



In Search of Actual Border in *The Shadow Lines*: A Geographical and Psychological Study

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Abstract. *This qualitative research delves into the psychological demarcations within Amitav Ghosh's "The Shadow Lines" by an intensive study of the characters' intricate relationships with each other, creating a sense of internationalism. Set against the backdrop of the Indian subcontinent's partition, the novel explores the artificial divisions of caste, nation, and identity, and their profound impacts on human relationships. This study examines both primary and secondary sources to dissect the intricate relationships among the characters, highlighting the devastating effects of psychological borders compared to physical ones. While geographical demarcations physically separate people, the psychological borders ingrained in individuals' minds create deeper, more enduring divisions. This research underscores how these mental boundaries perpetuate alienation, contrasting with the moments of collective unity despite physical separations. Through a meticulous analysis of character dynamics, the paper argues that psychological borders are more harmful, influencing emotions and identities on a fundamental level. The study offers significant insights into the themes of identity, trauma, and demarcation in literature, contributing to a deeper understanding of how mental and social divisions shape human interactions and societal structures.*

Keywords: *Geographical Border, Psychological Border, Psychological Trauma, Identity, Demarcation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Shadow Lines (1988), a novel of reminiscence, captures the complexities before and after the partition of the Indian subcontinent, which led to the division of both the country and the families residing within it. Post-colonial English writer Amitav Ghosh focuses on the artificial borders of caste, nation, and identity. National, social, and cultural identities, as well as geographical and psychological boundaries, are the main themes of *The Shadow Lines*. The novel illustrates how geographical and psychological borders, politically constructed by a few local leaders based on religious views, significantly impact individuals' lives. In exploring the intersection of geographical and psychological borders, Ghosh reflects on the trauma and alienation experienced by the characters, mirroring the broader historical context of the partition. The geographical borders physically divide communities, while the psychological borders—rooted in fear, prejudice, and historical grievances—further entrench the separation. These psychological borders often prove to be more enduring and damaging than the physical ones, as they shape the characters' identities and relationships long after the political boundaries have been drawn. Ghosh's narrative delves into the human aspects of these

divisions, highlighting the shared humanity and the potential for empathy and connection despite the imposed separations. The novel suggests that while geographical borders can be redrawn or crossed, psychological borders require deeper understanding and reconciliation to be overcome. By focusing on humanity and psychology, Ghosh envisions a motherland that transcends political boundaries, advocating for an international abode for all human beings. This research seeks to uncover the nuanced psychological demarcations within *The Shadow Lines* by intensively studying the characters' intricate relationships with each other, thereby creating a sense of internationalism. The paper aims to reveal how the interplay between geographical and psychological borders shapes the characters' lives and the broader social fabric. The issue of geographical and psychological demarcation is pivotal in *The Shadow Lines*, as it keeps people distant from one another. To address this demarcation, several objectives will be met. While the geographical borders in the novel are discussed openly, the subdued and hidden psychological borders require a deeper analysis by reading between the lines. This approach will bring forth arguments and counter-arguments, paving the way to a conclusion that establishes a new pathway for thought experiments in the literary arena. This paper centers around one particular question: "What is the actual border in *The Shadow Lines*?" By addressing this question, the study will examine the impact of both geographical and psychological borders on identity formation and social relationships, contributing to the existing research on post-colonial literature. The findings will help enthusiasts and scholars understand human nature, emotion, and psychology in the context of partition and border demarcations. In the future, they will be able to predict the flow of emotion, the root of connection, and the reactions of the masses subjected to any form of partition, enhancing the broader understanding of social and psychological demarcations in literature.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Indu Swami in her paper "Step across the Line: Rejection of Borders and Boundaries in Amitav Ghosh's Selected Fiction (*The Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*)" represents concepts of border and boundary. She says Ghosh has interpreted the historical partition events and their traumatizing aftermath on those people in order to project this idea of border and boundary. The borders and boundaries established as a result of the partition events caused those people's troubles, miseries, penances and sorrows. As a result, Ghosh questions the adequate nature of borders and boundaries, focusing on how ordinary people are unable to overcome their previous memories and the anguish of separation. Ghosh's ordinary characters in the novels are from marginalized groups such as migrants and subalterns, whose voices have

remained silenced in the nation's recorded history. In the process of reinterpreting history, Ghosh shares the private history of these undiscovered, silenced people, whose traumatic and painful experiences with historical events are never written in the nation's history (Swami 63-71).

