

CHAPTER II

TRAVERSING BORDERS

If there aren't any trenches or anything,
 How are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then?
 And if there's no difference both sides will be the same;...
 What was it all for then – Partition and all the killing and
 everything – if there isn't something between? (TSL 167)

Borders are lines that segment the earth into different nations, states, districts and union territories. These lines drawn on the basis of language, ethnic and cultural differences differentiate and segment humanity with numerous identities. The lines are uncanny and whimsical subjected to change according to the fancies of the cartographers and administration authorities. Ulka Joshi in *Beyond and Beneath Violence: Private and Public Turmoil in The Shadow Lines* states, “The lines on the maps are the handiwork of administrators and cartographers and they do not mark much more than the will of the state”(72). These lines not only mark the separation of landscape but also humanity.

The earth has its own natural boundaries like seas, oceans, rivers, mountains, forests and deserts. Apart from these natural boundaries, artificial lines, called borders – invention of man – separates not only the geographical arena but also divides and segments the mass of humanity by sowing the seed of animosity in the name of patriotism. Etienne Balibar in *Politics and other Scene* says, “...borders and states are a formidable reducers of complexity even though, paradoxically, their very existence is a permanent cause of complexity” (76). This chapter interrogates the necessity for drawing these imaginary lines that pose threat to social, national and universal harmony among humanity in the name of patriotism.

Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) is the outcome of his personal experience of riot in Delhi on account of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination in 1984. It has made him to look beyond the boundaries like borders, religion, caste, nationality and patriotism. It became the fulcrum for him to re-search and re-root 'humanism' in professing it as a new religion. Usha Hemmadi in *Amitav Ghosh: A Most Distinctive Voices* quotes, "His is the kind of voice that alters readers to the lost meaning of humanism. Ghosh extends his thematic concerns to explore human relationship"(288). He intensely professes 'humanism' that engulfs all national, cultural, social, traditional and linguistic differences through his work. All his work propagandise this universal brotherhood, love and humanism.

The title of the novel *The Shadow Lines* is taken from a classic colonial novella by Joseph Conrad, *The Shadow Line* (1917). The title *The Shadow Lines* signifies the meanness of the arbitrary lines called borders that engulf human relationship and humanism. Usha Hemmadi in *Amitav Ghosh: A Most Distinctive Voices* opines, "Borders are meant to be crossed. Borders, then are an illusion, cruel most of the times" (290). The novel is subdivided into 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home'. The sub-titles denote the impermanency of the place of existence called the "Home".

A 'Home' is a place where one is born and brought up and is deeply attached to. The attachment towards one's home increases and turns as a longing if one is away from home for a long time. In the novel Ghosh symbolically refer "Home" to one's nation. The characters in the novel either go away from their home or come home, whose homes are situated in Calcutta or Dhaka. But at the end it emerges to them that home is a place where peace and harmony is, wherever they are – either at home or

abroad – thereby shattering the invisible bond of patriotism. As P.D. Dube in his *Postcolonial Discourse in Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines*, observes,

...one is constantly plagued by doubts in the novel as to whether the characters are going to Calcutta or coming to Calcutta or coming to London or going back to London. The two parts of the novel indicate this enigma of 'non-belonging.' When the dwelling place is uncertain, borders also compound the problem. (1)

He puts forth that the existence of human being and their security is subjected to uncertainties of this world in the form of borders that emerge separating a wide spread land with fences.

The novel *The Shadow Lines* is a unique representation amidst the conventional form of Indian English novels. Novy Kapadia in her essay *Imagination and Politics in Amitav Ghosh's, The Shadow Lines* comments, "*The Shadow Lines* has a unique narrative technique, sensitive handling of language and perceptive concepts of political issues" (16). The novel depicts man's insatiable desire for possession, power and dominance that feeds and breeds the roots of humanity with the venom of violence, riots, war and destruction sucking humanism from the face of humanity.

The novel narrates the story of the two families that of the Datta Chaudhuris of Bengal and the family of Prices in London from the protagonist's – the narrator – view. Mrs. Price's father Lionel Tresawsen had been to India before independence and initiated their friendship with Mr. Justice Chanrashekar Datta-Chaudhuri and his family. The narrator's family had migrated from Dhaka to Calcutta during partition. His only rich relative was his grandaunt 'Mayadebi' as she was married to Shri Himangshushekhhar Datta-Chaudhuri. She along with her three sons Jatin, Tridib and

Robi had been to London for her husband's treatment in the year 1939 and stayed there for a year with Mrs. Price's family.

Tridib, the narrator's alter-ego, was eight years old when he had been to London. As a child Tridib witnessed the commotions and bomb blasts of Second World War. After their return they had been to different places on account of Sahib's work. In the year 1959 Tridib began his correspondence with May when he was twenty seven and she nineteen. May in response to his constant summon visits India in 1963 and accompanies Thamma to Dhaka in 1964 in her mission of rescuing her aged uncle Jethamoshai to India. In Dhaka, the rescue crew was trapped with guilt in the riot of 1964 that engulfed three innocent lives. The story is narrated through the eyes of the 'unnamed narrator' – the protagonist who weaves the present and the past events of the two families against the social, political turmoil, Second World War, Partition and riots.

The story emerges with characters traversing their national boundaries and letting lose their sense of patriotism, fighting against odds like war, riots and partition. Traversing the geographical limitation has been the binding force that binds the two families with friendship that shoots even to its third generation. Usha Hemmadi in *Amitav Ghosh: A Most Distinctive Voices* states, "Ghosh's fictional people traverse borders with an almost biological urge"(289). Mrs. Price's father, Mr. Lionel Tresawsen initiated the life long relationship between his family and the narrator's family. Their friendship was strongly conserved by their offspring, Mrs. Price and Mayadebi when they had been to England for Mayadebi's husband's treatment. She had been to London in 1939 with her three sons Jatin, Tridib and Robi. Their friendship bloomed into love between May Price and Tridib; Ila (Jatin's daughter) and Nick Price and is sealed with the union of the narrator with May.

Humanism has been the fulcrum for traversing national boundaries that knits and weaves the crux of the novel. It exemplifies the strangeness of the geographical boundaries and questions the spirit of patriotism on the cost of human life. Mrs. Price's father, Mr. Lionel Tresawsen traversed the borders of his country yielding to his urge of humanism. He came to India, during the British rule on his mission to establish a homeopathy hospital in a village near Calcutta. May, like her grandfather is humanitarian; though she earns by orchestra she derives utmost satisfaction working for relief agencies like Amnesty and Oxfam that helps in providing shelter for the survivors of earthquake in Central America. Ila joins Save the Children Fund that paid her less. Ghosh's characters, shuttle from East to West crossing not just political and national boundaries but also invisible bonds like patriotism, nationality, and sense of belonging. These characters move in so many directions blurring the boundaries of the world and create a new world where no boundaries of race or caste exist or acknowledged. He aims at creating one big home and emphasises that the real home lies with flourishing of humanism, not confined to all these lines. Usha Hemmadi in *Amitav Ghosh: A Most Distinctive Voices* views, "Traversing borders becomes almost an obsession with Ghosh"(290). All the characters in the novel traverse not only the national borders and sense of patriotism but also from self-centeredness to human-centeredness.

