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# A Journey through Homes: Relooking the Looking-Glasses of Geographical Partition

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**Abstract.** The paper addresses Conrad's *The Shadow-Line* and Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* to bring out the conflict between the Orient and the Occident in the former (with the movement of the naval officer from doubt towards fulfilment) and that of the classical mapping of East and the West in the latter (with the movement away from the 'cultural/classical' fulfilment towards unsatiated doubt). The paper criticizes and counters the absence of any discussion about the common human experiences/events and/or subaltern histories in *Midnight's Children* by focusing on nationalistic criticism present in *The Shadow Lines*. Thus, the paper holds implications and displays a journey through historical events that dismantled and suffocated 'sensibilities'. Furthermore, the paper intends to prove that any journey/trip once taken complicates/problematises one's identity by making the swift flow between the old and new, past and present gradually impossible. Life, therefore becomes an unending trip forward and backward either by choice or by a lack of choice.

**Keywords:** Journey, Diasporic Sensibilities, Bengali Psyche, Home.

## 1. Introduction

Diaspora, like other current literary ideas, has its own place in the larger context of world literature. Each country's history and development are unique, yet the meaning and concern of diaspora are universal. All Diasporic communities share a common desire for something. The term "Diaspora" is a word that comes from the Greek language, 'Diaspeirian', that means „dia“→ 'through' and 'speirian'→ 'to scatter'. It conjures up images of numerous adventures. Diaspora conjures up images of journeys, but not all journeys. Diasporas are definitely not synonymous with casual travel, nor do they usually refer to brief stays. Diasporic voyages, paradoxically, are mostly about settling down and establishing roots 'elsewhere.'

Diasporic senses are the expressions of a person's Diasporic feelings and experiences. Almost all Diasporic populations encounter difficulties and hardships when settling in a new country. Even if they try to acclimatise to their new surroundings, language, culture, and society, they will face psychological difficulties. Diasporic themes and problems include alienation, identity crisis, loneliness, rootlessness, displacement, nostalgia, cultural change, gender inequity, racism, homelessness, and so on. Diasporic sensitivity is a fluid concept that shifts with the passage of time and place. The Diasporic sensibility has evolved as a result of its ever-changing consciousness. Expatriate writing is more than a nostalgic look back at a former home; it is a nostalgic reminiscence of time. Among the Diaspora, time causes the development of groups and sub-groups. Diaspora is a journey of self-discovery, self-awareness, self-knowledge, and self-definition. "Diasporic Sensibilities" was chosen with special reference to Amitav Ghosh's novels, which acquired a distinguished place in Diasporic literature. Ghosh takes a fresh look at Diasporic literature. After V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh is one of the formers who popularised the Diaspora in Indian writing in English. He is an anthropologist,

sociologist, journalist, novelist, essayist, travel writer, teacher, and journalist. His fictitious and non-fictional stories flit back and forth between countries, continents, and oceans.

## 2. Literature review

As a writer, Amitav Ghosh has several facets. Nationality, identity, and cultural legacy are significant aspects of his personality and writings as a post-colonial writer. He is engrossed in history, and the crossing of national and international borders is an old issue that Ghosh adds a new perspective to. His works *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow Lines*, *In an Antique Land*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, and travelogues *Countdown* and *Dancing in Cambodia At Large in Burma* earned him international acclaim. Salman Rushdie, Vikram Chandra, Khushwant Singh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, and Amitav Ghosh have all used their works as a vehicle for cultural representation, according to Jasbir Jain.

"...aimed at enhancing an Indian cultural identity, and projecting Indian cultural and historical heritage to enable an assertion of the Indian self." [1].

## 3. Research Questions

Journeys play a vital role in Ghosh's imaginary world. The voyage is a recurring theme in the novels and also serves as a uniting component. The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* travels from Calcutta to Bangladesh and then to England. These excursions are more than just quests for Ghosh; they also allow him to investigate history's ramifications and violence's effect on human behaviour. He enthusiastically writes with the issue of cross-border travel. Ghosh makes it apparent in his stories that man-made borders are mental creations, and that the lines on maps are simply shadow lines. Homi Shroff wrote that Ghosh in his journeys explores, "a colorful and warmly human picture of people and places, both medieval and modern" [2]. Travel, according to Ghosh, is man's fundamental drive to expand his awareness into realization.

