

## **Behind the Shadows: A Psychoanalytical Study of *The Shadow Lines*, with special reference to the Narrator, Tha'mma, Ila and May Price**

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**Abstract:** In the novel *The Shadow Lines*, the author Amitav Ghosh has not only fulfilled his implicit agenda of subverting and problematising the European concept of a nation state by exposing it to be a mere conglomeration of arbitrary lines, 'shadow lines' drawn on maps and minds, he has also presented remarkable portrayals of 'shadows' in and within the characters, as looked at in the light of Analytical Psychology, propounded by the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961). In Jungian psychology, the 'shadow aspect' may refer to the entirety of the unconscious or an unconscious aspect of one's own personality which the conscious mind does not recognize in itself. Here two of Jung's very famous principles have been used: the principle of the Collective Unconscious and the principle of the Personal Unconscious to explore and explain the shadowy areas of the four major characters of the novel.

**Keywords:** Existentialism, Colonialism, De-humanization, Anguish

### **I**

Jung, in one of his most famous works, *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche*, defines the Collective Unconscious as:

The collective unconscious - so far as we can say anything about it at all - appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious... We can therefore study the collective unconscious in two ways, either in mythology or in the analysis of the individual. (CW 8, 1970, p. 152)

The personal unconscious is formed by the interaction between the Collective Unconscious and the development of the individual during life. Jung's definition of the Personal Unconscious is as follows:

Everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking; everything of which I was once

conscious but have now forgotten; everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; all the future things which are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness; all this is the content of the unconscious. (CW 8, 1970, p. 185)

Besides these we must include all more or less intentional repressions of painful thought and feelings. I call the sum of these contents the "personal unconscious". (CW 8, 1970, p. 133).

According to Ann Hopwood, "The 'shadow' is a complex in the personal unconscious with its roots in the collective unconscious" (Hopwood, 2009), which affects an individual in mysterious ways. The 'shadow' is that part of our psyche that carries all the things we do not know about ourselves or do not even want to know, as the shadow is largely negative. In this paper I have tried to explore and explain the 'shadows' of the four individual characters - the narrator, Tha'mma, Ila and May Price, and will try to examine how these 'shadows' are formed, what constitutes these 'shadows' and how they affect the behaviour and thought processes of the respective individuals.

The author Amitav Ghosh, through the unnamed narrator, has designed the novel against the backdrop of the experiences gathered since childhood in the context of the socio-political and economic scenario of the late 1980s. The novel begins in the year 1939, when the Second World War broke out, and ends in 1964, when violence erupted in both India and Pakistan. During this time span, India had been partitioned in 1947, and gone to war with China in 1962. When the author wrote the novel in the late 1980s, both Margaret Thatcher in England and Ronald Regan in U.S.A. championed the globalization and liberalization of the economy, in strident opposition to socialist economy. The demolition of the Berlin wall in Germany, the decline and fall of communism in East Europe, the fragmentation of the Soviet Union into several small autonomous countries, and the movement against apartheid in South Africa under the leadership of Nelson Mandela might have prompted Amitav Ghosh to design his novel with the view that the boundaries of class, nation, border only exist in the psyche of mankind, not in reality.

The highly acclaimed novel *The Shadow Lines* has been dealt with from a wide range of critical perspectives such as Postcolonial Theory and Gender (Halloran, 2009, pp. 45-55), Nation and Partition (Mongia, pp. 225-228) etc. After a thorough search of all the accessible research articles, it has been found that an in-depth psychoanalytical approach to

the 'Shadows' has not been taken in any of them, though some articles do contain certain traces of psychoanalysis. Therefore in this paper I have tried to deal with those 'shadowy areas' for psychoanalysis which have been critically untouched as yet.

## II

**Nation and Mankind as Shadows to the Narrator:** The narrator considers his uncle Tridib – who was an archaeologist by training – a mystifying personality, who, tries to see things beyond their present state with the aid of the imagination. He admits with candour: “Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and had given me eyes to see them with” (TSL, p. 22). It is Tridib's “Bartholomew's Atlas” that reveals to him the great truth that “Khulna is about as far from Srinagar as Tokyo is from Beijing, or Moscow from Venice, or Washington from Havana, or Cairo from Naples” (TSL, p. 255). Through his interactions with different characters and his experiences in the novel, the narrator realizes that 'national interest' and nationalism continues to motivate and inspire people. An “ideology that is irrational, narrow, hateful and destructive” (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 7), nationalism has caused enmity even between two neighbouring countries that have strong cultural ties. The narrator draws circles on the maps and a circle of 1200 miles in radius, he finds, will cover more than half of the world population –

Beginning in Srinagar and travelling anti-clockwise, it cut through the Pakistan half of Punjab, through the tip of Rajasthan, and the edge of Sind ... It was a remarkable circle: more than half of the mankind must have fallen within it (TSL, p. 255).

