Bartholomew's Atlas to keep himself in touch with the reality of borders. He is very keen in observing Borders and how it is created by the empires. But it does not work for him. Ordinarily people live in the present, struggle in the present conditions, and do not bother to know the dead past which has created the Borders. Therefore Tridib remains almost an isolated person. No one except the narrator's family knows about Tridib's family background. There are many rumours about Tridib. He has been associated with Maoist, since he speaks only about borders and reality. Many young people have become Maoist at that time for money. The Independence of a country has benefited only rulers. The middle-class has remained jobless as usual. Though they have borders in their mind, Poverty has forced them to get into such works for money.

Time is of great significance to both Tha'mma on the one hand and Tridib and the narrator on the other. The narrator is a student of history. So he is punctilious about putting down dates and times as exactly as he can. Tridib is an archeologist working for his Ph. D degree. Obviously, Borders and imagination plays an important role in his profession. Tha'mma, who has been a school teacher, finds Tridib's work strange. She is a traditional middle class Bengali, who has reverence for academic work. She has always valued him less since Tridib does not do anything pertaining to career and income. She has a border in her mind which keeps Tridib away from her thoughts. She distrusts the way her nephew uses time.

Tha'mma has broken all the gender stereotypes and has become successful in her life. So she respects people who are in a good profession. Tha'mma says, "Time is not for wasting, time is for work" (15). The narrator says, "My grandmother, for all her disapproval of him would be delighted whenever he came- partly because she was fond of him in her own way, but mainly because Tridib and his family were our only rich relatives" (4). Class distinctions exist in the minds of Humans that tend to respect others based on money. The narrator considers them unimportant, since they have left India long before his birth. So he has created a border in his mind that has kept them away. In the same way, Tridib has borders in his mind that have never let him to mingle with people of India. The narrator says, "He did not seem to want to make friends with people he was talking to, and that perhaps was why he was happiest in neutral, impersonal places" (10).

Tridib is engaged not just in the study of Border facts but rather in the imaginative reconstruction of fact. It makes the past a part of the present. Tridib's ways suggest that Border is a shadowy concept. So there cannot be any definite and sharply demarcated

border line between past, present and future. The narrator very often travels into the past and describes incidents which occurred before his birth. He does it to bring home the truth that the present borders in the minds of the people are the product of the past. Few characters like Tha'mma and Robi, consider it as real lines. Whereas Tha'mma's uncle, Jethamoshai calls it as an imaginative line.

Tridib has no permanent friends or place because people believe that he is a Maoist. Though they get along with him easily, the Borders in their mind make them to keep him away personally. The world is full of Borders which respects people only based on their profession. He spends his leisure time at coffee houses and street corner addas in the Gole Park. Many local people pay attention to him in the street corner addas. He likes the attention which he gets from them. He tells all his fake stories to them. They tend to believe whatever he tells them. For them, Tridib is an entertainer. When Tridib does not turn up for three to four months, the local people terribly miss him. They usually find happiness in the way he speaks. They do not bother to take an attempt to find out whether his stories are true or not. This goes the same for the Borders in the map and the mind. They do not take attempts to find out whether the borders really exist and who has created it. In the same way, the narrator thinks that the stories of Tridib are true and takes pride in it. Tridib tells the narrator that he has discovered the treasure of the Sena Dynasty. The Narrator, unknowing the real facts, believes in him. Tridib also cooks up stories about having English relatives through marriage. He tells everybody that he has gone to visit his relatives in London. People around him believe in it until the narrator interrupts and tells the truth. Tridib has family friends in London. He does it because everyone will respect him if he has links with the people living outside the Border.

Indians have the habit of respecting foreigners. He is partially true, but his fake stories made the entire details false. This is how reality of Borders plays an important part in the novel.

Tridib has a vast bookish knowledge. He has information on all kinds of subjects, including Mesopotamian Stallae, East European Jazzo, the habits of arboreal apes, the plays of Garcia Lorca. He talks about them with great confidence as if he has personal knowledge of those facts. He loves a girl whom he has not seen. She is a family friend of Tridib. He speaks to her through letters. His love life is also a sort of imagination. He has seen her only through photographs. Though she is a family friend, there is a Geographical Border that exists between them. Tridib has no idea how she actually looks and whether she loves him. He does not bother to know whether she loves him. This shows his negligence of Borders and reality. He says, "you're my love, my own, true love, my love-across-the-seas" (193). Tridib is also able to construct an image of her in his mind through the photographs. He tells everyone that she has broad shoulders, strong face, square jaw and thick straight hair. Later, in England, the narrator finds her with exactly the same physical appearance as how Tridib has described her. The narrator wonders how intelligently Tridib's mind has worked in spite of the borders between them. In Tridib's case, Borders have no value when the love is true.

Tridib takes no interest in matters of his real life such as earning his livelihood and raising a family of his own. He does not seem to have interest in family life. But he has interest in issues pertaining to politics and society. He tells narrator about the terrorist movement, nationalism in Bengal and the secret terrorist societies like Anushilan and Jagantar. He also explains him about the homemade bombs. He tells the narrator how the

soldiers vigorously fight for extending the territories. These are all true facts and in this way Tridib teaches the realities of the Borders and the world to the narrator. Initially, the narrator has never been to other countries. So in a way the narrator falls under his influence. For him, Tridib is an ideal person and his hero. The narrator admits: "Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with" (22). Tridib tells him stories of far-off lands, little known tribes, and the design of the temple at Karnak. Tridib has shown him several countries in his "tattered old Bartholomew's Atlas". He remembers those stories and is curious to verify the facts of Borders given by Tridib.