Ghosh structures the novel with interconnections of lives and experience of the two families. He interweaves multi-layered stories together with themes like riots, violence, freedom – political as well as individual. Arvind Choudhary rightly comments in his introduction in *Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines: Critical Essays* about the plot structure of the novel as:

Its focus is a fact of history, the post partition scenario of violence, but its overall form is subtle interweaving of fact, fiction and reminiscence. Its multi-layered complex structure makes it difficult text, which demands perceptive reading for a richer experience. It is principally, organized through the weaving together of personal lives and public events. (12)

Ghosh has thus blended the novel in right proportion of both public and personal lives in his attempt to propagate his view that home is universal where humanism exists.

The narrator witnesses Tha'mma's transformation of belief from patriotism to humanism in the riot of 1964. The narrator by unravelling the past and his memories brings out the trauma of partition on the lives of the characters, events of Tridib's death and historic events of Second World War. His life is influenced by three chief characters, Tha'mma, Ila and Tridib. The narrator's first influence is his grandmother Tha'mma, a great patriot and strict disciplinarian. The second is Ila – his only identity. Thirdly, Tridib – a man of everywhere – taught him the art of imagination and gave him worlds to travel. Ila and Tridib belong to modern India to whom the concept of patriotism is associated with the past but to Tha'mma patriotism and nationalism was once her identity.

The narrator's grandmother fondly known as Tha'mma is one of the dominant character in narrator's life. She is a wholesome character; the exact representation of the few Indian women who stood against the odds of the patriarch society. Being the eldest of the two she grew up nurturing responsibility of her big joint family. She was born in 1903 and her sister Mayadebi in 1910 and was brought up in a big crowded joint family. Her family lived in their big ancestral house in 1/31 Jindabaha Lane in Dhaka (TSL 150), she remembers,

...everyone living and eating together: her grandparents, her parents, she and Mayadebi, her Jethamoshai – her father's elder brother – and his family, which included three cousins of roughly her own age, as well as a couple of spinster aunts. (TSL134)

Tha'mma's big crowded joint family was shattered with the death of her grandfather. The heirs fell into worse quarrels and fights over their possession and above all for the vacant place of the grandfather, of who to boss over the family next. As a matter of fact the ancestral house had to be partitioned. The house and the family had been partitioned. From then on, the family on the other side became aliens to the other. Tha'mma becoming the silent witness to separation and partition of her own family, lost faith in the meaning of family and brotherhood.

Tha'mma, was a great patriot and a revolutionary who aspired for a free India. She was one of the few fortunate lots who had obtained a bachelors degree in History from Dhaka University. She even as a young college girl had a great liking for nationalism. Her liking towards revolutionary movements increased when she happened to witness the arrest of her classmate on the charge of being a secret agent belonging to the revolutionary movement. She expresses her desire to serve them as,

if only she had known, if only she had been working with him, she would have warned him somehow, she would have saved him, she would have gone to Khulna with him too, and stood at his side, with a pistol in her hands, waiting for that English magistrate.... (TSL 43)

her patriotism is revealed with her desire to work for the revolutionaries, to run errands for them, cook their food, and wash their clothes because they were fighting the enemy of her country. When the narrator asks her whether she would have killed the English magistrate, she replies, "I would have been frightened.... But I would

have prayed for strength, and god willing, yes, I would have killed him. It was for our freedom: I would have done anything to be free” (TSL 43). She very much wanted to be a part of the freedom struggle to contribute for the independence of her nation India.

Patriotism had been on her nerves for free India. Her aspiration to build a strong country is revealed when she encourages her grandson – the narrator – to play games in order to have a strong body, the narrator comments:

My cricket game was the one thing for which my grandmother never grudged my time away from my homework: on the contrary, she insisted that I run down to the park by the Lake whether I wanted to or not. You can’t build a strong country, she would say, pushing me out of the house, without building a strong body. (TSL 9)

She was also proud of Robi for his strong physic,

She would look at him and marvel at how he was always half-a- head taller than anyone else of his age, at the strength in his long sinewy legs. She would press her thumb against the muscles in his forearms, already hardened at the age of nine by all the games he played, and she would say: You’re strong, don’t ever forget that, you’re strong....

Watch Robi, he’s strong, he’s not like the rest of you in this country.

(TSL 39)

Her nationalistic feeling was so strong that she even parted with her chain by giving it to the fund for war in order to get freedom.

A sudden hurricane of misery and helplessness embraced her when her husband died of pneumonia in the Arakan Hills in 1935 when she was just thirty two. With the loss of her parents and also her husband she boldly ventures into life for the

sake of her ten year old son. Her education helped her to obtain a job as a school teacher in Calcutta, where she had to work for the next twenty-seven years by traversing the borders of her hometown, family and memory. In Calcutta she had to live in a one-room tenement in Bhowanipore. She would dream of “the old house, her parents, Jethamoshai (her uncle), and her childhood” (TSL 125) in Dhaka, but to her return was unimaginable. The family fight, separation, partition of her house had created an indelible mark and was fresh in her mind. Later on this becomes the primary cause for her return to Dhaka – East Pakistan, an alien nation, which was once her hometown.

Tha'mma had led a confined and contented life all through her widowhood. She was very particular in leading an independent life and not to be dependent on her relatives for help or favours. In 1980 when her sister Maya invited them to visit their old family house in Rajbajar, Thamma was careful in declining to accept her rich sister's invitation. When the narrator's mother asked her for reason she said sharply,

she ought to have known that Queen Victoria only wanted us along so that Ila would have someone to play with; that we weren't beggars yet to grab at everything she held out to us. (TSL 36)

All the more even after her husband's death she never expected her relatives to help her; instead she took up school teaching and was daring enough to traverse the borders of her country to find her new life in Calcutta. The narrator reasons out Tha'mma's feelings for her relatives, “she was extremely wary of relatives; to her they represented an imprisoning wall of suspicion and obligations...” (TSL 143). But the fact is that she never entertained relatives in her life, the narrators says,

She in the fierceness of her pride, had severed her connections with most of her relatives, and had refused to accept any help from them at

all, even from Mayadebi, her own sister; that she, being, as she was, too formidable a woman for people to thrust their help upon without being asked, had never had the generosity to ask of her own will. The price she had paid for that pride was that it had come to be transformed in her imagination into a barrage of slights and snubs; an imaginary barrier that she believed her gloating relatives had erected to compound her humiliation. (TSL 143)

So stubborn was Tha'mma that she never shared affinity with her relatives other than her sister Maya. But then the narrator explains the reason for Tha'mma's refusal of help from her relatives, "I knew intuitively that all that had kept her from agreeing at once was her fear of accepting anything from anyone that she could not return in exact measure" (TSL 37). Tha'mma was so virtuous that she was careful not to exploit the goodness of her relatives and had never expected help or favours from anyone.