*The Shadow Lines* (1988) (TSL) refers to one of colonialism's great books, Joseph Conrad's novella *The Shadow - Line* (1917). The novella by Conrad is about an unseen boundary that separates youth and maturity. In moving from the Orient to the Occident, a young naval officer, metaphorically crosses the shadow line into maturity. In a convoluted sense, this metaphoric bridge also represents the conflict between the Orient and Europe. By breaking his work "The Shadow Lines" into two halves, Amitav Ghosh disrupts this 'classical' mapping of the globe into Orient and Occident by dividing the novel into two parts 'Going Away' and 'Coming Home.' The story evolves into a fictional critique of classical anthropology's separate culture paradigm and nationalism's accompanying ideology. *Midnight's Children* (1981) by Salman Rushdie is widely known to be the first Indian English text to question entrenched representations of nationalism in politics and literature. Though the novelist does not address people's experiences of events or other subaltern histories, Rushdie deviates from the heritage of applauding a dominant version of nationalist ideology. Amitav Ghosh enters and changes the discursive space that Rushdie has created. *The Shadow Lines* is a unique take on nationalistic criticism. It arises from the lived experiences of culturally rooted characters in the book. As Nivedita Majumdar says:

"In locating the critique of nationalism in an alternative view of history that itself is derived from the often silenced voices of the nation, *The Shadow Lines* pitches the nation against Nationalism" [3].

In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh challenges the traditional illustration of the nation as a single entity. He thinks national boundaries to be "shrouded" and imaginary. Not only between countries, but also between imagination and reality, the

past and the present, memory and desire, appear as shadow lines. The plot revolves around three generations of two families: the Datta- Chaudhuris of Bengal and the Prices of London. It's set against the backdrop of post-Partition East Bengal and riot-plagued Calcutta, and it delves into private lives and public events that compete for attention. The story moves along the recollections of an unidentified narrator. His grandma Thamma and uncle Tridib are the two that have mostly influenced the child-narrator. They symbolise two opposing ideals by interpreting reality from completely different perspectives. The grandmother represents a patriarchal worldview that is deeply anchored in the working class. Internalizing the patriarchal, nationalist culture's discourse has formed her morality and convictions. Her support for nationalism stems from a sense of insecurity in her life. She was widowed at a young age and has had to fend for herself in a harsh culture. Her extreme independence prevents her from accepting any form of help from her close family. Her 'status' as a school headmistress that she acquired through hard effort must also be protected. She dislikes her nephew Tridib and keeps a safe distance from him as he goes against most of her values. Tridib's casual challenge to his controlling, self-opinionated grandma, which fascinates the narrator. Thamma is aggressively protective of her domain and resentful of her middle-class image. Her patriotism shields her from fictitious foes on the other side of the border. She extols violence as a means of bolstering the nationalist spirit. The grandmother's reaction to the concepts of freedom and nationalism raises questions about what nationalism means and if it is desirable. She even exhorts the young narrator to sacrifice blood for his country in one of her rants to him. She says:

"It took those people a long time to build that country; hundreds of years, of wars and bloodshed. Everyone who lived there has earned his right to be there with blood; with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're a nation because they have drawn their borders with blood... War is their religion. That's what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. That is what you have to do for India, don't you see?" [3].

Thamma's sense of insecurity and fear of being deprived of her property is mirrored in her ferocious advocacy of violence in the name of national unity. She represents the mainstream discourse with her perspective on nation-building, which is rooted in tradition. She talks about their brother's blood, their father's blood, and their son's blood with zeal.

Nation-building is plainly a male-dominated Endeavor. Thamma is echoing the age-old androcentric perspective — that it needs a male to fight war, shed blood, and settle conflicts. In a sense, she becomes the bearer of patriarchal values, passing them down to children. Thamma is unwittingly putting a patriarchal value system into the susceptible mind of her grandson in her capacity as the matriarch (ironically!) and as an intellectual guide to the young generation in her role as a teacher. The grandma sees a clear correlation between a strong physical body and a powerful country. The narrator recalls:

"My cricket game was the one thing for which my grandmother never grudged me time away from my homework: on the contrary, she insisted that I run to the park by the Lake whether I wanted to or not. You can't build a strong country, without building a strong body" [4].