The narrator observes:

They (Politicians) had drawn their borders, believing in that pattern, in the enchantment of lines, hoping perhaps that ones 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. 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 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 irreversible symmetry by the line that set us free – our looking glass border (TSL, p. 257).

It is ironical that nationalism is capable of motivating people very quickly, and soon transforms into a desire for the annihilation of the 'other' – in this case, the neighbouring country. The governments never let the people know the truth behind the political issues for which the country is at war with its neighbouring countries. They simply advocate war, resulting in mass killing, creating and fanning jingoism and fanaticism in the guise of 'patriotism'. Even Tha'mma, who feels unsure of her nationality while applying for a visa before going to Dhaka, gave to the war fund her dearest possession, a thin gold chain with a tiny ruby pendant that was a memento from her husband:

I gave it away, I gave it to the fund for the war. I had to, don't you see? For your sake, for your freedom, we have to kill them, before they kill us, we have to wipe them out (TSL, p. 261).

This is how nationalistic feelings take over rational judgement when war breaks out. But the narrator finds that the people don't react in such a violent manner when their fellow citizens are killed in local riots. He finds that people have vivid memories of the Indo-Sino War of 1962 but they have forgotten the mass killings of 1964, when riots erupted both in Calcutta and Dhaka. He says:

The theatre of war, where generals meet, is the stage on which states disport themselves; they have no use for memories of riots. By the end of January 1964 the riots had faded away from the pages of newspapers, disappeared from the collective imagination of 'responsible opinion', vanished without leaving a trace in the histories and book shelves. They have dropped out of memory into the crater of a 'volcano of silence' (TSL, p. 254).

The narrator also observes that people don't try to know even about the neighbouring countries unless a war breaks out. He says:

With my knowledge I tried to imagine an event, any event, that might occur in a city near the periphery of that circle (or indeed much nearer) – Stockholm, Dublin, Casablanca, Alexandria, Istanbul, Kiev, in any city, in any direction at all – I tried to imagine an event that might happen in any of those places which would bring the people of Milan pouring out into the streets, I tried hard but I could think of none. None, that is, other than war (TSL, p. 256).

After careful study of the narrator's observations of the characters and the incidents in the novel *The Shadow Lines*, one can find that, Amitav Ghosh, in his novel tries to advocate his view that border lines exist only

in the psychology of people, and when one tries to analyze the novel with psychoanalytic tools, one can find that class, nation and culture – components of the Collective Unconscious – mingle and merge with the Personal Unconscious, creating a 'shadow' of nationalism in the minds of the populace, who – in an atmosphere of uncertainty and weakness – indulge in communal riots and wars, and the invisible border lines in the psyche of the people resulting in the creation of geopolitical demarcations or 'shadow lines'.

**Shadows Cast by Time, Space and Silence:** Analyzing *The Shadow Lines* from the psychoanalytical perspective, it is evident that the novel closely relies on the interplay of silence and articulation with respect to collective and individual memory and psyche. An archaeologist digs up the past, traces the stages of development of civilizations and cultures, to answer questions as to how and why the cultures have evolved into their present shape. Until the archaeologist defines the intricacies, the whole gamut remains buried in silence. For a researcher the silence is baffling and also a challenge which he just can't refuse to accept. Therefore a struggle ensues. In this connection the narrator reflects:

Every word I write about the events of 1964 is the product of a struggle with silence. It is a struggle I am destined to lose – have already lost – for even after all these years, I do not know where within me, in which corner of my world, his silence lies. All I know of it is what is not. It is not for example, her silence of an imperfect memory, nor is it a silence enforced by a ruthless state – nothing like that, no barbed wire, no check points to tell me where its boundaries lie. I know nothing of this silence except that it lies outside the reach of my intelligence, beyond words – that is why this silence must win, must inevitably defeat me, because it is not a presence at all, it is simply a gap, a hole, an emptiness in which there are no words...when we try to speak of events of which we do not know the meaning, we must lose ourselves in the silence that lies in the gap between words and world. This is a silence that is a proof against any conceivable act of scorn or courage; it lies beyond defiance – for what means have we to defy mere absence of meaning? Where there is no meaning, there is banality, and that is what this silence consists in, that is why it cannot be defeated – because it is the silence of an absolute, impenetrable banality (TSL, pp. 240-241).