The narrator is surprised to know from Ila that she has only faint memory of those meetings with Tridib. He cried: "But how could you forget?" (21). It reveals that the narrator gives more importance to his memories and past. Ila has forgotten, because she has no concern for people who lives outside the Border. She has been in London from her childhood. Their family has stayed in Mrs. Price, one of their family friend's houses in London. Mrs. Price has always considered Ila's family as her own. Though geographical borders exist, they are emotionally connected. Though Mayadebi does not like the climate of London, she likes to stay there. It is because of the people's kind attitude towards her family.

The atmosphere had changed so dramatically, even within the last few weeks. People were becoming friendlier; in the shops, on the streets, she could not help noticing. Everyone was so much nicer now; often when she and Tridib were out walking people would pat him on the head and stop to

have a little chat with her; the shopkeepers would ask her where and how her husband was, and when he was to have his operation.(72)

Ila is one such character who likes to stay in London. Ila is a woman of modern civilization. She is a beautiful and attractive girl. She always likes to be free of duties, commitments and responsibilities. She lives in her own world. She is empowered in her own way. She is a very positive, stubborn and a firm woman. She has travelled widely with her father who is transferred from one country to another. She comes to Calcutta during holidays, but she is not moored with any culture. Naturally, she is a character who stands exposed, unprotected in the armour of convictions. But nature has given her features which are similar to those of her kin and kith. She resembles the narrator so much that they are mistaken as twins by many people. She does not have any kind of affinity for Indian values and tradition, but she is determined to preserve her marital relations.

Ila does not carry childhood memories with her. The narrator, who is of her age, takes her towards the lake where both of them used to go in their childhood days. But, Ila has forgotten her childhood completely. She does not like to remember anything that has happened in her life during her stay in India. She has taken the geographical borders too seriously. She finds that life in Calcutta is dull and boring. In order to relieve herself of that boredom she takes Robi and the narrator to a night club. Robi does not like to enter the club. After sometime she has asked the narrator and Robi to dance with her. The narrator and Robi ignore her. So she goes to the extent of dancing with a stranger. Robi shouts at Ila for her behavior. Because, Robi thinks that Indian Culture does not permit such acts. But Ila never bothers about culture. According to her, there is nothing wrong in

attending parties. Ila tells, "What do you mean 'girls'? I'll do what I bloody well want, when I want and where. Do you see now why I've chosen to live in London? Do you see? It's only because I want to be free. Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you" (97, 98).

Ila is bereft of all the treasures of culture and tradition. For her, past is already past, and future is not yet born. So she is delinked from her people both in thought and culture. She thinks that all that is done in London is progressive. She always feels that she is superior to the narrator, since she has lived all her life in London. Ila tells the narrator, "It's all new to you. I've always told you. You know nothing about London." (111). According to Ila, who do not appreciate London life are backward, conservative reactionaries. She wears modern and western clothes. Her outfits make her to look like a foreigner. She does not have any values to guide and sustain her in difficult times. But, she has some kind of Indian values with her. Like an Indian wife, she loves her husband and adores him. She takes care of him though he is jobless. She accepts him with his flaws. The narrator advises her to leave her husband. But, she does not do it. She loves her husband till the end of the novel. She is mistaken by other characters in the novel. The narrator's Grandmother tells that she is a greedy little slut. But she is not a greedy woman. The narrator also thinks that Ila is something of a flirt like other European girls. He has had some wicked thoughts about her, as he is attracted by her physical charms. But, Ila is actually a fine mixture of strength, sacrifice and pathos. She is very strongly concerned with the welfare of the people. She is affiliated with the Anti-Nazi League group. Though she takes part in it, her English friends do not give importance to her opinions. This clearly shows the border that they have drawn between them.

Indeed it was soon evident to me that she played a bit role n their collective political life: it was often apparent that they had made their decisions long before they asked her for her opinion. They were all clearly fond of her, but they seemed to regard her as a kind of guest, a decoration almost. They would talk of her as ‘our own upper-class Asian Marxist. (107)

She works in an organization called “Save the Children Fund”, and is fighting for Indian Immigrants in London. Tridib has a clear understanding of her mindset. All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power: that was all she wanted- a modern middle-class life, a small thing that history had denied her in its fullness and for which she could never forget it. (86).

Ila finds pride in being a foreigner. The narrator likes to see her in a sari. The narrator says, “Our Ila is growing into a real beauty. She was now, dressed in a simple white sari with a red border, like any Bethune College girl on her way to a lecture” (20). He thinks that the attire she wears brings her close to India. The borders in her mind will not let her to move close with Indians. She connects her with rich Americans to establish her foreign identity in India. She admires things in India that are brought from London. “She hovers over the shadow lines between imagination and reality. Her stories are based partly on imagination and partly on reality” (Barat, “Imagination” 118). The narrator cannot understand the nature of people who forget the past. Memory fades over time. But, it never fades for the narrator. It remains deep inside his heart and it forbids him from seeing the real world with Borders. With the help of Tridib’s Atlas, he has learnt

certain hard truths about people, places and borders. He used to draw circles on the map to find the distance between the places. In this way, he invented an image of England in his mind.