The grandson narrator, on the other hand, is more receptive to his uncle Tridib's liberal and revolutionary beliefs. Thamma's fictitious nationalism is subverted by Tridib. He goes about things carefully, with lots of patience and understanding. Tridib does not refer to her as a "fascist," like her niece Ila does. According to Tridib:

"... she was only a modern middle-class woman ... All she wanted was a middle-class life in which, like the middle classes the world over, she would thrive believing

in the unity of nationhood and territory, of self-respect and national power: that was all she wanted – a modern middle-class life, a small thing that history had denied her in all fullness and for which she could never forgive it” [4].

She becomes enraged when she learns that her uncle is still living in their family home in Dhaka, and she vows to rescue him from a foreign land. Surprisingly, grandmother's motherland is designated as a "foreign country." When she realises that her Indian passport lists a strange city as her birthplace, she finds herself in a total knot. "...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 152). She is perplexed by the disorder in her own life, having grown accustomed to order and structure in everything she did. Grandmother is looking forward to her return "home" and changes her sari twice, feeling frightened and shy like a bride. But the instant she walks inside her uncle's house, Jethamoshai's, she is overflowing with energy, and with a missionary fervour to save him from a strange land beset with foes and return him to India, to safety. Jethamoshai is a sceptic when it comes to political boundaries. Sense shines through his otherwise hazy recollection. Thamma, May Price, and Ila are three female characters who have control over the events of the story. They defy stereotypes in either way or other. In fact, girls develop a superiority complex over their male counterparts. They are powerful individuals that highly impacted the unnamed narrator. Thamma, the matriarch, has come a long way as she was a vulnerable widow who had to fend for herself. Pure willpower, self-respect, and unwavering courage are what enable her cope with life. She instils a strict, regimented lifestyle in her family, which she expects everyone to follow. She evaluates people and locations for herself, influenced by her personal philosophy of life.

#### **4. Methodology**

The fundamental theme of *The Shadow Lines* is travel. It's just not only the characters that are constantly on the move. The narrator's use of the stream of consciousness approach to carry the narrative forward in time from 1981 to the 1960s and 1940s and beyond aids the author in moving the story forward in time from 1981 to the 1960s and 1940s and beyond. The 'travel motif' runs throughout the narrative, from the grandmother's trip to Dhaka in the second half through the narrator's voyage backwards in time. Path can also be interpreted as a metaphor for a person's life journey, in which they move from one item to the next.

The story is a family saga in which the family has many ups and downs due to the historical events that took place at the time. The story spans a vast period of time, including a time before Ghosh was ever born. Mayadebi, his father's aunt, went to England with her husband and son Tridib in 1939, thirteen years before he was born, he wrote. "Going away" and "Coming home" are representations of journeys in *The Shadow Lines*, which are divided into two halves. Tridib and his family move from India to England, and the youngster relives the experience through Tridib's vivid descriptions, so that when he grows up and visits London, it is a seamless transition, a "coming" rather than a "leaving." Tridib is the one who pushes the boundaries of his youthful environment. Tridib explains to him how one might be transported to other times and locations outside the confines of one's consciousness. As a result, the youngster learns the value of imagination, which exposes a world that is as concrete and real as the world experienced via the physical senses, but much more thrilling. Drawing lines across a country to divide it into two nations, one with an East wing and the other with a West wing separated by over a thousand miles, is futile, as Amitav Ghosh illustrates. 'The Partition of Bengal: A Comparative Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* and Sunil Gangopadhyay's *Purba Paschim*', according to Alpana Neogy, focuses on the Partition of India and the resulting pain of the East Bengali psyche in her article. The writer focuses on India and Dhaka, where he

attempts to define political freedom. After Partition, the definition of nationality, or Indian nationalism, altered, eliminating those on the other side of the divide while failing to include everyone on this side of paradise. The partition of the Indian subcontinent was one of the most catastrophic events in recent history. In the twentieth century, nationalism devolved into political hostility. The historic occurrence of Partition rocked India's sense of national identity.

In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh examines issues of religion and nationality, belonging and displacement, and the urge to suppress memories that contradict the clean narrative of history and national identity. The "little riots" that occur in India play an important role in developing the Indian people's character. The author discussed an old theme of partition with a new spin in this tale. All such lines that divide nations and people in the guise of nationality, religion, language, and caste are symbolised by the "line." Manohar Malgaonkar's *A Bend in the Ganges*, Attia Hossain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column*, Khushwant Singh's *A Train to Pakistan*, and Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* all express anxiety over partition, war, and bloodshed.