Kalyan Pattanayak shows the narrator's views in his article "Amitav Ghosh's Shadow Lines: Mapping Cross Border Identity" that boundary lines on political maps or borders are nothing more than man-made that are drawn by the politicians or those in positions of authority (Pattanayak 118-122).

Kasikhan and Kasikhan say in their paper "Postcolonial Approach to Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines" about the impacts of colonialism and cultural and political changes in Dhaka and Calcutta before and after partition. He has considered the effects of colonialism on the societies and cultures of Dhaka and Calcutta, two of the major cities of the two countries. The novel shows a comprehensive transformation of politics and culture, shedding light on the early recognition of the social, psychological, and cultural subordination imposed by colonizers. It also shows the fight for political, cultural, and ethnic independence by marginalized groups. The author shows his interest in capturing the repercussions of colonization, particularly in an era following freedom, by subtly and overtly introducing postcolonial ideas throughout the book (Kasikhan and Kasikhan 247-255).

Furthermore, Shameem Black says in his article "Cosmopolitanism At Home: Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines" that the philosophy of the author reflects tumultuous historical periods that exacerbated tensions between the two nations, highlighting how nationalism can undermine peaceful coexistence. Conversely, Ghosh illustrates the benefits of internationalism through his characters Tridib and Ila. Tridib's extensive knowledge of the world and its cultures stands out in the novel, and his aspiration to be a global citizen unequivocally supports internationalism. Through the experiences and perspectives of his characters, Ghosh intricately explores the dynamics of nationalism and internationalism, ultimately aligning himself with the principles of internationalism. Ghosh resembles himself in regard to this matter with another major Indian writer, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore since he too fosters the philosophy of internationalism (Black 45-65).

In the paper "Tagore's Conception of Cosmopolitanism: A Reconstruction" Saranindranath Tagore wrote that Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy that "the world is one family" embodies the essence of internationalism. Tagore envisioned a world where people share their cultures and achieve mutual understanding, imagining a borderless world that

promotes cooperation and tolerance, thereby reducing conflicts and fostering lasting peace (Tagore 1070-1084).

P. Bhavani and Dr. M. Kannadhasan, in their paper “The Conflict Of Nation And Partition In Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*”, argue that the novel’s recurring motif of shadow lines represents the paradoxical connection between nations and individuals. They suggest that psychological connections between people transcend artificial national borders (Bhavani and Manimurasu 59-66).

Abeer Alrawashdeh, in his paper “Geographical Borders and Political Maps in Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* and Kanafani’s *Men in the Sun*”, focuses on the notion that the title “*The Shadow Lines*” signifies the artificial nature of borders, suggesting they are mere shadows created by politicians (Alrawashdeh 1-10).

Postcolonial literature often addresses the cultural hybridity and identity issues resulting from colonialism. In “Cultural Hybridity and Postcolonial Identity in the Diaspora: A Study of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*”, Suryawanshi discusses how characters navigate multiple cultural contexts, making cultural hybridity a central theme. The novel addresses postcolonial identity, belonging, displacement, and cultural legacy preservation, emphasizing the role of memory and storytelling in constructing cultural identities (Suryawanshi 42-47).

Pabitra Bharali’s paper “Amitav Ghosh’s “*The Shadow Lines*”: Problematics of National Identity Pabitra Bharali” investigates national identity and its complexities in *The Shadow Lines*. Set against historical events like India’s Partition, the novel explores the arbitrary and destructive nature of national borders. Bharali discusses how Ghosh portrays the fluidity of national identity, challenging rigid political boundaries and emphasizing that meaningful connections transcend national borders (Bharali 44-46).