Retirement marks Tha'mma's transformation. Her life entered into the phase of transformation after her retirement at the age of sixty in the year 1962. She who had kept herself busy all the time is now lost in the vast space of time. She had never allowed her time to be wasted, could now smell her time stinking, the narrator comments, "Time – great livid gouts of it; I could smell it stinking" (TSL 131). She found it very difficult to stay indoors. She even after her retirement visited her school for a couple of hours until the new headmistress requested her son to keep her at home.

Tha'mma's life becomes purposeful with her encounter with her distant relative Minadi. She learns from her about the state of her uncle Jethamoshai in her ancestral house in Dhaka. He is taken care of a Muslim refugee from India, "...

(refugees) mainly people who had gone across from Bihar and U.P.” (TSL 149).

Tha'mma who never paid attention to her relatives in all these years of widowhood is suddenly overcome by strong feeling of bonding over her uncle who had been the reason for the partition of her ancestral house in Dhaka.

Humanism and compassion forms the fulcrum of her mission of rescuing her aged uncle from Dhaka. Her retirement has clothed her with loneliness and aloofness that she had to be confined in her own room. As she had always craved to be a revolutionary, she decides to give her humanistic feeling a try to find and bring her uncle Jethamoshai, back to Calcutta, who lives in their ancestral partitioned old house in Bangladesh. Thamma pitied her old uncle, “Poor old man, ... what it must be like to die in another country, abandoned and alone in your old age” (TSL 149) she fails to understand that to Jethamoshai, Calcutta in India would be another country for he had not traversed the borders of Dhaka.

Tha'mma's concept of home is shattered to pieces on her visit to Dhaka. She decides to take up the mission of bringing the old man 'home' – to Calcutta, she says, “There's only one worthwhile thing left for me to do in my life now, she said. And that is to bring the old man home...” (TSL 151). She is of the view that her act of rescuing her uncle from the clutches of her enemy nation would be the right thing to do in order to amend the chaos that the partition of the family has left over. She says,

It doesn't matter whether we recognise each other or not. We're the same flesh, the same blood, the same bone, and now at last, after all these years, perhaps we'll be able to make amends for all that bitterness and hatred. (TSL 142)

Ergo, Tha'mma sets on her new mission of rescuing her aged uncle from Dhaka, which was once her home. Tridib, May and Robi also accompany her in this rescue

mission. She had the heart to empathize with her old uncle with whom she had never an opportunity to live together as a family due to the partition of their house. It is here that she comes to understand the barbarity of human kind and the meaningless of life that she greatly possessed.

The concept of 'home' is reconsidered which puts Tha'mma in close proximity with the term 'alien'. To Tha'mma, Dhaka as her home existed only in her memories but her heart is deeply rooted in Calcutta in India which she had adopted as her home. The quote by Gaius Plinius Secundus "Home is where the heart is" becomes true in the case of Tha'mma. Her homecoming had made her understand that she had become alien in her own land. This feeling brought in transformation in her belief and opinion of home, nation, country and nationality, thereby making her to accept the truth that she herself is a transnationalist.

Tha'mma's homecoming transformed her belief on life and home. It is here she understands how the powerful feeling of 'love' 'home' and 'nation' losses its significance yielding to the triviality of borders and boundaries. Her entire life is altered with her homecoming. Her disappointment began on her flight when she expected to see the borders like a huge wall or a fence or a pit that separates India and Dhaka but was shocked to find nothing. Her patriotic feeling is questioned and she claims,

But if there aren't any trenches or anything, How are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same;... What was it all for then – Partition and all the killing and everything – if there isn't something between? (TSL 167)

In reciprocation the narrator's father explains that borders are insignificant and integral part of the nation. He represents the modern day's conception and embodiment of borders,

This is the modern world. The border isn't on the frontier: it's right inside the airport. You'll see. You'll cross it when you have to fill in all those disembarkation cards and things (TSL 167).

Reem Yassar in *Remapping Borders and boundaries in the Middle East* writes "Borders entail visas, passports, checkpoints and other procedures which make travel and movement a problematic issue" (7). Then again landing on Dhaka she asked Mayadebi, "Where's Dhaka? I can't see Dhaka" (TSL 213). All her expectations were futile and she was filled only with disappointments and says, "I've never seen any of this. Where's Dhaka?" (TSL 214). Her homecoming has paved way for her revelation that there is no concrete place where and which you call it 'home', she confesses to May, "Yes, I really am a foreigner here – as foreign as May in India or Tagore in Argentina... this isn't Dhaka" (TSL 215). Thus her concept and belief on patriotism and nation undergoes a transformation in understanding and accepting the reality, that home is where the heart is. Furthermore Jethamoshai's refusal to come with her makes her understand that 'home' is definitely an abstract noun that could exist only in one's memory and feelings.

Ghosh draws attention to the concept of belongingness in this non-permanent world with grandmother's homecoming. Her return is filled with irony. Thamma's sense of nationalism and patriotism loses its grip in the second part of the novel. Her visit to Dhaka ceases off her patriotic feeling because it is no longer her Dhaka but Bangladesh. The narrator's grandmother returns to visit her paternal home in Dhaka in 1964, which is now named as Bangladesh and is considered to be the neighbouring

country. His grandmother wants to bring her uncle back from Bangladesh to her home in Calcutta – but the irony is that Dhaka which is her birthplace has now become an alien nation. She realized her alienation when she had to fill in the form for her visa her state of mind is described thus,

She would have to fill in ‘Dhaka’ as her place of birth on that form, and that prospect of this had worried her... and at that moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality. (TSL 168)

It is for this nation – Dhaka – she exhibited her patriotic feeling and aspired to fight against British government when she was a college girl. Now that very place seems to pose her the problem of identity crises. She could no longer accept that she belongs to Dhaka. Though the prospect of coming to Dhaka enticed her, she was totally at a loss on arriving.

Ghosh has purposefully employed words like ‘going’ and ‘coming’ just to reconsider the concept of belongingness. Tha’mma who had been traversing borders of many cities when young was at total loss to traverse the borders of India to Dhaka. Tha’mma could sense the loss of her nationality when she was ready to ‘go’ to Dhaka for the very first time after her widowhood, because all those years she was actually ‘coming’ to her home – Dhaka from wherever place she had been living.