The Border stories of Tridib which he has heard in childhood gave a fillip to his imagination. The narrator has become curious to visit places like Cairo “to see the world’s first pointed arch in the mosque of Ibn Tulun and touch the stones of the Great Pyramids of Cheops” (22). In fact Tridib has infused in him the desire to see things in imagination, because he does not want the narrator to look at the Borders. Tridib thinks that the world will become horrible for the narrator if he gets to know the Borders. Tridib has become his mentor, his guide and philosopher. But the narrator has failed to apply imagination to the practical life of real Borders. Tridib has gone to England when he was eight years old. He has preserved the memory of the places he has visited. He has clearly said the narrator about those places and also has explained how war must have ravaged the places like Solent Road. Life can never be the same after war. War alters the life of the people. The narrator says, “The realities of the bombs and torpedoes and the dying was easy enough to imagine-mere events, after all, recorded in thousands of films and photographs and comic books” (74). The war and its destruction can be recorded easily, but it takes time for the people to overcome the hard realities.

In London, the narrator has jumped to his feet when Ila has proposed to go to a film in Brixton or to a Vietnamese Restaurant in Maida Vale. These names he recounts give fillip to his imagination. To Tridib and the narrator, these are the places of war but to Ila, these are the places where she can get entertained. The narrator says, “I called out to Nick and Ila: we’re going over there to take a look at Solent Road, where the bomb fell.

Ila made an impatient face. You and your silly bombs, she said. We're already late" (62). Though she takes part in the league and Movements, she gives only a little importance to the war and the people. The narrator can understand the sufferings of people very well than Ila.

I knew nothing at all about England except as an invention. But still I had known people of my own age, who had survived the Great terror in the Calcutta of the sixties and seventies, and I thought I had at least a spectator's knowledge of their courage, something that Ila, with her fine clothes and manicured hands, would never understand. (116)

The narrator often makes a fool of himself. On the basis of the stories he has heard from Tridib he asks the woman at the counter at Victor Gallancy whether this is the place where left Book Club used to be before war. The woman knows nothing about it. Again, at Taj Travel Agency, he tries to know whether there is a staircase. Solent Road has no sign of Bomb explosion, but he confidently says that a bomb was exploded in that place in 1940. He does not believe his eyes when he sees the rows of cars and houses at Solent Road. After looking at the pretty houses of the Solent Road, he has understood that the reality of Borders is different from his imagination. The narrator says, "I had not expected to see what Tridib has seen" (63). He also consoles himself by thinking that all other details of Solent road which Tridib has told him are true "Tridib had shown me something truer about Solent Road" (63). The narrator in the beginning had faith in Tridib's way of exploring the truth of wars, but after finding Tridib's version about Solent Road incorrect, he has made changes in his approach and attitude. Nick says,

“You’re positively a mystic from the east” (64). He understands that the entire world is not fighting for borders. Damages occur only in few places and not everywhere.

The narrator has invented England in his mind. Credit for his invention goes to Tridib and Bartholomew’s Atlas. During his college days, he has always used Tridib’s Bartholomew’s Atlas to find the difference between certain important places in London. He knows the route to Mrs. Price’s house. He has framed the structure of the house through Ila’s stories. When he walks along the streets of England, he finds that the route which he has in his mind is correct. But the narrator says that he does not know the realities of the war and its impacts. The image which he has in his mind is a beautiful England. But in reality, Lymington Road is affected by wars. The narrator says, “England had chosen hers in a war” (63). War has transformed England. No Atlas can show these changes. It can only show the lines and borders that are drawn between the countries. The narrator says, “But he knew that the clarity of that image in his mind was merely the seductive clarity of ignorance; an illusion of knowledge created by a deceptive weight of remembered detail” (74).

Initially, Ila is not accepted in the English society. She believes her doll to be a girl and names it “Magda”. She describes Mrs. Price’s house to the narrator. She draws lines, borders and explains the house’s structure to the narrator. She is not clear and gets confused while explaining. It is a well-known fact that inferiority complex confuses one’s mind. The narrator gets to know that Ila does not speak the truth every time. The narrator says, “She was uncertain now, biting her nails, unable to find a place for verandas in the world of her invention” (77). Ila tells that Nick helped her to recover from the hard times she has faced in her school in London. Nick is Mrs. Price’s son, May’s brother. We live

in their house in London. He and I walk to school together in the morning and come back together in the afternoon, and then afterwards, every evening, we go down together to play in the cellar” (54). But May dismisses the fact that Nick has helped Ila. It is very clear that Ila has created stories to console herself. This once again happens during her teenage.

Ila is a kind of girl who thinks that a person is judged and respected by the riches. She does not understand the fact that a good attitude towards others is enough for a person to earn respect from the society. She is taken by the glamour of wealth and position, since it is not possible to look for the really good things of life. She carries with her yearbooks of the International schools of whatever city she has happened to live. They are full of photographs of groups of friends, of parties and tennis matches. When she comes to Calcutta, she shows those photographs to the narrator. She points herself dressed in jeans or skirts, and even Persian Lambskin waist coat. She shows her friends having strange names such as Cassano, ash-Sharqaur. Ila tells with pride what she has worn in the parties. But the narrator does not find her in any of those photographs. She also tells about her boyfriend to the narrator. She tells that her boyfriend is very rich and his father has got him a BMW sports car on his birthday. She is a type of girl who thinks it is an honour to have friends from the richest class. So she sometimes tells false stories to the narrator to make impression that she belongs to the highest strata of the society.