In the 21st century, the concept of internationalism has gained relevance, particularly in the era of globalization. Examining *The Shadow Lines* through this lens reveals its contemporary significance, offering insights into internationalism and its implications. While geographical borders have been extensively discussed, psychological borders remain relatively unexplored. This research aims to fill up that gap providing scholars with a deeper understanding of the novel by uncovering new dimensions related to psychological borders.

3. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative method is used in this paper to meet the desired outcome, allowing for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of the themes and nuances within *The Shadow Lines*. The methodology involves several stages: selection and analysis of primary and secondary

sources, justification for these selections, and the analytical techniques employed. The primary source is Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*, which is intensively read to extract relevant themes, character dynamics, and instances of geographical and psychological borders. Secondary sources include scholarly articles, books, research papers, criticisms, and analyses related to the novel collected from libraries, academic databases, and reputable websites. The sources are selected based on relevance, academic credibility, and the diversity of perspectives. The research design involves systematic review and categorization of sources, enabling a nuanced understanding of the psychological and geographical borders in the novel through textual analysis and critical interpretation. Data sources include the primary text, secondary literature, and historical context. Analytical techniques such as thematic analysis, contextual analysis, critical interpretation, and argumentation are employed. Thought experiments explore different scenarios and interpretations to deepen understanding of the characters' experiences and the impact of borders. The final stage involves synthesizing the findings into coherent arguments and reaching a well-supported conclusion. MLA 9th edition guidelines are followed for citation, and the contributions of other writers are acknowledged. This methodology provides a structured approach to exploring the psychological and geographical borders in *The Shadow Lines*, offering insights into the broader themes of identity, trauma, and post-colonial literature.

4. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* presents a comparative study between geographical and psychological borders, demonstrating the significant role borders play in shaping the novel. These borders influence the narrative and appeal of the novel, prompting readers to reconsider how borders affect human psychology. This raises an important question: are physical or geographical borders the only lines that separate people, or are psychological borders more significant and impactful? The following arguments aim to establish a new discourse around these queries, enhancing academic understanding of this masterful work.

Generally, a border refers to the line that divides the land, jungle, river, desert, sea, and everything that befalls in the midst of the fault line which marks the territory of two or more countries. "A border is a line or a sign or a mark that mainly separates two countries or areas or regions, states and provinces. The definition of Border is the line that divides two countries or areas" (Hey and Holloway 167). Borders not only divide countries but also separate nations, along with their national identities, ethnic cultures, languages, customs, and traditions. Geographical borders are political, artificial, and fictitious lines created by indiscreet

politicians who seek power and dominance at any cost. These politicians manipulate national and religious emotions to establish themselves as powerful leaders or prime ministers of a geographical region. In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh explores the relationships, situations, and consequences before and after the geographical and political partition of the Indian subcontinent. Following the partition, the subcontinent was divided into two parts: India and Pakistan. Pakistan consisted of two provinces, East and West Pakistan, separated by thousands of kilometers. East Pakistan later became an independent country named Bangladesh after the 1971 Liberation War. This division was purely geographical and political, not religious or cultural, yet it was based on the premise that the two major religions could not coexist peacefully. According to Ghosh, geographical borders are artificial and erect barriers between nations and their citizens. When Jethamoshai, Tha'mma's uncle, was urged for going to Calcutta to live with his extended family, he remarked:

I understand very well, the old man muttered. I know everything, I understand everything. 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. At that, my grandmother gave up. She sighed and got up to go. There's no use talking to him anymore, she said. We've done what we can. We'd better go now. (Ghosh 237)