Tha’mma’s journey to Dhaka put her in a state of frenzy in respect to her sense of belonging. This was the very first journey where she feels that she is ‘going’ to Dhaka – that is going away from her new home India to another country Dhaka – so her ‘going’ to Dhaka is painful as she is at loss of her connection from her family, home and relationships. Her feeling on her prospect of ‘going’ to Dhaka is evident when her son asks, “Why are you so worried about this little journey? You’ve been

travelling between countries for years. Don't you remember – all those trips you made in and out of Burma” (TSL 168). Tha'mma was quick to contradict her son's statement and was clear in expressing her fear of 'going' for the very first time, she said, “Oh *that*,... it wasn't the same thing. There weren't any forms or anything and anyway travelling was so easy then. I could come home to Dhaka whenever I wanted” (TSL 168). Thus traversing these lifeless lines creates a vacuum of lifelessness and uncertainty in the minds and life of the travellers.

Ghosh adds pun to the words 'going' and 'coming' through the young narrator. As a young boy narrator could not infer the meaning nor understand the difference between 'coming' and 'going', though he knew only the peripheral implications of the words, he asks Tha'mma, “How could you have 'come' home to Dhaka? You don't know the difference between coming and going!” (TSL 168). The grown up narrator then reasons out and infers the real meaning of what it would have been for his grandmother to say 'coming home' rather than 'going home'. He reasons out,

You see, in our family we don't know whether we're coming or going – it's all my grandmother's fault. But of course, the fault wasn't hers at all: it lay in language. Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (TSL 169)

The grown up narrator fathoms that Tha'mma's homecoming was not her coming home but actually going away from her present 'home' to her past, as to her the home in Dhaka exists only in her memories.

Tha'mma's final shock to her conservative view of the world comes when her uncle Jethamoshai, refuses to go back to Calcutta. She witnesses his transformation of being taken care by Muslim refugees. She recollects of how orthodox the old man was when they lived together as one big joint family. She says to Robi,

There was a time when that old man was so orthodox that he wouldn't let a Muslim's shadow pass within ten feet of his food? And look at him now, paying the price of his sins (TSL 231).

When she expressed her willingness to take him with her to her home the old man simply refused her invitation. Tha'mma was alarmed and was taken aback of such a resolved refusal even without a thought or consideration. When Tha'mma and others persuade him to return to India he says,

Once you start moving you never stop. That's what I told my sons when they took the trains. I said: I don't 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. (TSL 237)

These words of the old man shattered Tha'mma's conception of nationhood. He was not willing to acknowledge such separation drawn by cartographers between nations.

The essence of humanity – humanism – is exhibited through Khalil. Khalil the poor Muslim rickshaw driver, had the basic quality of humanism that despite of his meagre income he was taking care of Jethamoshai with utmost dedication. Moreover,

Tha'mma's rescue operation meets a tragic end that fills the rest of her life with guilt.

It is pertinent here to cite Robert Dixon's comment:

The Shadow Lines is therefore, a fictional critique of classical anthropology's model of discrete cultures and the associated ideology of nationalism. The reality is the complex web of relationships between people that cut across nations and across generations. (10)

Tha'mma's visit to Dhaka has transformed her perception on freedom, patriotism, nationhood and human relationships.

Tha'mma's homecoming made her understand that 'Humanism' surpasses all belief and differences. It was on the basis of humanism that her aged uncle Jethamoshai had given his house for the refugees from India to stay. It was on the ground of humanism that Khail had looked after Jethamoshai despite of his adversity. Above all it was on the same ground of humanism did Tridib ventured into the mob in his act of rescuing become a martyr – an epitome of transhumanization.

The narrator does not possess the spirit of patriotism and nationalism like his grandmother. He was born in the year 1952 and to him the sense of patriotism and nationalism are things associated with the past. From childhood he was confined to his grandmother's strict disciplinary life. It was the grandmother who led the house as she wanted to. She heads and leads her family – her son, daughter-in-law and grandson – under her strict disciplinary rules. His father was working as a junior executive in a company, his mother a housewife and grandmother is a school headmistress, the narrator says,

In our flat all of us worked hard at whatever we did: my grandmother at her schoolmistressing; I at my homework; my mother at her

housekeeping; my father at his job as a junior executive in a company which dealt in vulcanised rubber. (TSL 4)

Tha'mma is of the view that "time was like a toothbrush: it went mouldy if it wasn't used" (TSL 4). Being very young the narrator was not able to comprehend Tha'mma's concept of time, when he inquired about the wasted time, she said, "It begins to stink" (TSL 4). She never gave any opportunity for their time to stink. The narrator recollects,

...she had been careful to rid our little flat of everything that might encourage us to let our time stink. No chessboard or any pack of cards...but I was only allowed to play with it when I was ill. She did not even approve of my mother listening to afternoon radio play more than once a week. (TSL 4).

According to Tha'mma "Time is not for wasting, time is for work" (TSL 15). The young narrator could not cope up with his confined limits and was finding his means of escape from his monotonous life.

Time has been the deciding factor in the life of the narrator. The narrator who grew up under the confined limits of his grandmother was very tired of his monotonous life, he says, "Our time wasn't given the slightest opportunity to grow mouldy" (TSL 4). Tha'mma in her attempt to make her grandson to understand the importance of time has made him drift into the axis of Tridib, whom she had never approved of, for the very fact of wasting his time, by hanging around in street corners and tea addas. In grandmothers view "He (Tridib) is a loafer and a wastrel" (TSL 4) because "he doesn't do any proper work, lives off his father's money" (TSL 4) and all the more "Tridib wastes his time" (TSL 4). The narrator was attracted towards Tridib for his freedom to use his time as he likes. He was very much fascinated and was

attracted towards him because of his liberty to use his time. He wonders that Tridib never had an overseer like his grandmother to instruct him as to how to spend his time, and doesn't work and yet his time never stinks. He then started to look up at Tridib with an awe and admiration. He then slowly started to identify himself with Tridib.

Ila is the narrator's only identity. Though she was the narrator's first love they were two opposite poles when it comes to Tridib. Ila who is a practical woman, neither has sentiments to events of the past nor had the faculty to imagine no matter how much she has travelled, the narrator says, "For Ila the current was the real: it was as though she lived in a present which was like an air lock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel floodgates" (TSL 33). She was practical in her own way.

The narrator, unlike Ila, was not fortunate to traverse the national borders of his country. He, who had a liking to go abroad, could not forget Tridib because he had taught him to imagine and helped him to invent his own world through his faculty of imagination, the narrator comments to Ila:

I could not forget because Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with: she who had been travelling around the world since she was a child, could never understand what those hours in Tridib's room had meant to me, a boy who had never been more than a few hundred miles from Calcutta. (TSL 22)

It was his influence on the narrator that enabled him to evolve into an adult who is free of other people's inventions, discarding all the national boundaries and is able to invent places in his imagination, the narrator recollects,

He said to me once that one could never know anything except through desires, real desire, which was not the same thing as greed or lust; a pure, painful and primitive desire, a longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried one beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's own image in the mirror. (TSL 32)

Tridib had imparted the secret for a happy living enabling the narrator to be independent and invent places using his imagination capability.