Tha'mma's opinion on Ila seems strange to the narrator. He defends her and he is also influenced by her. Women are leading spirits in *The Shadow lines*. They are not suppressed by men in the male-dominated society. At the same time, women do not argue with men for their rights. But they try to assert their rights as human beings in the society

with the help of education, employment and rebellious attitude towards life. Women characters in *The Shadow Lines* are unique. Few characters like Tha'mma and the narrator's mother are bounded by traditions. "The women in Ghosh's novels achieve their goals by balancing their lives between the traditional set up they are placed in moving slowly and continuously towards the modern mindset" (Singh, "Critical essays" 84). Ila likes to be away from culture, tradition and India. May likes to help others and she collects fund for the poor and deprived. Mrs. Price is a strong woman who has worked all her life to bring up her children. The narrator's mother is a typical woman. All the women in the novel are bold and independent. They fight for various causes and eventually have become revolutionaries.

Ila becomes matured as she grows up. She has a strong belief in the Borders and she does not like to see things in imagination. The narrator says, "For Ila the current was the real" (33). She learns to accept life and she does not create stories to console her. After getting married, Nick has betrayed Ila. Nick has an affair with another woman and Ila knows about it. Ila does not seem to react for it. She has got the fear of losing him. So, she keeps quiet ignoring the other part of Nick's life. Nick's affair with a woman is shown only through Ila's eyes. No one except Ila and the narrator know about it. She cries for it and tells about it to the narrator. Later, Ila tells that Nick has not betrayed her. She puts the entire blame on herself and frames certain stories to justify that Nick is an honorable man. The only way in which she can cope with the situation is by pretending to herself and to her cousin that the reality of borders is actually imaginary. This shows that Ila has lost her true nature at the end of the novel. She has always been as a symbol of "empowerment" in the novel. But, her marriage life has forced her to live inferior to her

husband. It is because of the borders in Nick's mind. Ila, who gives more importance to real facts has become imaginative in the fear of losing her husband.

The narrator's mother has a great respect for Tridib's father, Shaheb. Shaheb is an officer in the foreign affairs. The whole family of the narrator is excited to have Shaheb in their house. They always consider him to be superior, since his face is very prominent in newspapers. The narrator's mother expects that he will discuss International politics. But to her surprise, he enquires about the price of vegetables and kerosene. She is impressed at this attitude of Shaheb. She thinks that, speaking about the price of vegetables is inappropriate for a person like him. The narrator's mother has borders in her mind. She is a stereotyped woman and she is under the impression that men do not discuss the price of household items. But in reality, Shaheb is a down to earth person with elegance and dignity. He generally enquires about it to women. He sticks to the fact that he is an Indian. It can also be seen in a scene where he has an argument with Mike. Shaheb's family is not respected by Mrs. Price's friends. Mike has asked Shaheb, "You do not look much of an Indian to me" (69). Many British people have never considered Indians great. Mike's attitude towards Shaheb is the result of the borders in his mind. Mike's opinion on Indians has created such Borders.

Indians are still in the clutches of western thoughts. This idea is brought in the novel through Ila. She considers herself superior to others, just because she is brought up in London. She has an English accent, which other characters in the novel do not have. Though, She lags behind them in many aspects, she is always treated in a better way. She is respected by everyone in India, since she has an English accent. A man at the reception of the night club has wondered, looking at her way of speaking English. But, in London,

Ila is not respected in the same way. She is the one who cleans the room in London. Even in her school, she is not respected by most of the boys and girls. Indians think that Ila is in Paradise. But in reality, she is discriminated by many of her friends in London. Ila's inferiority complex plays a major role in framing her character.

During her school days, Ila always used to be alone. Her school friends do not like her because she has a different skin complexion. Children want everybody to be alike. They have always tried to ridicule her. Once a boy has chased and attacked her. Though she has an English accent, she is not accepted as an English woman in England. But Ila is fond of England than India. She tries to hide the reality that she is an Indian. She has many English friends. They lend their ears to Ila's views on Fascism and she also marries an English man. Ila is educated and has a job of her own. She earns and her father has presented her with a house on the day of her wedding. Ila and Nick lives in the house, which her father has presented them. In every aspect, Ila is superior to Nick. But Nick never recognizes her talent. Till the end of the novel she is treated as an Indian woman, which she does not like. Indians, living in India are unaware of the vengeance which white people have towards Indian skinned people. Indians think that non-residential Indians are living in heaven.

Nick always wears a suit and a tie. His friends generally use him to deal with police officers, when they get into trouble. Nick has a good impression, since he wears a suit and a tie. It is considered as a sign of professionalism. But in reality, Nick is jobless. He conceals the reality with his outfits. He is frustrated when May exposes to everybody that Nick is jobless. Nick shouts at May, "You're a liar and a bitch" (120). Nick is the one who cannot accept his failure in career. He is jobless, but he never feels ashamed of

it. He is also not ready to accept that his lethargic attitude is the reason for his state of being unemployed. He puts the blame on everyone and never tries for a job. This is the result of his superiority over others. He thinks that an English man is always better than others. He does not even think about getting a job and earning money for his wife. He is always in the clouds that he is a chartered accountant. He has also never felt guilty for betraying his wife, Ila. He has never respected Ila. Even during their school days, Nick has never defended her. May says, "Ila walking alone because Nick Price was ashamed to be seen by his friends, walking home with an Indian" (84). This is the attitude which the English society has towards Indians.