## 5. Results

Ghosh's writings are inextricably linked to history. Migration exacerbates emotions of alienation and isolation. Ghosh has a unique ability to beautifully combine the personal with the historical. Even after so many decades after India's independence, the Bengali diaspora has migrated to far-flung corners of the globe, where some have found success in new affiliations and ventures. However, the feeling of losing one's identity and connection to one's 'baari' persists. 'Baari' refers to the ancestral home of one's ancestors. No matter how long one stays in 'Baasha,' it is only a transitory dwelling [6]. *The Shadow Lines*, by Amitav Ghosh, is a manifestation of the need to validate the post-colonial experience and to try a reconstruction of "public history" through a reconstruction of "private" or personal history.

Sharmani Patricia Gabriel examines Ghosh's work in depth in "The Heteroglossia of Home," connecting Mikhail Bakhtin's thoughts on the other nesses existent within a given linguistic and cultural system with Homi Bhabha's theories about the ambiguity of national identities. According to her, *The Shadow Lines* is a critique of hegemonic constructions of otherness and difference in subcontinental conceptions of "the country." As a result, Ghosh is seen as committed to the dynamics of heteroglossia, which opposes the binary logic inherent in the nationalist creation of boundaries during Partition as separatist, hostile, and self-defeating. Gabriel sees heteroglossia as the driving force behind Ghosh's creative output. Heteroglossia, according to Bakhtin, assures that signs do not have set meanings; meaning in the intrinsically insecure domain of contestation, rather than the product of a finished or secure language. His conception of heteroglossia is based on communication as a conflictual foregrounding of the existence of "another mind." A recurring theme in Ghosh's work is the desire to disrupt the rigid confines of nationalist speech and the epicentrollogical view of cultures as fixed and homogeneous systems. In nationalist rhetoric, the construction and consolidation of difference is crucial to the concept of the frontier. The concept of a 'boundary' implies the separation of entities and the concept of binary opposition.

## 6. Conclusion

The looking-glass metaphor is especially evocative of the diasporic imagination's tenability, locating the 'other' over the shadow line in a way that is uncannily familiar but potentially confrontational in its reversal. The narrator begins his craziest excursion while sitting in an elite library: a voyage into a realm outside of space, an expanse without distances, and a land of looking-glass occurrences. The cause of the

Dhaka riots that murdered Tridib is also the cause of the Calcutta riots, in which he was caught as a youngster. He says, "I, in Calcutta, only had to look in the mirror to be in Dhaka; a moment where each city was the inverted image of the other" (TSL 233). Interrogating the idealised unities of nationalism and re-narrating the nation in its heteroglossic complexity is one of Ghosh's main concerns in his novels.

This work takes the reader on a journey through historical events that rattled the sensibilities of the people of India and Bangladesh and forever transformed their lives. They were treated as foreigners in their own land. They were forced to migrate after Partition, crossing the border and leaving behind not only their homes and ancestral lands, but also their history and culture. Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* deals with questions of dislocation as well as identity and nationhood. In his fiction, the terms "coming and going," "arriving," and "departing" are frequently used [5]. This is a movement from ignorance to knowledge, awareness, and understanding, not a physical or geographical movement. Trip is perhaps that eternal and never-ending journey.

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## **Aims and Objectives**

Published online by Institute of Certified Specialists twice a year, **Journal of Digital Art & Humanities (JDAH)** is an international peer-reviewed journal which **aims** at the latest ideas, innovations, trends, experiences and concerns in the field of the digital arts & humanities. JDAH bridges humanitarian, artistic, and scientific disciplines, allowing author(s) to express the views on the subjects studied using modern digital/information technology. It is a nexus for information exchange among academia and industry addressing theory, criticism, and practice. The effective dissemination of original ideas/results generated by the human brain and presented/reflected in articles created using modern information/digital technology **is the main objective of JDAH.**

Topics to be discussed in this journal include the following: Digital Journey; Ethical Climate in the digital age; Human Factor in Healthcare in the digital age; Health Psychology in the digital age; Role of Human-Computer Interaction in Psychology; The Critical Thinking Initiative; Ecotourism in the digital age.

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