The narrator in his linking towards Tridib persuades Ila to use her faculty of imagination. He in contrast to Ila's concept of practicality responds,

...we could not see without inventing what we saw, so at least we could try to do it properly. ... I told her how he had said that we had to try because the alternative wasn't blankness – it only meant that if we did not try ourselves, we would never be free of other people's inventions. (TSL 35)

Tridib was also right in judging Ila for her lack of imagination ability. The narrator comments:

I could not persuade her that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination; that her practical, bustling London was no less invented than mine, neither more or less true, only very far apart. It was not her fault that she could not understand, for as Tridib often said of her, the inventions she lived moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all. (TSL 23)

The narrator who could not only understand Tridib's view of imagination was also able to fathom it to its full in using his imagination precisely. He says, "...the one thing he wanted to teach me,... was to use my imagination with precision" (TSL 26). But for Ila it was difficult to believe that there are people who could experience the real world through their imagination, "Ila lived so intensely in the present that she would not have believed that there really were people like Tridib, who could experience the world as concretely in their imaginations as she did through her senses..."(TSL 33). The narrator despite this contrasting opinion on Tridib, was able to love Ila wholeheartedly nevertheless his love was not reciprocated.

The young narrator is the exact representation of aficionado who loses his identity and nationality. The very first time when the narrator listened to Tridib's account of his visit to London, he started to identify himself in Tridib's shoes. His transformation occurred at early years for he says, "... I have come to believe that I was eight too when Tridib first talked to me... and I had decided that he looked like me" (TSL 3). He also believed that he shares semblance with Tridib. He fails to live his life despite his grandmother's disapproval for his thought of resemblance, "she was very quick to contradict... No, he looked *completely* different – not at all like you" (TSL 4). He willingly commits identity suicide by imitating Tridib. The narrator fits into Emerson's definition that he states in his prose piece *Self Reliance*, "imitation is suicide" (82). He was fascinated by his approach towards life. He learnt the magic of imagination from Tridib but fails to draw a line between his fascination and his obsession.

The narrator is the replica of the unfortunate middle class people who deemed that traversing borders was the highest end of luxury. He had inherited this mentality from his grandmother who was specific to avoid any help rendered by her sister

Mayadebi. The narrator who grew up in a family where the whole family works hard to make both the ends meet could not accept the fact that Mayadebi was in any way related to him, he says,

It startles me now to discover how readily the name comes off my pen as ‘Mayabedi’, for I have never spoken of her thus; not aloud at any rate: as my grandmother’s only sister, she was always Maya-thakuma to me. But still, from as far back as I can remember, I have known her, in the secrecy of my mind, as ‘Mayadebi’ – as though she were a well-known stranger, like a filmstar or a politician whose picture I had seen in a newspaper. (TSL 3)

He was in such a opinion because of their very opportunity to traverse borders of several countries like, London, Africa and Ceylon.

The narrator had the urge to traverse the borders of different countries. He neither had the trace of nationalistic nor patriotic commitment towards his country. It was this urge that made him to identify himself with Tridib who was fortunate to fly to England at the age of eight. He desired to travel to various places like Tridib and Ila but that his family situation had confined him to the limitations of a middle class life style. To him Maya is someone with high reputation and he never wanted to think them as his relative and reduce her reputation, he says,

The truth is that I did not *want* to think of her as a relative: to have done that would have diminished her and her family – I could not bring myself to believe that their worth in my eyes could be reduced to something so arbitrary and unimportant as a blood relationship. (TSL 3)

This thought brings out the prevailing middle class attitude in India. People who afforded to go abroad enjoyed special status in the society. They were treated with dignity and pride. It was for this very reason that Tridib was sought after for guidance for writing examination and also for job interviews.

The other character who had influence the narrator is Ila. The narrator's original identity is revealed in his relationship with Ila. She belongs to the same age group as of the narrator. She is the narrator's first love and his identity where Tridib's influence is absent. The narrator experienced his first crush at eight years with Ila. His affection is revealed when he was longing to see her when the narrator's family was waiting for Maya and her family's arrival, "...I was beside myself with worry. I tugged at her sari and shouted demanding to know where Ila was, hadn't she promised me that she'd be coming too?" (TSL 46). He has a young boy had special liking towards her.

Ila introduced the narrator to the fancies of the western culture. She from her childhood had been fortunate to traverse the borders of various places and returns to Calcutta on holidays every year. She would bring her Yearbooks of International Schools of whatever city she had been living at that time and show him her pictures of which he had never imagined. On seeing the album the narrator comments,

They were always full of Photographs.... For a long time I could not believe that they were really pictures of a school, because in the pictures the boys and girls were standing around all mixed up together, and besides, not one of them was in uniform. To me the clothes they were wearing in those pictures seemed to have as little to do with school as the costumes at a circus. (TSL 24)

This reveals the narrator's desire to be a part of that society where there were no limitations and restrictions on time or on clothing. The narrator treasured the moments that he spent with Ila. She had taken him to the cellar that was in the underground and taught him to play Houses, where he played the role of a husband and she the wife and mother of their doll Magda. The incident and experiences that she narrated to him was her own experiences in her school. This had created an indelible mark in the mind of the narrator.

The narrator traverses the borders of his country at the age of twenty eight for his Ph.D. research. He goes to London in 1980 for re-searching on the nineteenth century textile trade between England and India. Though it was his first trip, the streets in London were exactly the same as he had imagined. Tridib's influence was so strong that his imagination of the places in London was accurate so that he was able to spot out the house in which Nick's uncle Alan had lived at the beginning of the war, the Brick lane and Kemble's Head. *Nishant Bana* writes in *Critical Analysis of "The Shadow Lines"*

It is through Tridib's idiosyncratic, rational and detached eyes
Anonymous narrator get the captivating picture of outside world and
 gradually Narrator was trained to contemplate through Tridib's vision;
 Evidently highlighting narrator's reliance on Tridib.

The narrator expresses his gratitude "I was grateful for the small privileges his presence secured on me on those streets" (TSL 61). *Nishant Bana in Critical Analysis of The Shadow Lines* states, "Tridib viably cultivated and built narrator's mind to perceive things and to enhance a *sense of imagination*". Ghosh showcases the narrator's character as someone who is torn between his original identity and his transformed identity (Tridib).

The narrator suffers the conflict of dual personality. His original identity becomes active with the presence of Ila. When on his visit to London for his research he had happened to stay a night in Mrs. Price's house where his love for Ila deepened. He on knowing well that Ila is in love with Nick Price, he could not control his feelings for her, he had totally lost himself, he says, "I knew she had taken my life hostage yet again; I knew that a part of my life as a human being had ceased: that I no longer existed, but as a chronicle" (TSL 123). He even after her wedding was fascinated towards her that after handing her his gift of "a minute silver salt cellar" (TSL 170) he admired her, "She was smiling radiantly; laughing that wonderful tinkling laugh of hers as she spun around the room in a blaze of crimson silk, talking to her guests" (TSL 171). His love for Ila was so deep that he even searched for reasons to mourn for his sadness because of her marriage, he says, "It was as though a part of my body had discovered, in my drunkenness, a means of pricking me on to look for a means of mourning Ila's marriage" (TSL 173). Thus his original self suffers a defeat as a person and he had failed in his love causing him to settle for libido.