This remark by Jethamoshai proves that common folks have never accepted the border. People like Jethamoshai or in other words, most of the common folk have really no idea what they will do with that new reality for which they have to give up their birthplace. They fail to understand why they should abandon the place they have been calling home since birth. This same bell rings when Hasan Azizul Huq in his novel *Agun Pakhi* says:

No one could make me understand that the new country is mine and this country doesn't belong to me anymore, only because I am a Muslim. Additionally, they could not make me understand that I also should go there just because my offspring have gone there and land possession has gone there. What can I do if my husband goes? My husband and I are not the same person, but two different persons. So close and so beloved, but two different persons. *Trans Added*. (Huq 252)

The narrator fails to grasp why she must forsake her homeland to embrace a foreign land where she has no roots. Her situation mirrors that of Jethamoshai when her family decides to relocate, as she asserts that while they are beloved, they are distinct individuals. Similarly, Jethamoshai's decision to stay in Dhaka when his sons move to Kolkata reflects this individual perspective. Together, these stories suggest that for many people, the notions of partition, borders, and new nations remain ambiguous and unsettling.

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh portrays characters haunted by memories of historical and geographical partitions that led to death, destruction, and socio-political instability across regions. These traumatic events continue to affect individuals and communities, influencing their social interactions over the long term. Historical practices of demarcation also contribute to this enduring trauma, as such events become integral parts of human lives, impacting both individuals and communities profoundly.

Colonizers historically used “divide and rule” as a powerful tool to assert control over vast territories like the Indian subcontinent. Political maps played a crucial role in this strategy, granting authority to spread imperialism and impose a sense of superiority over colonized people. Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, describes imperialism as a form of geographical violence, where every corner of the world is mapped and controlled to maintain dominance. Maps, according to Said, were tools of imperialism, facilitating colonial practices in regions like South America, Africa, Asia, and Europe. He says imperialism as “an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control” (Said 14). The demarcations of Korea, Vietnam, and India-Pakistan highlight how colonial powers strategically drew boundaries to foster cultural and religious segregation.

The partition of India in 1947 exemplifies the profound consequences of such colonial practices. Initiated by political maneuvers and communal tensions, this partition resulted in widespread conflict, forced migrations, and the loss of millions of lives. Its impact continues to resonate through generations, ingrained in the collective memory and subconscious of those affected. While the colonial “divide and rule” tactic sustained imperial control, it left lasting mental and social disorders among the colonized populations.

Overall, Ghosh's narrative and historical insights underscore the enduring legacy of partition and colonialism, highlighting how these practices shape the collective consciousness and socio-political landscapes of affected regions.

The long-term effect of all these historical, geographical, and psychological demarcation is the traumatized state of mind of the characters from which they cannot escape.

The term trauma first defined by the Greeks, they have denoted that trauma is a mental state where the person gets severe psychological shock or unpleasant experience that causes an unstable state of mind soaked with anxiety and fear. Later, various theories have emerged to explore this phenomenon, one of them is presented by Ruth Leys. In her book *Trauma: A Genealogy* she says that the American Psychiatric Association initially recognized psychological trauma related to post-traumatic disorder in the year 1980. Leys defines post-traumatic stress disorder as the situation where “the victim is unable to recollect and integrate the hurtful experience in normal consciousness; instead, s/he is haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories” (Leys 2). Leys later claims that the traumatic historical events or psychological experiences of the individual are the root cause of this disorder. In the form of haunting memories, those events lead the person into a distressed psychological condition where externally they look fine but mentally, they are not, events of the past that caused violence, abuse, or loss of some beloved thing and this remain unresolved in mind of the individual or the people can bring about the psychological stress, fear, or anxiety associated with the past event decades after their occurrence. This long-term anxiety and fear is vivid in the characters like Tha'mma, Robi, May, and the narrator himself. The result of this is vividly portrayed by Ananta Khanal in his paper “Indian Partition and Life in the Aftermath: The Traumatic Memory in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*” where he says:

Ghosh’s novel dramatizes the plights of characters who were historically divided and psychologically distressed because of the partition and its consequent sociopolitical uprisings. As displayed by the text, in the consequent political instability after the partition many people were killed, some others were forcefully separated from their loved ones and many others were dismantled them from their birth place, which compelled them to relive with the hunting memories of wonderful bygone days. (Khanal 100-101)

In *The Shadow Lines*, Khanal vividly portrays how traumatic memories from the past resurface years later. For instance, the narrator recalls the harrowing events of 1965 while reading newspapers in the late 80s, vividly remembering the chaos of riots and bloodshed during his bus ride home. Tha'mma experiences a profound sense of nostalgia for her birthplace, now under the control of another country. The trauma extends beyond mere death and displacement; characters like Robi, living far away in 1980s London, still grapple with haunting memories of partition, reflecting a generation scarred by enduring historical wounds. These characters’ lives are deeply shattered, trapped in a perpetual state of trauma by haunting recollections that profoundly impact their social interactions. They struggle to respond

normally when confronted with triggers that awaken subconscious memories. This analysis underscores the lasting impact of psychological trauma, which persists far beyond geographical borders. While borders separate based on land and region, mental trauma transcends these physical boundaries, lingering across generations and casting a shadow over daily life. Tha'mma's ongoing agitation and Robi's distant struggles illustrate how these memories continue to affect individuals long after the initial events, shaping their perceptions and interactions with the world around them.

In *The Shadow Lines*, borders play a crucial role, creating significant distances between people that are often difficult to bridge. The impact of regional borders imposed by colonizers varied across the vast Indian subcontinent, affecting states like Punjab and Bengal most severely. These regions, despite being geographically divided, shared deep cultural and societal ties, leading to intense turmoil during partition. Conversely, states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and the eastern states of Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya experienced relatively peaceful transitions, as they were culturally distinct from their neighboring regions. The division of Punjab and Bengal highlighted the profound influence of regional identity on nationalism. While other states swiftly adapted to their new national identities post-partition, Bengal struggled with forming a cohesive national identity due to its shared cultural heritage and deep emotional ties. Despite eventually establishing separate identities under India and East Pakistan (later Bangladesh), Bengali nationalism continued to resonate strongly, evoking nostalgia and a sense of loss among its people. Tha'mma's experiences exemplify this struggle when she confronts her memories of Dhaka and grapples with conflicting feelings about her national identity. The Radcliffe Line, symbolizing these geographical borders, left enduring ambiguities and emotional complexities that persist among those affected by partition, shaping their identities and perceptions long after the physical divisions were drawn.

In the novel, apart from the geographical border, the psychological border plays a significant role. The psychological border that has made two communities, Hindus and Muslims, sail away from each other. This abstract border has made it possible to divide long coexisting friendly communities of the Indian subcontinent. Things have gone so far, and mistrust has grown exponentially that peaceful coexistence has become an impossible idea. The impact of this bitterness can be seen vividly in the novel. All the major characters around whom the course of events revolves, are barred behind some imaginative border in their head which prevents them from getting along with other characters of events, for instance, Jethamoshai, a well-educated man, a lawyer himself, is so biased about Muslims that he cannot tolerate even the shadow of a Muslim man. This is evident from the account of Tha'mma when

she tells Robi about Jethamoshai's old behaviors. She says, "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" (Ghosh 231)?

Another account of this distance is seen in 1964 when the situation in both Calcutta and several towns in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) went out of hand, suspicion and mistrust grew between Hindu and Muslim communities that for any anonymous mishap, one community would throw allegations on the other. For example, in that year, among those fuming atmospheres, the whole water supply of Calcutta city was contaminated, no one knew who did this but Muslims were held accountable for this automatically. This can be understood from the event of that morning when the narrator was going to school and one of his friends said, "We will know at Gole Park. Why? Someone asked. Because that's where Montu gets on the bus, he said. He'll know; he's a Muslim" (Ghosh 220). Furthermore, the psychological distance formed between the two families long back in the past is something from which Jethamoshai cannot escape even in the last days of his life when Tha'mma and Mayadebi go to rescue him, surprisingly, they find out that the bitterness remains intact in him. Jethamoshai, after the partition, gives possession of the other part of the house to strangers with no intention of doing charity but to form hatred for his brother's family. As Ghosh says through the character Saifuddin:

Don't you know? After partition Ukil-babu went around looking for people to move into the house because he was afraid his brother's family would come back to claim their share. He used to stand at the gates, welcoming people in. His own children had gone away long ago, no one knows where. One of his sons came once, but Ukil-babu sent him back. Khalil came much later than the rest of us. He just turned up with his family, and the Ukil-babu let him stay. And Khalil has looked after him ever since. (232)

The hate and distance become evident from his voice and appearance when the daughters of his brother come to take him with them so that he can have a comfortable life in his last years. However, Jethamoshai says that he wishes that his brother's family is dead already and his face lights up from the thought. Jethamoshai, despite being a man who doesn't believe in any geographical or political borders, cannot step outside of the mental border strongly imposed in his psyche as the writer exposes:

The old man's face lit up. They died! he said, his voice quivering with 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... I am

just waiting for them to come back, he said, so that I can drag them through every court in the land up to the Viceroy's Council. (Ghosh 236)

Not only he but also Tha'mma is also a prey to this invisible mental border. This invisible border makes her unable to cross the border and initiate talk with her uncle's family when she last visits her father's house in Dhaka before the partition. Her psychological border constraints her from taking any help from her sisters after her husband's death because she thinks it will make her fragile in front of others. Even her dislike of Illa, too, resulted from psychological margins that made Illa's character in her eyes bad for her grandchild. Her dislike for Illa is so intense that on her deathbed, the day before her death she writes a letter to the principal of her grandson's college so that he is rusticated and sent to Calcutta from Delhi, she has done all this just to push her grandson, the narrator, away from the influence of Illa.

Moreover, Illa, too, has mental restraints that make her refuse the narrator's love and despite being in a quite unhappy relationship with Nick Price, she chooses him for marriage. All this is because, in her mind, she thinks of the narrator as a typical Indian with values contradictory to hers. She is an independent woman with ideas of individual freedom, but in Indian culture it is impossible to do whatever one wants to do, especially for a woman, they are deprived of personal liberty. This conflict of interest is visible from an event at a bar in Delhi. She wanted to dance but Robi stopped her from doing so, he even used force to do it. After the incident, she says why she lives far away from India, and she declares, "Free of you! she shouted back. Free of your bloody culture and free of all of you" (Ghosh 98). This forms her psychological border which affects her so much that she never accepts the narrator's love because she thinks he, too, holds those customs and cultures which will make her submissive to the patriarchal society.

On the other hand, her husband Nick Price, in his school days, has ignored Illa because he has racial judgment which has worked as a psychological border, that's why he has felt ashamed to go to school with a brown Indian girl. Furthermore, Illa's grandfather, whom Tha'mma refers as Shaheb, a top-tier diplomat, takes the narrator's mother as a third secretary's wife and asks the routine questions that he asks to all of them. Even the narrator's father says it has taken a long time to upgrade from the position of third secretary to the first. All these show that he, too, has a sense of pride that makes others inferior in his eyes which actually works as a mental border in him.

It is obvious in the novel that geographical borders have devastating effects on both sides of borders. People living in those lands for centuries, suddenly no longer belong to that land, and become strangers overnight in their own home. The authority who divides the land

never thinks about the effect it will create in people's lives as they have done with the map of the Indian subcontinent. They have drawn lines and demanded people think the other side of the line, which results in dividing their house in half, has become another reality and another country that belongs to the other people. People, who were neighbors yesterday, are now citizens of two separate nations. Their birthplace, the village, the river, and everything they have known all their life as their own which has become their identity, are suddenly not owned by them anymore, they shouldn't stay there either, they must move to a new place, the place where they have never been before, is now their own country.