The narrator tirelessly tries to find the meaning of this silence and in doing so, he moves backward to 1960s, to refresh his memory of the Calcutta riots of 1964, the installation Mu-i-Mubarak in 1969, and disappearance of Mu-i-Mubarak etc. The narrator goes back fifteen

years to find a connection between the “nightmare bus ride back from school” and the events in Calcutta and Dhaka. He regrets that he had then knowledge only of nations and borders, of war and friendship, and the things for which he did not have any words were lost into “Chasm of silence”.

Time and space seem to conspire to hide the truth under a sheet of silence. The narrator says that people remember the Sino-Indian War of 1962, but have forgotten the riots of 1964. The narrator thinks that, war throws up the national prejudices, but buries into silence the aeons old cultural ties: war has words but the ties have silence.

The narrator rummages through news papers and the past starts to come alive before his eyes, in all its intricacies. The newspapers of 1964 remind him of the Madras Test, Kamaraj – a believer in socialism and democracy, the installation of Mu-i-Mubarak. This astounding experience prompts him to say: “I began on my strangest journey: a voyage into a land of outside space, an expanse without distances; a land of looking glass events” (TSL, p. 247).

According to the psychoanalysts, time and space is a strange phenomenon. It buries facts and truths, and when the facts are excavated from the past, distance gives a better view because the onlookers are at a vantage point. The viewers are then free from the immediacy of the event, and get clearer view of the events against the backdrop of contemporary events. The newspaper informed the narrator of how people – irrespective of religion, caste or creed – demonstrated and enthusiastically marched from Srinagar to Hazratbal mosque despite the bitter cold. The narrator learnt of the weather from the news paper.

But the fall out of this incident was a communal flare up at Khulna and Calcutta. The governments of both India and Pakistan took quick steps to stop the riots as quickly as possible. But the narrator observes that indivisible sanity binds the people to each other, independent of their governments but the political system does not admit of any independent relationship, as the state claims the monopoly of all relationships between peoples. Finally, the riots of 1964 “dropped out of memory into the crater of a volcano of silence” (TSL, p. 254).

This going beyond space and time continually shapes the personality of the narrator. Stories narrated by Tridib and descriptions of places given by Ila feed him. Though, he had moorings in Calcutta, Tridib has made him an imaginative traveller while Ila tries to keep him tied to the present. This duality of influence helps the narrator develop the power to see things in imagination and establish relationships. The distance of space makes Ila and May look exotic to the narrator and Tridib. The narrator admits that he was infatuated by Ila. At the age of sixteen Ila and the

narrator went to the park with their arms around each other's waists. Even in later years, he was charmed by the foreign ways of Ila – “She looked improbably exotic to me, dressed in faded blue jeans and a T-shirt I had never seen before except in pictures in American magazines” (TSL, p. 89). The distance is conquered as they come closer in spite of the space between them because of the untoward situation created by Robi at the Grand Hotel, regarding Ila's insistence upon dancing with a stranger. This nonplussed Ila for a while, but soon she gathers herself and tells Robi and the narrator that she wants to be “free of your bloody culture and free of all of you”. Tha'mma also does not approve Ila's ways because she dresses like foreigners – “She (Ila) wears trousers like a Free School Street whore” (TSL, p. 88). The antagonism of Robi and Tha'mma is born of their failure to conquer time and space.

The final meeting of May and the narrator is in a way a meeting of time and space, as they meet in spite of differences in their ages and culture. But all the time the writer posits that time and space coalesce to test the mettle of the people. A psychoanalytical reading of the novel affirms that individuals who are able to transcend the boundaries of time and space in their understanding of personal events in the context of history can transcend the 'shadows' in their psyche.

### III

**The Shadows That Engulf Tha'mma:** The outlook towards life and society of the grandmother of the narrator, Tha'mma, has been shaped by her personal experiences. Widowed at an early age, she had to fend for herself and her children. She became a school teacher and rose to be the Principal. Life had never allowed her to idle away her time and she revels in her judicious use of time, even to the extent of sitting in judgement upon those whom she believes to be wastrels, and those whom she perceives to have an outlook towards life contrary to her own.