The reality of the treatment of Indians in England is also brought in through one more incident. Indian characters in the novel always have a special respect for Shaheb. The main reason for the respect is because that he has lived in England. But in England even Shaheb is not treated with equal respect by everyone. Mike has disrespected Shaheb, after knowing that Shaheb is an Indian. This is because of the jealousy which Mike has towards Shaheb. He does not want an Indian to be a professionally successful person. Native Indians are unaware of the fact that Indians are being suppressed in foreign countries.

In Calcutta, even rumours can create a riot. The novel shows how geographical boundaries at times lead to cultural differences which in turn create hatred among people. For example, the story of the loss of the Prophet's hair in faraway Srinagar has killed Indian Hindus in Dhaka. It also has made many people to believe that their water supply has been poisoned. On the other hand, the whole Bengalis has started to pray for prophet's hair. They have become united irrespective of religion. The Bengali feels closer

to what is happening on the Indian subcontinent than to events in Thailand or Chendu in China. Those places are closer to Calcutta than Delhi or Srinagar. It is the border that has separated them and not the distance. In this case, the physical fact of geographical boundaries between nations is of no real importance. When the cultural issue arises, the border drawn between the two Bengals has in fact pulled them even closer together.

The narrator's Grandmother is entirely different from the other characters in the novel. She lives in the present and does not think about the past until her retirement. Her native is Dhaka. She has lived there along with her family until her marriage. Tha'mma's family has occupied one half of the house. The other half is being occupied by Tha'mma's uncle, Jethamoshi. Tha'mma and her sister, Maya have an image of the other half of the house in their minds. They call it as upside-down house. Tha'mma knows that the other half of the house is not upside-down. But she frames bed time stories to make Maya sleep. Tha'mma tells Maya that the relatives in the other half of the house write with the umbrellas and sleep under their sheets. Maya believes all these stories and she likes it very much. In the later part of their life, they heartily laugh at each other, when they think about the upside-down house. Tha'mma never forgets the story of upside-down house, since she has framed it with creativity. Amitav Ghosh indirectly tells about the views which Indians have on the other countries through upside-down house. He tries to tell that the border is just a line in the map. The line makes no difference in reality.

Dhaka has stayed in Tha'mma's mind till her death. She often speaks about Dhaka to the narrator. She has her home only in memory. Tha'mma has stuffed the narrator's mind with all the details pertaining to Dhaka. She plans to meet her uncle in Dhaka. She also thinks of bringing him back to India. When she goes to Dhaka, she is

surprised to see the changes that have happened in her birth place. Time has the power to change the authority. She is unable to believe her own eyes. She cannot see the sweet shop that has existed before. She cannot understand that present 'Dhaka' is different from the past. To Tha'mma, Dhaka is a peaceful place. Shaheb says, "it's not safe to go there now. I cannot permit it. You must wait a few days" (218). Though, people live there, it has become an inappropriate place for them to live. Riots happen very often in Dhaka. Dhaka is a place that is easily prone to violence and death.

The narrator does not react when he hears about Tridib's death. "Another rare peep into child-psychology comes when the child-narrator gets to know that Tridib had died" (Tiwari 26). The narrator has not heard of death. He wonders why his father is making a big fuss over a minor issue. The reality of death is not understood by the narrator. For him, 'dead' is just a word associated with films and comic books. He considers death as a very trivial thing. So he is not able to understand that he cannot see Tridib anymore. He has failed to associate death with absence of Tridib. The narrator has always been in the shadow of Tridib. He worries a lot when he understands the real meaning of death. After few years, the narrator is shocked to see that no one of his friends knows about the riot in Dhaka. He searches for newspapers in the library concerning the issue. He shows the articles to his friends to make them aware of the riot in Dhaka. So it has taken time for the narrator to understand the seriousness of war and death. War and death has an impact on many people's life.

May Price is the other woman character in the novel who thinks that her presence of mind during the riot has killed Tridib. She lives her life with that guilt. She does not marry anyone. Throughout the novel, she is under the impression that she has killed

Tridib, which keeps her unmarried. She sleeps on floor. She fasts. She suffers his death like hell. Later, she realizes that Tridib has sacrificed his life. She considers death life as a kind of sacrifice. She learns a new definition for “sacrifice” through war and other related border disputes. At the end of the novel, she tells the narrator that she has finally understood the reason for Tridib’s death. She has lived her life thinking only about Tridib and her last moments with him. So Tridib’s death is the reason for May’s negligence of marriage. Nick tells that the rude attitude of May price keeps her away from men. Nick is wrong in judging his own sister, May. Nick is always away from war and its sufferings. It is proven through his attitude towards May. “If May is acutely conscious of her duties and faults, Ila is just the opposite, self absorbed, oblivious of others’ needs and irresistibly charming” (Tiwari 29).

Tha’mma does not like Ila and Nick because she is not fond of lavish life style. She is against people who are Europeanized. She does not like Ila. She argues with her grandson that Ila should not live in England. She wants people to stay in the motherland. She does not have a good impression on Ila, since she lives in England.