The same was the feelings of millions of people, especially in the Punjab and Bengal provinces of India in 1947, the year India was divided. The oddity of this act is found in the desperation of Thamma at the Dhaka airport in January 1964 when she had flown into her birth land but its peculiarity surprises her. "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" (Ghosh 168). Undoubtedly, these lines have given birth to two new countries named India and Pakistan, and People are divided forcefully which created bitterness to an unbearable extreme. However, many people have never accepted this artificial man-made demarcation, they believe in internationalism, a world where there will be no borders or at least, they don't accept that a line will make the other part of their village a foreign place. In the novel *The Shadow Lines* Amitav Ghosh's philosophy of internationalism is reflected via the characters he has created, for example, Jethamoshai, he has never accepted the newly created reality of a divided country. He has chosen to stay in the place where he was born. For him, borders are lines drawn by whimsical people who never understand the ground reality as the writer upholds:

Once you start moving you never stop. That's what I said to my sons when they took the trains. I said: I don't believe in this India-Shindia. It's all very well, you are 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. (Ghosh 237)

However, the question arises at this point- are the geographical borders the most impactful lines in the novel that tear people apart from each other as it is exposed and commonly assumed from the text? This paper will argue on this very point and establish that psychological borderlines are the most difficult lines to cross. To justify the claim, from here onwards, the following arguments will dive deep into the bottom of the crucial events of the novel. On 27 December 1963, the Mu-i-Mubarak disappeared from its place in Hazratbal

mosque in Kashmir which was a symbol of religious solidarity among all the people, since Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists alike went to the mosque as a pilgrimage place. This event was so heinous that people of all religions came to protest against it. But things turned bad so fast because the two newly born neighboring countries from the beginning of their existence maintained hostile relations with each other and that's why the political hate spread swiftly among the people and made them hate and suspect each other.

As an effect of this event, several towns in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) turned against India and suspected the Hindus of making a plan to terminate Islam and Muslims, riots began to take brutal faces and Hindus had to pay a heavy toll for that. On the other hand, similar things happened in Calcutta like a mirror image of Dhaka. Only the Muslims were paying heavy tolls this time. Newspapers and politicians on both sides played a major role in this unrest which took thousands of innocent lives. On 4 January 1964 Mu-i-Mubarak was recovered, and the city of Srinagar and the Muslim community erupted in celebration. Only a small incident happened in Khulna, a protest against the theft turned into a violent aggression killing several people mostly Hindus and shops were burned down. The next morning the same thing happened in Calcutta, killing hundreds of Muslims and their shops were looted. Amitav Ghosh realizes the truth and draws a circle on a map, with Khulna at the center and Srinagar at the circumference. That line connects several cities in South Asia, and this line literally connects the cities and their people because if anything happens in any of these cities, protests and demonstrations occur in other cities on this circle. Amitav Ghosh now declares the truth of this whole border and partition acts, as he says:

They had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enhancement of the 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 the prehistoric Gondwanaland. (Ghosh 257)

However, the simple fact is that people who have been together for thousands of years cannot be completely torn apart only by the borders. They are connected perhaps more closely after the artificial lines have been drawn. As a testimony to this statement, the novelist describes:

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. (Ghosh 257)

Hence, it is quite evident now, like the clear light of day, that geographical borders do tear apart the map and push people away to a great extent, but it cannot create a completely different reality for them. Despite the borders, people are still connected regarding various affairs and collective sentiments. If something happens on the other side of the border, maybe thousands of kilometers away, the cities of other countries will erupt in joy or protest because they are collectively connected, a psychological trans-border relationship.