**Tha'mma and her Concept of Borders:** Tha'mma was born and brought up in a joint family in Dhaka. “Theirs was a big joint family with everyone living and eating together : her grandparents, parents, she and her sister Mayadebi, her Jethamoshai, her father's elder brother, and others which included three cousins, roughly of her age as well as a couple of spinster aunts” (TSL, p. 136). A quarrel between the two brothers after Tha'mma's grandfather's death resulted in the house being divided between the two brothers.

The wall that was erected to divide her ancestral house was Tha'mma's first encounter with idea or 'borders'. In her childish whims, she liked to fantasize about the life on the other side of the wall, and relate her fantasies to her sister Mayadebi as bed time stories. Eventually and unconsciously she herself came to believe that the life on the other side of the wall was really the reverse of her life. This material presence of a

border which was made not to facilitate but to hinder entry and exits, was the notion with which she grew up: "When the wall was eventually built they found that it had ploughed right through a couple of doorways so that no one could get through them anymore" (TSL, p. 136). This is the primary reason for her bafflement when she was informed that there was no physical entity to demarcate the borders of the two nations of India and East Pakistan, despite the pain, horror and suffering that accompanied the 'creation' of the two nations in 1947.

**Tha'mma and her Views on 'Time':** Since Tha'mma's life had been had been marked by struggles throughout, she did not like anybody who she thought was wasting time. "For her time was like a toothbrush; it went mouldy if it was not used...it begins to stink" (TSL, p. 4). She did not like Tridib who she felt was wasting time. She had seen him a couple of times at the street corners around Golepark; she had a deep horror of young men who spent their time at 'street corner addas'.

In Tha'mma's life, retirement was a significant event. Though it was not an unforeseen event, strange changes began appearing in her behaviour. She began interfering in household and her old school affairs. At home, she nagged her daughter-in-law about cooking, clothes and housekeeping. She started visiting her school again and would come back bursting with horror stories. After a dozen or so of such visits, the new Headmistress wrote to the narrator's father that if he failed to prevent his mother from visiting the school she would have to ask the chowkidar not to let her in. This somehow shocked her into stop meddling into the affairs of others, and she gradually became oblivious and indifferent. She would sit by the window staring blankly at her cupped hands. The narrator noticed: "I knew what she had in her hands. Time - great livid gouts of it; I could smell it stinking" (TSL, p. 131).

**Tha'mma's Assessment of Ila:** Tha'mma disliked Ila for more reasons than one. As Ila had to travel a lot with her parents across the globe, she dressed like foreigners and had scant regard for Indian customs and traditions. The grandmother, who was inextricably linked with the past, therefore had a strong hatred towards her so much so that she even calls her a 'whore'. For a person like her who had struggled hard for life's necessities, material comforts were the be-all-and-end-all of life. She could never figure out why Ila was living in London "in a tiny room in a house which she has to share with five other students" (TSL, p. 87) when she could have a far better living in India. She thought that people lived abroad only for those liberties and carnal pleasures in which Western society apparently indulged freely. She was angry to learn that the narrator had gone to meet Ila, and in her desperation wrote to the dean of the narrator's college that he had been visiting prostitutes in houses of ill-repute, and that he should be expelled and sent back home for his own good. In her opinion, Ila should not be in England because "She doesn't

belong there” (TSL, p. 85).

Though such a reactionary and regressive attitude towards Ila may seem absurd and shadowy but this could very well stem from two reasons: primarily, being moored to Indian traditions she could not conceive of the Westernization of one of her kith and kin, her own sister's granddaughter; and secondarily, but more importantly, it was based upon the frustration that brewed within her because she had been denied of the cherished idea of a 'homeland', an entity she desired to base her identity on. She is a staunch believer in the political demarcations on the maps and they are as real to her as blood: “They know they are a nation because they have drawn their borders with blood” (TSL, p. 85). Ila was the embodiment of the subversion of this deep seated faith in nation and nationality and hence this contempt.

**Tha'mma's Nationalistic Spirit:** Tha'mma had harboured strong nationalistic sentiments ever since her college days. She had deep feelings for a boy who was arrested for his involvement in terrorist activities against the British rulers. She said to herself:

“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, and stood at his side with a pistol in her hands ,waiting for that English Magistrate...” (TSL, p. 43).