The narrator's transformed identity – the identity of Tridib – is active with the presence of May. When he had been to London for his research in 1980, he took his way to meet May after a great deal of trouble. He was twenty seven and May thirty eight years old. As his call went unanswered several times he took pains to buy a ticket to meet her at the musical concert and also accepted her invitation for dinner. It was then he learnt of her relationship with Tridib which they began in 1959 when she was seventeen years. He also happened to read their personal letters and started to look at May through Tridib's eyes. To him Ila's wedding was a reason to mourn his failure in life so he took refuge in May's arms trying to seduce her in his drunkenness.

Though May initially restrains from the narrator, later on she identifies Tridib's characteristics in the narrator and seeks solace in his arms.

The narrator's love and obsession makes him a prey for libido. He despite Thamma's strict disciplinary rules drifted away from the path of virtuousness. He did not fit into Tha'mma's puritanical world, so she had written to the Principal of his college requesting to expel the narrator from college for his shameful act of visiting whores in the city, the narrator says,

I have never understood how she learnt of the women I had visited a couple of times, with my friends; nor do I know how she saw that I was in love with Ila so long before I dared to admit it to myself. (TSL 103)

He had confessed his act of shame on admiring Ila being half dressed, "she seemed to belong to a wholly different species of being from the women my friends and I had visited" (TSL 122). His love for Ila made him wrenched into adulthood and his obsession on Tridib authorised his adulthood by seeking relationship with Tridib's lover, May. Thus the narrator proves to be the testimony of Tha'mma's words, "...the male, as a species, to be naturally frail and wayward..."(TSL 6). He lacked the core gravity to maintain virtue and originality to live his life. He willingly committed identity suicide by imitating Tridib's characteristics and attitudes.

Tridib was a man of supreme wisdom that sets him apart from being an ordinary man. Freedom was in his heart; freedom not from the clutches of any dominating forces, but freedom to live as to one's imagination, a rightful living. Though he had been a continuous traveller he possessed the faculty of imagination at its precision. He had taught the young narrator the art of imagination, he says:

...we could not see without inventing what we saw, so at least we could try to do it properly. ...we had to try because the alternative wasn't blankness – it only meant that if we did not try ourselves, we would never be free of other people's inventions. (TSL 35)

He lived his life to its fullest for he followed the secret of living *Carpe diem* – 'size the day'.

Humanism and optimism are the hall mark of Tridib. He had an optimistic outlook towards life. His mindset is revealed when he consoles May on seeing the Victoria Memorial. Though the immense marble edifice took her breath she was also reminded of the injustice done to India by her nation and felt ashamed. When Tridib asked her what was that that disturbed her she said, "It shouldn't be here... It's an act of violence. It's obscene" (TSL 188). But Tridib consoles her saying, "No it's not, he said. This is *our* ruin; that's what we've been looking for" (TSL 188). His words reveal the truth that, humanity on the whole has lost its humanism in the name of nationalism and patriotism. He by saying "This is *our* ruin", (*our* being in italics – indicates humanity) lays emphasis to the spirit of humanism that is buried under the guise of patriotism. His words had changed the perspective of the narrator who deemed it as the nation's pride. It made him understand that the monument depicts the doomed fate of humanity have invited upon themselves willingly in the name of nation and nationality.

Tridib desired a freedom from the arbitrary borders. He rather aspired to live a life free from all confinements. He even tried to achieve his desire by living on his own. He wanted to be free of other people's opinions and criticisms. He is a man who aspires to be everywhere where there are no borders to distinguish between nations, place and people for he is of the view that emotions are same everywhere despite any

differences. He wanted the young narrator to understand that wherever humanity exists, emotions are the same. He in order to explain this truth narrates a sad little story of a hero called Tristan, a man without a country, who fell in love with a woman-across-the seas... (TSL 206). When the narrator asked, “Where did it happen? Which country?” (TSL 205). Tridib said, “It happened everywhere, wherever you wish it. It was an old story, the best story in Europe,... when Europe was a better place, a place without borders and countries...” (TSL 206)

Tridib strongly believed in stories for he is of a view that it was the only place where borders do not exist he says to the narrator,

Everyone lives in a story, my grandmother, my father, his father, Lenin, Einstein, and lots of other names I hadn't heard of; they all live in stories, because stories are all there are to live in, it was just a question of which one you chose... (TSL 201)

To him stories are the exact place populated with people and emotions *sans* borders, *sans* nationality and *sans* differences. He also desired to see his beloved- May, in such a place where differences do not count but only emotions. May informs the narrator about his proposal to her, “All I remember, she said, is him saying – you're my love, my own, true love, my love-across-the-seas; what do I have to do to keep you with me?” (TSL 193). To him May was his love-across-the-seas as he heard that story from Snipe, May's father. It was just as he believed; his life became a story to the narrator of whose fate he discovers after fifteen years of his death.

The narrator who grew up to the confined limits of borders was unable to fathom Tridib's concept of borderless humanity. He like most who are brought up on geographical atlases and text books elaborating on borders and boundary lines, believes in these fixtures and remarks:

It actually took me fifteen years to discover that there was a connection between my nightmare bus ride back from school, and the events that befell Tridib and the others in Dhaka... I was a child, and like all the children around me, I grew up believing in the truth of the precepts that were available to me: I believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance, I believed in the reality of nations and border; I believed that across the border there existed another reality. (TSL 241)

The borders are lines that are capable of arousing violence and riots among nations. It lays bare the futility of human life and brotherhood. The narrator wonders:

...what had they felt I wondered, when they discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet undiscovered irony – the irony that killed Tridib: the simple facts 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 loosely 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. (TSL 257)

Though these lines are drawn on the borders they are deeply rooted in the minds of the people living in that region changing and shaping the identity of every individual. It is for this very reason Tridib had taught the narrator to invent places in one's own imagination, in order to be free from other people's misguiding and subjective inventions. Murari Prasad observes:

The novel addresses the challenge of geographical fluidity and cultural dislocations with a new consciousness and firm grasp of socio-cultural and historical materials. The experience of aliens and immigrants in post-colonial setting furnish us with the clue to the novel's larger borders and adjustment with the altered face of the world. (12)

Thus Ghosh triggers the spirit of humanism which is totally lost under the web of these crisscross lines drawn in the name of borders.