However, psychological borders are something that cannot be crossed and connected like what we see in the novel, psychological borders are the actual border that truly divides people. It is so impactful and complex that two people living under the same roof for years can have this mental border that in the realm of soul keeps them apart. For example, The Hindus in Khulna and the Muslims in Calcutta did not have anything to do with the missing Mu-i-Mubarak, but the opposite majority of the respective cities charged the minority with whom they were living for centuries for an event that occurred hundreds of kilometers away. This was because a mental demarcation formed among the masses. Another example, in the novel the old house of Tha'mma in Dhaka was divided between two brothers, inch by inch including the nameplate. Several years later, it was possible to make a reconciliation since despite the physical border drawn between the house, they were connected to a level for Mayadebi's wedding was fixed by her aunt herself, nevertheless, that reconciliation didn't happen because a mental border was formed at that time. It is evident from the following lines:

My grandmother did what she could to make them forget the past, but they had grown so thoroughly into the habits engendered by decades of hostility that none of them wanted to venture out into the limbo of reconciliation. They liked the wall now; it had become a part of them. (Ghosh 137)

And at last, when she tried to sort things out, "After all these years, perhaps we'll be able to make amends for all that bitterness and hatred" (Ghosh 142). She was only to discover that the wall between the houses didn't carry meaning anymore, but the psychological boundary formed among them remained intact for which every act of reconciliation had gone unfruitful. Apart from this, the plightful account of the relationship between Illa and the narrator can be explored. Their relationship from their childhood is great, even they grow up resembling each other in their manner and their liking. Though they are barred by the borders and the distances since Illa's family lives abroad most of the time, they seem connected in their growing ages. However, Illa as a grown-up, has developed a sense of spite for the Indian culture

because its customs don't permit women to enjoy total freedom and as people are to a great extent culturally constructed, they possess those customs. For this Illa also thinks of the narrator as a typical Indian with all those constraints for women and her idea turns into a belief when at the club Robi forcefully prevents her from dancing, but being present there, the narrator doesn't take Illa's side. This belief acts as a psychological barrier that prevents her from accepting the narrator's love, despite their mutual affection since childhood. Similarly, her grandfather, Mr. Shaheb, struggles to maintain cordial relationships with his relatives due to his psychological boundaries, which prevent him from embracing warmth and instead lead him to adopt a cold, diplomatic demeanor rooted in a sense of superiority. In these instances, while physical boundaries are absent, the psychological barriers significantly influence personal relationships and interactions. This illustrates that psychological borders can have a more profound impact than geographical ones.

5. CONCLUSION

The exploration of *The Shadow Lines* reveals that psychological borders are the most profound and enduring form of division among people. While geographical borders, imposed by political forces, can separate communities physically and create tangible barriers that are guarded and maintained, they still allow for moments of collective unity and shared humanity. These physical demarcations, though disruptive, can be acknowledged and sometimes even crossed through mutual understanding and cooperation. In contrast, psychological borders, deeply ingrained within the human psyche, are far more difficult to dismantle. These mental divisions, rooted in fear, prejudice, and historical grievances, create invisible yet powerful barriers that affect individuals' identities, relationships, and social interactions. The characters in Ghosh's novel exemplify how these psychological borders manifest, influencing their behavior and shaping their experiences long after the physical borders have been established. The narrative of *The Shadow Lines* underscores that while geographical borders can be redrawn or crossed, psychological borders require a deeper level of reconciliation and understanding to be overcome. These mental demarcations perpetuate alienation and conflict, often preventing individuals from connecting on a fundamental human level despite their physical proximity. The study concludes that psychological borders are the true lines of division in *The Shadow Lines*, more impactful and enduring than geographical borders. They not only shape the characters' lives but also reflect the broader historical and social context of partition and its aftermath. By delving into the intricate relationships and psychological landscapes of the characters, this research illuminates the profound impact of mental boundaries on human

interactions. It contributes to a deeper understanding of how psychological borders influence identity formation and social cohesion in post-colonial contexts. Ultimately, Ghosh's novel advocates for a vision of humanity that transcends these divisions, emphasizing the need for empathy, connection, and a shared sense of belonging beyond the artificial lines drawn by history and politics.

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