This is one of her dormant desires that provoked her to give up her only possession, a gold chain with a ruby pendant which was the first memento that her husband had given her after their marriage and which she had never parted with ever since, in the war fund of the India-Pakistan War of 1965. She also vows to donate her blood to the war fund, because for her “This is the only chance” (TSL, p. 261).

**Tha'mma and her Familial Ties:** Tha'mma believed in sinking petty differences and living in peace and harmony. She had a strong desire to make up with Jethamoshai. When she came to know from Mrinmoyee that one of Jethamoshai's sons was living in Calcutta with his family, she became so impatient to meet him that she refused to listen anything against it. When the narrator's father said that they probably would not even recognise her, she snapped

“It does not matter whether we recognise each other or not. We are the same flesh, the same blood, the same bone, and now at last after all these years, perhaps we will be able to make amends for all that bitterness and hatred” (TSL, p. 142).

This seems to stand very much in contrast to her earlier views that it was only through war that filial and familial bonds could be strengthened. But in actuality it is the mission to bring her Jethamoshai 'home' which is

the driving force behind the subduing of all her previous antagonisms. The passion that this supposedly noble venture instilled in her made her disregard every other hurdle that could have come in between: be it her own ego before Mayadebi for asking for her help or her concocted reasons for not revisiting Dhaka.

Therefore we find many shadowy areas in Tha'mma's character. She was conservative and reactionary, notwithstanding the fact that she was well educated and a school headmistress. Her principles were so deeply embedded in her subconscious that she vehemently criticized anybody and everybody who did not conform to her philosophy.

**The Shadows that Submerge Ila:** Ila is the daughter of Jatin, the eldest son of Mayadebi, who is the narrator's grandmother's sister. Jatin is an economist with the United Nations; Ila travelled widely with her father to the different places where he was posted. Though she resembles the narrator – they are often mistaken to be twins – they are actually poles apart: perhaps owing to having had to move frequently from one city to another, one country to another, one culture to another, Ila has always been an outsider. Visiting Calcutta only during holidays, she finds it difficult to fit in to the societies that she inhabits merely fleetingly, and thus ends up devoid of cultural moorings, and spends her life trying desperately to fit in.

**Ila and her Childhood:** Ila from her very childhood is taken by appearance, by glamour of wealth and position, since it is not possible at that age to look for things in life which are of abiding value. She carried with her the Yearbooks of the international schools of whichever city she happened to be living at that time. They were full of photographs of groups of friends, of parties and tennis matches. She would point herself out dressed in expensive exotic clothes in some of the pictures; she would tell with pride what she did and what she wore at the parties. But the narrator recounts “She herself was unaccountably absent in the pictures” (TSL, p. 25) of the special social occasions which she would be describe with great clarity and obvious pride. When she was fourteen she once showed him a picture of a boy named Jamshed Tabrizi, who appeared to the narrator to be a grown man. She said that he was not only a fencing champion but also so rich that his father had got him a BMW sports car on his birthday. She claimed he was her boyfriend. But in another picture the narrator happened to see this boy sitting with his arms around two laughing blond girls and Ila herself was standing a little apart. Ila saw that the narrator had noticed it. When he again came upon the same yearbook later, he found that the page had been torn off.

Ila felt that by telling these stories she could convince the narrator of the 'story' that she liked to live in – that she belonged to that class of society of which she dreamt of being a part. By telling those stories she

subconsciously tried to realize her secret dreams but could not tolerate the embarrassment of getting caught in her lies. Her tearing off of the page from the Yearbook was a fervent attempt to save face before the narrator. While playing Houses with the narrator, Ila also tells him the story of their 'baby' Magda, who is nothing but a psychological projection of her own humiliated and tormented self at the International schools. But the story that she told to the narrator was not an exact account. It was modified and altered to suit the 'story' she wanted to live in – that she, (represented by Magda), was rescued by the boy whom she admired most – Nick Price. This was later proved to be false by May, who disclosed the truth of the latter half of this incident to the narrator. These are precisely the insubstantial stories or the shadows that she loved to be submerged in during her childhood.