Ila has no right to live there, she said hoarsely. She does not belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, years and years of war and bloodshed. Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother’s blood and their father’s blood and their son’s blood. They know they’re a nation because they’ve drawn their borders with blood. (85)

Tha’mma, staying in her motherland, has succeeded in her family life and profession. She wants others to do the same. She does not like Shaheb, just because he

has western attitude. She also comments on Shaheb's way of dressing. She does not like smoking and drinking. She does not like Shaheb, as he drinks. She speaks her old Dhaka dialect when she speaks with her sister. This shows the strong cultural bonds that exist between people belonging to the same family. Though she does not like her relatives, she has gone to visit her relatives in Calcutta. The narrator says, "an imaginary barrier that she believed her gloating relatives had erected to compound her humiliation. It was only natural that my mother was surprised at this sudden onrush of family in her" (143). She has strong ties to her culture and language. Even as a headmistress, she gives more importance to mother tongue. Even in London, there is a place called 'Brick Lane' where most of the Bengalis stay. It is to establish their identity in a new land.

Tha'mma is a very strict woman, as far as moral values are concerned. She thinks that Tridib wastes time unnecessarily. According to her, Tridib is a wastrel. She never asks for help from anyone, because she is in a fear of returning it in exact measure. She likes to be perfect. She also teaches perfection to all her family members. She constantly nags about her daughter-in-law's way of cooking and house-keeping in order to teach perfection to the narrator's mother. Tha'mma is a very talented headmistress. She tries her best to teach diversity of India. She asks her students to cook at least one dish that is a specialty of some part of the country other than their own. She tries to incorporate the meaning of "Unity in diversity" through this attempt.

Tha'mma is very patriotic and believes in the idea of Nationalism. She always likes to have a border. Even during her childhood days, she is fond of the border that has divided their house into two. She supports killing people in the name of war. She wants freedom with violence and bloodshed. She supports people who have fought for

Independence. As a young girl, she has been inspired enough by the freedom fighters to join the terrorist movement. She says, “it was a kind of place where rich Calcutta people built garden houses. And look at it now-as filthy as a babui’s nest. It’s all because of the refugees, flooding in like that” (145). She is even ready to kill, for her cause, and she retains this fierceness till the end. She tells her grandson the story of how one of her classmates was arrested during a police raid in their college. She also tells that she would have helped him from being arrested. When the astonished narrator asks her whether she would have killed the English magistrate, she replies, “Yes, I would have killed him. It was for our freedom. I would have done anything to be free” (43).

The grandmother’s response to the notion of freedom and nationalism questions about the meaning desirability of nationalism. Her narration of her personal memories of the terrorist movement in Bengal reveals her secret desire to have been part of militant resistance to colonial power and her understanding of the nation is rendered in terms of baptism through bloodshed. (Bannerjee 42)

During the time of Indo-Pakistan war Tha’mma becomes very patriotic. She donates her ruby chain to the war fund. The narrator’s father does not believe in the concept of borders between nations. He argues that the people are the same everywhere. Tha’mma is not able to believe it, since she has always seen the borders as barriers.

And if there’s no difference both sides will be the same; it’ll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for

then- partition and all the killing and everything-if there is not something in between? (167)

Tha'mma is a very emotional person. When her relative shows her the post-card, she has received from Jethamoshai, her uncle. She becomes so emotional that tears start rolling down her cheeks. She decides to contact him, forgetting the border that has existed between their families. Tha'mma goes to Dhaka to bring her uncle back to India. When Tha'mma enters Dhaka, she comes to know that the place has become a part of another nation, Pakistan. This is the repeated idea in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. Time can change the empire and rulers. "And then, in 1947, came Partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan" (138). After Partition, many Hindus have settled in Calcutta. Tha'mma's uncle, Jethamoshai has never had a thought of going away from his home even after partition. He does not believe in Borders.

Once you start moving you never stop. That's what I told my sons when they took the trains. I said: I do not believe in this India-Shindia. It's all very well, you're going away now, but suppose when you get there they decide to draw another line somewhere? What will you do then? Where will you move to? No one will have you anywhere. As for me, I was born here, and I'll die here. (237)

Dhaka has been Tha'mma's birth place of birth, but her Nationality is Indian. As a young girl, she has thought of fighting for freedom in East Bengal. Her disillusionment increases when she has to mention, 'Dhaka', East Pakistan, as her place of birth on the passport-form and then state Indian as her Nationality. Tha'mma thinks that a line on the map cannot destroy the cultural unity between the people.

Tha'mma likes people who are bold. She is very much fond of Robi, since he is strong. He calls Robi as her resemblance. Tha'mma and Robi are similar in their way of thinking. Robi is patriotic and respects culture. Robi has certain borders around him. He follows rule strictly. He says, "Because a rule's a rule; if you break one you have to be willing to pay the price" (92). This is the reason for her inclination towards Robi. Robi shouts at Ila when she drinks, "Drink! In a place like that?" (90). Robi's idea of Nationalism is entirely different from that of Tha'mma. "She opposed any Indian's opting for a life in England on the grounds that the English had earned their liberty and prosperity by incorporating military valour with their religion" (Bhaduri 107). He does not believe that death and war gives freedom to people.