The climax of the novel intensifies with the rescue of Jethamoshai back to Calcutta. Jethamoshai, Thamma's aged uncle who lives in Dhaka was a man of poor health and poor memory. She on finding her uncle pities him for his neglected state of living under the care of Khalil, a muslim who runs a cycle – rickshaw, from Murshidabad, in Bengal. Though he does not recognize her in the beginning, he remembers when Tridib reminds him of his connection with them, he suddenly recognizes:

The old man's face lit up. They died! he said, his voice quivering in triumph. They had two daughters: one with a face like a vulture, and another one who was as poisonous as a cobra but all pretty and goody-goody to look at. (214)

But Jethamoshai, on the other hand, considers Thamma as foes who have come to spoil his peace. Despite his refusal, Thamma persuades him to come along with her to Calcutta.

Ghosh portrays Tridib's transhumanization through the riot of 1964. The narrator could not comprehend the animosity that encompasses between the two cities. Though the cities Dhaka and Calcutta were the closest to each other, even though concrete border lines had been drawn between them on the map, violence

consumes all that falls between the two cities and the distance was converged with the spread of violence. The narrator could not comprehend the cause that the theft that took place in Srinagar, could kill Tridib who was in Dhaka miles away from India.

The narrator finds out the manner of Tridib's death after fifteen years. He discovers that the reason of the 1964 riot in Calcutta and Dhaka was the theft, of the prophet's hair *Mu-i-Mubarak* from a mosque in Srinagar. The theft was condemned by the Muslims as an attack upon their identity and observed 31st December as a 'Black Day' in Karachi. Though the relic was reinstalled within three days the frenzy of riots never seems to be quietened. The newspaper never had any reports on agitations based on the demonstration that took place in Srinagar except a small note on Khulna, a distant place in the east wing of Pakistan where a demonstration turned violent killing few people. This violence soon brought in social disturbances and the next day headlines records the death of *Fourteen* lives in that state. Soon the then Pakistani government took necessary steps in deporting Hindu refugees to India in trains and by foot with armed guards to protect them but the city was given to the frenzy of violence, "The towns and cities of East Pakistan were now in the grip of a 'frenzy' of looting, killing and burning" (TSL 252). The riot that was aroused by the theft never subsided. While there were Hindu refugees pouring into India from Pakistan, angry mobs began to gather to quench their vengeance. The narrator reads,

... the events followed their own grotesque logic, and on 10 January, the day the cricket Test match began in Madras, Calcutta erupted.

Mobs went ramping through the city, killing Muslims, and burning and looting their shops and houses... There are no reliable estimates of how many people were killed in the riots of 1964. The number could stretch

from several hundred to several thousand; at any rate not very many less than were killed in the war of 1962. (TSL 252- 253)

The notable aspect of these riots is that they just vanish from the minds of people just like a fleeting vapour without leaving any trace.

The quality of forgetfulness is a greatest blessing as Robert Lynd writes in his prose piece *Forgetfulness*. Forgetfulness along with time alters and mends the sorrow of the collective group. The newspaper report states that once the riots began there were groups working as relief agencies for refugees pouring into India, the narrator recollects,

...there were innumerable cases of Muslims in East Pakistan giving shelter to Hindus, often at the cost of their own lives, and Equally, in India, of Hindus sheltering Muslims. But they were ordinary people, soon forgotten – not for them any Martyr’s Memorials or Eternal Flames. (TSL 253)

The narrator through his research realizes that there is a universal cord binding every individual in the name of ‘Humanism’, he states evidences from the newspaper,

... it is clear that once the riots had started both the governments did everything they could to put a stop to them as quickly as possible. In this, they were subject to a logic larger than themselves, for the madness of a riot is a pathological inversion, but also therefore a reminder, of that indivisible sanity binds people to each other independently of their governments. And that prior, independent relationship is the natural enemy of government, for it is in the logic of states that to exist at all they must claim the monopoly of all relationships between peoples. (TSL 254)

Time has such a potential to sooth the intensity of sorrow and misery, he says, “they have no use for memories of riots” (254). He further ponders,

By the end of January 1964 the riots had faded away from the pages of the newspapers, disappeared from the collective imagination of ‘responsible opinion’, vanished without leaving a trace in the histories and bookshelves. They had dropped out of memory into the crater of a volcano of silence. (TSL 254)

Thus on one side humanism flourished giving shelter to the refugees whereas on the other side these refugees had to traverse the borders of their native country for protection in an alien nation just because they were different in religion. It is reiterated, has patriotism and the attained freedom serves the real cause of freedom and liberation of humanity? If so then why is such killing and massacre? Has patriotism served its cause? All the good deeds of these nameless people and the ‘Martyrdom’ of Tridib were soon forgotten and were pushed back into the volcano of silence called ‘history’.

Tridib’s death is an embodiment of extreme humanism. His experience of the Second World War at the age of eight created an indelible mark in his memory. He aspired for unity and oneness among humanity despite all distinctions and differences. He was of the view that border lines do not create a home or gives a sense of belonging rather it increases hatreds and mutual rivalries and frenzies that shatters all hopes for survival. He dreamt of creating a true world full of harmonies and affection. He in his quest for a harmonious nation of humanism becomes a transhumanist in a riot in Dhaka in 1964.

Tridib’s death is an attempt to fulfil his craving for a united humanity discarding all the physical and psychological separations among the people. He has

demonstrated that it is the mental barrier of hatred between people of same geographical location that sows the seeds of differences like religion, caste and nation. May, a foreigner enjoyed a safe haven amid such brutal violence. As May reveals to the narrator,

I was safe you see I could have gone right into that mob, and they wouldn't have touched me, an English memsahib, but he must have known he was going to die... For years I was arrogant enough to think I owed him his life. But I know now I didn't kill him. I couldn't have, if I'd wanted. He gave himself up; it was a sacrifice... (TSL 277)

The extreme effect of violence affects not only the body but also the psychological and emotions aspects of human being. The narrator who loved and celebrated Tridib as his hero is extremely inflicted with agony and is dumbstruck on the revelation of the manner of his death. He says, "I do not have the words to give it meaning. *I do not have the words*, and I do not have the strength to listen" (TSL 251). This trauma has affected the narrator so intense that he is baffled and so agonized with shock and grief and does not accepts the tragic death of Tridib.

Robi who witnessed Tridib's death concludes that the riot has not only robbed his brother's life but also haunted his family's memory and has denied the real freedom of mind, space and place of which Tagore had dreamt of in his poem *Where the Mind is Without Fear*. May, on the other hand confesses to the narrator that she is rid of her guilt that had haunted her all these sixteen years (1964 – 1980) because she has understood that Tridib had willingly gave his life as a sacrifice, she says, "For years I was arrogant enough to think I owed him his life. But I know I didn't kill him; I couldn't have, if i'd wanted" (TSL 277). She deems Tridib's death as a sacrifice, "He gave himself up; it was a sacrifice. I know I can't understand it, I know I mustn't

try, for any real sacrifice is a mystery” (TSL 277). Arjya Sirca in *The stranger Within: Amitav Ghosh’s for Identity* comments,

The student of history (Tridib) embraces martyrdom to occupy forever a place in the minds of Thamma, Robi and May. Each of them, of course, sees the incident in his or her own way. The pragmatic I.A.S. officer, Robi can only see it as a nightmare he would like to forget; May sees it as a supreme act of sacrifice (which in her eyes likens him to Christ) and something she would never like to forget. (146)

May hence celebrates Tridib’s martyrdom and deems him as an epitome of transhumanization amidst the dehumanised society that was the cause of the 1964 riots.