**Ila and her Concept of Freedom:** Ila thinks that all that is done in London is progressive while those who do not approve of that kind of life are backward, conservative reactionaries. She finds that life in Calcutta is dull and boring, and to relive herself of it she takes Robi and the narrator to a night club. Robi does not want to enter the club, and even pulls his hand out of Ila's, but she finally prevailed upon him. After sometime she asks the narrator and Robi to dance with her. When both of them refuse, thinking that their culture did not permit it, she dances with a stranger. Her uncle Robi could not bear it. He “wrenched her away from the business man. Then he opened the palm of his hand and planted it squarely in the middle of the man's chest” (TSL, p. 96)

For Ila, it was this which she thought of as freedom. She justified her stay in London on the grounds that she wanted to be free of people like Robi and the narrator because they despised the British customs which she considered essential facets of freedom. But though she claims herself to be “a free woman and free spirit” (TSL, p. 206), she does not prove to be actually free of her Indian moorings because she confesses that she “talked of things like that to shock you and because you seemed to expect it of me somehow. I never did any of those things: I'm about as chaste, in my own way, as any woman you'll ever meet” (TSL, p. 207). Her discourse of chastity and such stuff is testimony to the fact. She also confesses that though a really free woman should not “ever live in that state of squalor where incidence in one's life can be foretold like teasers for a bad television serials?” TSL, p. 206), but she is somehow psychologically compelled to live a life like that.

**Ila, the Narrator and Nick Price:** The relationship that Ila shares with the narrator is one that is replete with shadows. Ila considers the narrator that he was “always the brother I never had” (TSL, p. 123). Though she could very well understand his feelings and sentiments for her, she neither acknowledged nor ever tried to do so. This could be because she considered him alien to her culture. She felt she belonged to the Western

culture. Therefore in her desperate attempt to concretize her feeling of belongingness she marries Nick Price. She confesses that she can't leave him despite the fact that he cheats on her because, in her subconscious, she can't bear to lose her Western ties. Therefore she makes the marriage survive despite all her sufferings.

In a sense the dialectics of the relationship between Ila and the narrator and Nick Price and Ila are the same. Just as the narrator feels Ila to be "more perfect than any human form could possibly be" (TSL, p. 122), Ila describes Nick to the narrator as "much bigger than you: much stronger too" (TSL, p. 54), better than the narrator in all respects. Ila's urge to be associated with the West stems from the fact that she had been subject to racial prejudices by the native dwellers of the those countries. This torment led her seek a sense of belonging, trying to fit in, by marrying a Westerner – Nick Price. The narrator too finds Ila just the like of the models he has seen in American magazines. Therefore he finds Ila to be irresistibly charming. This is because of the collective unconscious imbued in the psyche of the once-colonized people to consider the occidental superior and more desirable than the oriental.

**Ila and her Travails of Travel:** Ila has travelled widely with her parents because of her father's job as an Economist with the UN. Whenever the parents of Ila came to Calcutta for holidays, they brought souvenirs from whichever country they happened to be living at that time – Indonesian leather puppets, North African stool with camel like humps, etc. This appears to hint at a deep understanding of the culture and tradition of the places that they had lived in or visited, but it was not so: it was merely like the collection of souvenirs by a disinterested tourist who was paying a desultory visit to a place. The narrator once said that he "longed to visit Cairo, to see world's first pointed arch in the mosque of Ibn Tulun, and touch the stones of the Great Pyramid of Cheops" (TSL, p. 22), but Ila, instead of showing her interest in the pyramid, said that at Cairo Airport, "...the Ladies is way away on the other said of the departure lounge" (TSL, p. 22). She did not have any interest even in the Underground. "She would burst out laughing and mimic me saying: you would think we were going to the bloody Concorde" (TSL, p. 23).

The reason why Ila responded to the word 'Cairo' in the way she did has been analyzed from the psychological perspective both by Tridib and the narrator. The narrator tries to make her understand –

...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 ... It was not her fault that she could not understand, for as Tridib often said of her, the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all (TSL, p. 23).

He also comments that “to her the Underground was merely a means of shifting venue” (TSL, p. 23). Analyzing her personal unconscious the narrator came to the conclusion that in all other airports she would probably “look for the Ladies, not because she wanted to go, but because those were the only fixed points in the shifting landscapes of her childhood” (TSL, p. 23).