Tha'mma gives no excuses to people when it comes to Morality. She wants men and women to live within borders. She can find truth very easily. No one knows about narrator's visit to a prostitute's house in Delhi. But Tha'mma knows about it very well. She has also written a letter to the University stating the narrator's bad behavior. The narrator does not know how she has found it. She has written that letter few days before her death. This shows that she is very much concerned about her family even during her hard times. She is also an intuitive person. She gets to know that Tridib will get killed, if he moves away from the car. She knows the fact that violence can kill a person. When she stops Tridib from opening the door of the car, May thinks that Tha'mma is a cowardly old ignorant woman. Tha'mma knows very well about the terrorist attempts. She does not want Tridib to get killed in the riot. She tries her level best to stop Tridib. But, the mob has killed him. After the death of Tridib, May understands that Tha'mma is not an ignorant woman.

May is another revolutionary in the novel. May is the daughter of Mrs. May Price. She is very much concerned about her duties and responsibilities. She is a very bold and practical woman. She is outright in expressing her emotions. She has a different perspective of India, since she is an outsider to India. She does not understand that the statue of Queen Victoria belongs to Indian history and its people. When she is confronted by a beggar, she gives money and helps him. She has the thought that it was an act of helplessness. She is shocked to see the poverty and helplessness in India. Her ideology does not permit poverty to exist. She tries her best to help others financially. In England, she collects funds from the public to help the refugees. She does not find differences between humans belonging to different countries. She helps everybody who starves for food. During the riots of 1964, many Muslim Pakistanis have given shelter for Hindus in their house. It is all out of love towards people. Though, refugees have occupied Jethamoshai's house, they have taken good care of him. Jethamoshai has become like a father for one of the refugee, Ukilbabu.

In the same way, does not have any boundaries for love. May has a heart full of love for all living things. She is also very sympathetic towards animals. When she has gone for a ride with Tridib, she sees that a dog is writhing in pain. She asks Tridib to stop the car to help the dog. She scolds him, when he denies stopping the car. She, then gets down from the car and treats the dog. So the dog gets free from the pain.

The values that May cherishes and which motivate her to put a helpless dog, hurt in an accident out of its misery at personal risk are the same values that inspire Tridib's act of selfless heroism. Cutting across the

superficial barriers of nationality, gender and similar divisions is human nature's 'indivisible sanity'" (Sinha 145)

She works in an Orchestra. The narrator reads about it in the Guardian. She admits that she works in that Orchestra to make a living. She is not very much passionate about music. But she is dedicated and does justice to her profession. She does it since she is paid for it. She is working on a project and helps to provide houses for the survivors of an earthquake in Central America. She is also actively engaged in collecting funds for relief agencies.

The final meeting between May and the narrator is, in a way, a meeting of Time and Space. They are fond of each other and they frequently meet to share their emotions. They frequently meet in spite of their difference in their ages and culture. But all the time the writer presents that the time and space coalesce to test the mettle of the people. The forward looking people conquer them and reactionary ones are conquered by them. It is the message that the novel gives in the boldest terms. *The Shadow Lines* presents interplay of war and peace and coalescence of time and space to present the reality of borders.

The simple fact that there had never been a moment in the four-thousand-year-old history of that map, when the places we know as Dhaka and Calcutta were more closely bound to each other than after they had drawn their lines- so closely that I, in Calcutta, had only to look into the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment when each city was the inverted image of the other, locked into an irreversible symmetry by the line that was to set us free-our looking-glass border. (257)

There is an undercurrent of emotions and feelings which unite the whole human race despite the man-made discriminations on the grounds of race, religion, region, colour, etc.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

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CONCLUSION

Colonial riots cannot destroy the human element present in all the human beings. As the narrator was looking for the reports of the 1964 riots in the newspaper, he also saw other news items which have generated the feelings of national pride. Human sentiments and considerations govern the emotions of the people. The political borders drawn on the map has not broken the cultural ties. *The Shadow Lines* condemns national and communal prejudices in the boldest terms to tell that the world should have regard for cultural ties. The novel says that political boundaries of the nations are merely shadow lines and the real cultural bonds are abiding. "Patriotism" is not killing each other. The death of Tridib is the climax of the political theme in the novel. The overall focus is on the meaning and nuances of political freedom in contemporary life. Communal strife and the irresistible urge of nationalism are also highlighted by the author. Political freedom, communal strife and Nationalism are some of the strands which make the borders viable. The complexities of majority and minority communalism are also very sensitively handled by Amitav Ghosh.

The novels of Amitav Ghosh also have the elements of diaspora. Bhim Singh Dhiya says, "Diasporic writing draws our attention to an important aspect of our era in which responsibilities go across national boundaries". In the West, migrants have achieved a number of cultural rights through the policies of Multiculturalism. In the Western countries, policies have been framed for the benefit of diasporic communities but the political and cultural effects of being called the Diasporas are different in South-East Asia. In case of migrant and displaced Indians from Pakistan and Bangladesh, a

feeling of nostalgia and a yearning for crossing “the shadow lines” of etched- out borders is reflected in the novels of Amitav Ghosh. The core feature of the Indian Diaspora is its collective imagination of India- of emotions, links, traditions, feelings and attachments that together continue to nourish a psychological appeal among successive generations of emigrants for the mother country. The partition of Bengal has turned the people of Bengal whether Hindus or Muslims, nostalgic and diasporic. Though the novel is based largely in Calcutta, Dhaka and London, it seems to echo the sentiments of whole South-east Asia, with lucid overtones of Independence and the pangs of Pakistan. Amitav Ghosh through his characters gives a lyrical expression to his diasporic imagination in his novels.