Tridib’s death reveals the complexity of partition, the borderlines and the looking glass metaphor wherein the border reflects not just geographical features but also the innate nature of people on either side. Kavita Dahiya in her article *No Home But in Memory: Migrant Bodies and Belongings, Globalisation and Nationalism in The Circle of Reason and The Shadow Lines*” throws light on this complexity:

The Shadow Lines reveals the fragility of partition borders between nations as etched out in maps, and of the frontiers policed by nation states that separate people, communities and families. However, Ghosh does this not to celebrate globalization but to argue that communities are transnational, through the work of historical memory. He suggests that the nature of boundaries can be understood through the metaphor of the looking glass: the national border between the people of India and West Pakistan resembles the mirror’s boundary, in which self and reflected other are the same (joined in visual and corporal

simultaneity). Therefore, in Ghosh's narrative, the borderline cannot destroy the fundamental identity of people on both sides of the boundary or render him changed into 'the other'. (11)

Thus the borders are just a mirage which may vanish with the presence of humanism.

The narrator when he learns the real manner in which Tridib was killed, questions the necessity for the futile and illusory nature of these lines called borders on the maps in atlases. He takes Tridib's old atlas and measures the distances between nations with a compass. He realizes to his disappointment that physical distance has nothing to do with cultural space.

I was struck with wonder that there had really been a time, not so long ago, when people, sensible people of good intention had thought ... that there was a special enchantment in lines... what had they felt, I wondered, when they discovered that they had created not a separation, but a yet-undiscovered irony – the irony that killed Tridib: 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. (TSL 257).

But the futility of these political boundaries is realised by Tha'mma at Tridib's death. Dhaka was her place of birth and as a young girl she had thought of fighting for the freedom of the nation. But the very people and nation for whom she had been willing to sacrifice herself became the cause of her sorrow in 1964. The struggle against the

British in Dhaka had been motivated by feelings of nationalism towards Bangladesh. But in 1964 that very loyal group of people, coming from India in the embassy car become the enemies to be hunted and killed.

Ghosh brings out the theme of transhumanization in confluence of communal frenzy and riot. It was on their way back that everyone becomes a witness to the most traumatic moment, Tridib's death. The angry mob on the street preyed upon Jethamoshai and Khalil when Tridib gave himself in his act of rescuing May, old man and Khalil. He plunged into the hands of the mob and sacrificed his precious life. This riot not only consumed Tridib's life, but also the dreams of May, who aspired to live a life with him, of that of the narrator, who celebrated Tridib as his hero and Tha'mma's conception of nationhood. This sacrifice of Tridib can be compared with that of Celia, in T.S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*. Strongly disturbed and annoyed by Tridib's murder, his younger brother Robi puts the question in angry terms,

...why don't they draw thousands of little lines through the whole subcontinent and give every little place a new name? What would it change? It's a mirage; the whole thing is a mirage. How can anyone divide a memory? (TSL 272)

It would be apt to quote from T.S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party*

We die to each other daily. What we know of other people is only our memory of the moments during which we knew them. And they have changed since then. To pretend that they and we are the same is a useful and convenient social convention which must sometimes be broken. We must also remember that at every meeting we are meeting a stranger. (TCP 71)

So true are the words of Eliot that describes that every meeting with a well known person itself is as if meeting a stranger. Every meeting with an acquaintance transforms every acquaintance into a stranger like that of grandmother's disapproval for Tridib transforms into her acceptance who accepts his death as a Martyrdom, May's disliking of the narrator blooms into love for him and Ila's love for Nick is retained in the course of their life together. May claims his death as a sacrifice; thereby Tridib becomes an epitome of transhumanization, despising all kinds of differences.

Ghosh gives a thud to the universal humanism that transcends the boundaries of nations and historical events thereby bringing people of different countries together. The novel illustrates how the two cities of Dhaka and Calcutta are separated from the countries they are geographically a part of, and binds them in the narrator's consciousness through a common suffering. This is the reason why the narrator, Robi and Ila crave for a different kind of freedom, a freedom from memory that haunts them. Robi comments ironically:

When I was a child I used to pray that it would go away: if it had, there would have been nothing else really remind me of that day. But it wouldn't go; it stayed. I used to think: if only that dream would go away, I would be like other people; I would be free. I would have given anything to be free of that memory. (TSL 270)

Though the cities were parted by borders, the memories of people who suffered and endured such trauma can never be erased until they join the volcano of silence – Death.

The novel reflects on the arbitrariness of borderlines between countries, nationhood and partition. The cartographical lines which claim to separate people and

communities proves to be futile. Ghosh claims that borders do not bring about a fundamental change in the identity of people on either side of the border or brings a division among themselves. Borders create a sense of illusion and rips off the memories. The lifeless borders once drawn transform the friends into foes in just a single moment in the name of patriotism. It breeds hatred towards one another and destroys unity and harmony of the society. It forces involuntary migration from their home town to a land which is totally alien, displacing them as refugees. These lifeless lines called borders efface humanism from the heart of humanity. These lines are so powerful that they separate a piece of land into two different nations, the narrator remarks:

They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that once-they had etched their borders upon the map, the two bits of land would sail away from each other like the shifting tectonic plates of prehistoric Gondwanaland.

(TSL 257)

The borders are nothing but a line on the map of the country or just an iron fencing that indicates the nations' limits. Dr. Smriti Singh is of the view in *Textualizing Postcolonial India: Gita Hariharan's Siege and Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss*

The postcolonial search for Identity in the third world is beset primarily with the problem of location. This is seen at its best in Amitav Ghosh's '*The Shadow Lines*' which questions the fixity of cultures and whether cultures can be contained within boundaries demarcated by maps. (22)

Thus the lines called 'borders' mushroom up to the fancies of the cartographers or political leaders and yet do not confine or constrain humanity on the whole.

Ghosh questions the validity of geographical boundaries which makes an individual's home, the most unsafe place for him in the world. He interrogates that if there is no safety for life then how the creed 'Unity in diversity' could be accomplished. As to him the borders succeed only in dividing humanity and not in uniting them. The very concept of nationhood is a mirage since it is not logically based. The lines drawn by nature in the form of mountains, oceans, and rivers are real. But lines drawn by humans in the form of borders are shallow and hence unjustifiable. The novel implies the theme of transformation that every character undergo, transnationalism by traversing national boundaries, and transhumanisation engulfing all differences. Thus the novel professes universal love and humanism that transcends all boundaries and differences.