**Ila and her Socio-political Participation:** The narrator reports to his grandmother that “Ila spends her spare time going on demonstrations and acting in radical place for Indian immigrants in East London” (TSL, p. 87). She also works in an organization called 'Save the Children Fund, and is associated with the Anti-Nazi League. The fact that her participation is merely cosmetic or, at least, so the members of the group felt, is explicit from the way the members would talk of her as “our own upper-class Asian Marxist”. Ila, the superficial character that she is, might not have noticed that such a labelling could well have been a mockery. Her active participating in the socio-political welfare programs is less out of any missionary zeal and more because they provide an outlet for her rebellious spirit. In another instance, we find she “marched straight off to Brixton...to confront a gang of jack bootied racists” (TSL, p. 116). This could be a proof to her courage and revolutionary spirit but not a sincere protest against oppression, since she endures such oppression in the domestic front from her husband. One cannot miss the subtle irony of the comment “I don't actually have to see the little creatures... I only have to save them” (TSL, p. 119) when she is working for the Save the Children Fund which only reveals the hollowness of her apparent socio-political participations.

**The Shadows that May has in her Life:** May Price is the granddaughter of Lionel Tresawsen, who tried setting up a homoeopathic hospital in a village near Calcutta, and also got interested in the Theosophical Society in Calcutta and séances by a lady in Chowringhee. It was at these séances that he happened to meet Tridib's grandfather Mr. Justice Chandra-Shekhar Datta-Chaudhuri. The two families came closer and the bonhomie was continued by successive generations.

**May and Tridib:** When the narrator went to England for his Ph.D. degree he learnt that Tridib had been sending greetings to Mrs. Price ever since he left London in 1940. But in 1959 he sent a separate card to May with a small note saying that “he remembered her very well”. She was touched by the personal note and recollects that she received this card “when she was trying to get over and adolescent crush...” (TSL, p. 19). She had had a comfort that 'someone' wanted to befriend her. Thus began their correspondence and this new friendship was a great comfort to her because she felt lonely. Tridib's death had once again created an empty space in her psyche. When the narrator went to her room for the

first time, he found her television on. She told him that it was her “only real indulgence” because its sound helped her to fill up the room – we understand it is the space which was occupied by Tridib's existence in her memory. Later she explained that Tridib, as she saw him in her imagination, looked “intense, saturnine, more than a little mad” (TSL, p. 184) and she would not have liked to meet such a man alone in a strange country. But when she saw him he looked

...awkward, absurdly young, and somehow very reassuring... She hadn't been able to help throwing her arms around him; it was just pure relief. She knew at last why she had come and she was glad. It had nothing to do with curiosity (TSL, p. 184).

This simple explanation tells us that May had deep feelings for Tridib which she dared not admit to herself. This is evinced in the conversation with the narrator, which took place in a sandwich bar near Regent Street. When the narrator asked if she had been in love with Tridib, “I don't know, she said. How can you expect me to know?... What do you think I've been asking myself these seventeen years?” (TSL, p. 193).

**May and the Narrator:** May Price is bold and practical in her statements. She is not impressed by the stories of the whims and fancies of rich people. The narrator showed her a big table in Tridib's house in Calcutta. Tridib had told the narrator that his grandfather had bought it on his first visit to London in 1980. He had shipped it to Calcutta in sections but when it arrived he did not know what to do with it. To this May remarked “I wonder how much it cost to have it shipped here... I wonder how many proper roofs that money would have bought for those huts we saw on our way here” (TSL, p. 53).

If this remark of her which was accusingly stabbing to the narrator seemed quite absurd at that moment, we find it is perfectly in keeping with her active engagement in the work of relief agencies. She told the narrator “I spend most of my time working for Amnesty and Oxfam and a couple of other relief agencies”. She was working on a project for providing housing for the survivors of an earth quake in Central America. (TSL, pp. 17-18) May Price is considerate and ready to pardon the narrator's misdeeds if she is satisfied that he is genuinely repentant. The day after Ila's marriage, the narrator went to Mrs. Price's house to give his wedding present to Ila. Having taken beer at a pub on the way and also some wine at Mrs. Price's house, he fell asleep on the arm chair. May Price, when she woke him up, found that he was not able to stand on his feet. She therefore took him to her room but he started taking liberties with her even in the cab. At night he admits, “I kissed her on her open mouth and slid my right hand quickly down her neck into her blouse and the strap of her brassiere” (TSL, p. 175). When she tried to push him

away he pinned her against his body with his left hand holding her tight, so that she could not get her hands free, and he thrust his hand inside her dress. She managed somehow to wriggle out of his hold, but it was certainly unbearable for any girl. In the morning she made it known to him that she expected an apology. The narrator had realized that his sin was unpardonable, but he did not have words to express his repentance. May stretched out her hand and rapped him on the back of his head to signify that she had accepted his unspoken apology.