The Shadow Lines is full of symbolic references to houses, maps and mirrors, borders and boundaries. All these symbols in one way or the other deal with the theme of man’s search for identity, his search for roots, war, borders and so on. It also explores man’s external quest for freedom. Through Ila, Amitav Ghosh reveals the futility of the concept of ‘freedom’ at the individual level. There are different perspectives of freedom in *The Shadow Lines*. It differs from person to person. For Tha’mma, freedom is related to politics. According to Ila, freedom is moving away from Indian culture. “Freedom has not been obtained by independence, especially for women” (Srivastava 107). Ila who deems herself superior to the narrator lives in a false sense of freedom. For her freedom means moving, mingling and dancing with men of her choice.

Ila could not tolerate humiliation when Robi tries to prevent her from dancing at the Grand Hotel. She adamantly decides to dance with a stranger. Her pride is pricked and she demands to know the reason for stopping her from dancing. But this sense of

pride and freedom collapses most pathetically when her most adored hero turns husband, Nick Price openly betrays her faith and love. She always lives in a world of fantasy, imagining the loving care and protection of Nick Price who in fact never cared for her. Ila discards and insults those who love her. But she runs after and gets cheated by the one she loves and adores. In matrimony she does not find either the love or security or the freedom she has craved for all through her life.

The inseparable tie between past and present manifests itself in the two love relationships that develop in the novel- Ila's infatuation with and later marriage to Nick Price and Tridib's love for May. Each is a bid for freedom from the past, but the irony lies in the fact that such freedom is an illusion. Ila desires freedom from a petty middle-class orthodoxy, but she discovers that the free world she had tried to build for herself was not free from the squalor of betrayal. Tridib wanted to meet May as "the completest of strangers, far from their friends and relatives-in a place without a past, without history, free, really free, two people coming together with the utter freedom of strangers" (Barat,144). But both are caught up inexorably in the backlash of history.

The Glass Palace also deals with the freedom struggle. It gives vivid pictures of the exploitation and the arrogance of foreign rulers, as also the portrayal of an awakened people struggling for their birthright. After independence, the minds of the people are imbued with the spirit of Nationalism. Indian Nationalism, which was chief weapon of the freedom fighters in their struggle against the British rulers changed its meaning after the partition and tended to exclude people on the other side of the border. Communal frenzy, violence and destruction are the obsession now. It is reflected in the novel *The*

Glass Palace through the character Rajkumar. He is the victim of such Nationalist Movement.

The novels of Amitav Ghosh also portrays a strong sense of a 'house' or 'home' as perceived in one's imagination. For instance, Tridib believes that a house with a sloping roof is something incomplete and inconvenient. The narrator develops a strong sense of house with the influence of Tridib's description and the insight he inculcated in the narrator. So when Ila and he played houses the lines she draws to mean a staircase, a drawing room and bedroom. The narrator couldn't sustain himself at the inaccuracy of the lines. He disagrees even to pretend the lines to be a house. He protests defiantly saying that it can't be a real house. For the narrator the necessity of verandas was no more accountable than the need for doors and walls. The line here again indirectly means the border that exists between India and Pakistan. "It is time, therefore, that enables the narrator to understand how shadowy such distinctions, such lines, really are, time that enables the narrator to communicate this meaning to his audience" (Barat 47).

In the second part of the novel, the narrator along with other family members is shown visiting Dhaka to visit their ancestral house. The narrator's grandmother and her sister were excited to visit their house. Their old uncle still lived there with a Muslim mechanic but he had become senile and insane. The two women wanted to see the borderline but they could not. It only existed in the maps and Atlas. On their return journey, communal clashes broke out and Tridib was killed by the mob. The narrator through Tridib has realized the illusory and uncertain nature of man-made borders as invented corollaries of the idea of nationhood. In his writings, Amitav Ghosh, instead of

securing borders through violence, expresses a strong desire to transcend nationalism and humanitarianism.

Tridib has taught the narrator to use his imagination to go beyond the limits of time, distance and Borders. The novelist is all the time trying to coalesce time and Borders, through memory and imagination. Time and space coalesce in *The Shadow Lines* to reveal the truth that the lines that divide the world into nations are mere shadow lines. The people, who cannot look into the past, remain loyal to the present frontiers and antagonistic to the neighboring countries. Time and space seem to be conspiring to hide the truth under a sheet of silence. Amitav Ghosh uses 'memory' as narrative principle to suggest that past can be concurrent with present and geographical distances can be transcended. The deeply etched man-made lines separating nations, peoples, events can be blurred into Shadow lines where there is universal brotherhood and love. Ghosh brings out the futility of drawing lines across a nation to form two nations. His novels reject the very concept of Partition. The implication of the story is the need for co-existence and strong humanitarian ties across cultures, overlooking personal, religious and political considerations.

In conclusion, this thesis attempts to bring out the ideological differences namely the differences in perspectives. It demonstrates that the lives of the characters in the novels are determined largely by their idea of freedom. It symbolizes all those dividing lines which have caused the fragmentation of the entire globe into the smallest Geographical entities. This study has traced and dissected the meaning of freedom, faith and nationalism. Political freedom is an illusory idea as the events and experiences narrated in the novels prove that people continue to think and behave in identical manner.

They influence each other, continue to be similar and remain connected in spite of the walls and boundaries that are built in the name of winning freedom. Lands may be broken up by borders and frontiers, through war, violence and identity politics, but they are perceived as one total and single phenomenon.

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