Later we find that a relationship develops between May and the narrator. Though this seems shadowy, this could be because of the fact that May could empathise with the narrator's frustration at his love, Ila getting married off. In turn the narrator too could empathize with May's guilt feeling and sense of vacuity at Tridib's death at the hands of the riotous mob at Dhaka. Their relationship is one that transcends time and space and eventually they come to rest in knowing, in each other's arms.

**Tridib's Death and May Price:** May has a heart full of love for all living beings. She cannot see anybody in pain. While going on a drive with Tridib, she saw an injured dog writhing in pain. She asked Tridib to stop the car and when Tridib said that they would not be able to do anything, she snubbed him – “All you are good for is words. Can't you ever do anything?” (TSL, p. 191) She took out her pen-knife and “made a determined jab with the pen-knife” (TSL, p. 191). The dog convulsed for a while and then it lay still.

May Price went with Tridib to Dhaka to bring Tha'mma's uncle to Calcutta where Tridib was killed by the riotous mob. Following May Tridib got down from the car to save the old man from the mob, and so May held herself responsible for Tridib's death. She tells the narrator – “I thought I had killed him. I used to think: perhaps he wouldn't have got out of that car if I hadn't made him, if I'd understood what I was doing” (TSL, p. 277). May had realised that it was she who had given Tridib the psychological impetus to get out of the car both directly and indirectly. For May, who always believed in actual physical participation to help somebody, it was quite natural to relieve that injured dog of its pain. This was exemplary to Tridib who was psychologically attuned to act in a similar manner if the situation so demanded. On the day of the riot May had ventured to help the old man out of sheer natural instinct. But Tridib felt the urge to come out of the car both because he felt he should rescue May from the mob and because the urge to help one in need, was already instilled in Tridib's psyche. But May sloughs off her despondence by coming to the conclusion:

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. I know I can't understand it, I know I mustn't try, for any real sacrifice is a mystery (TSL, p. 277).

Thus May overcomes the most problematic shadow in her life through the concept of sacrifice of Hindu religious philosophy which elevated her spirit to live life and find love anew.

#### IV

The subtle interplay of the word 'shadow' so far has been thought to be fraught with socio-political ramifications. But the consummate artist that Amitav Ghosh is, he makes the word applicable to both universal and personal levels. In this paper I have tried to convey both these aspects giving emphasis to the latter. It is not only the child psyche that is overcast with shadows but the adult psyche too, is affected by the shadow that is created within it as a result of socio-political shadows. In this paper though I have tried to explain and explore some of the shadows that each all these four characters have in their lives, in reality however, we do not know or for that matter cannot know, what the shadow knows. It is only as an onlooker that we can analyze the forces at play behind the actions and reactions, and such analysis is possible only when we can have a clear picture of such characters. Though such a reading can be made of real-life characters too, it is a practical impossibility because we cannot gather all the informational details of a particular person. It is only through a novel such as the one in question, that we can have a broad if not complete gamut of a particular person or persons' behavioural details and an almost exact knowledge of the social and environmental stimuli he or she is exposed to, so that from their behavioural patterns we can discern what the person perceives consciously or unconsciously, which contribute to the shaping of their personal unconscious. These are things that we can and must relate to since *The Shadow Lines* is written "much more in a realist mode to deal with real events and real characters", as the author Amitav Ghosh himself claims in an interview (Aldama, 2002, pp. 84-90). Just as we find in the characters here, the 'shadow' possesses qualities which are quite opposite from those in the persona, and therefore opposite from those which the person is conscious. According to The Society of Analytical Psychology, this is the way in which we most immediately experience the 'shadow' in ourselves- when we see it in others, and it is from here that we can fairly be sure that traits which we cannot stand in other people, really belong to ourselves which we want to disown. But we have the Jungian idea of one aspect of the personality compensating for another – where there is a 'shadow' there must also be light, which is the positive aspect. In another sense the psychological

analysis of the characters of a novel may well be the 'light' to throw on our own 'shadows' to bring them to our consciousness. Though the task of owning our own 'shadow' and bringing it into a relationship with the persona is painful, it is better than “shying away from the patches of shadow” as the narrator in the novel does. As Jung himself writes “Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is”; we should take the message.

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