

Formal Innovation as Postcolonial Response: From *A Passage to India* to *The Shadow Lines*

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities
BRAC University
June 2026

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing a degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material that has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

This thesis examines the colonial barriers that E. M. Forster demonstrated in *A Passage to India* (1924) and how these barriers are depicted as a postcolonial response in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988). By confiding on the theory of hybridity by Homi K. Bhabha, this study argues that the non-linear, fragmented narrative that Ghosh constructs is a formal response to the strict categorical division that colonialism imposed. Forster's text shows the limit to which the British Raj deliberately blocked the possibility of a hybrid identity and genuine cross-cultural relationships, and suggests that friendship between a colonizer and colonized man was impossible under colonialism. The analysis shows how the colonial power operated by establishing fixed temporal, geographical, and identity categories which is a direct violation of the "third space" as theorized by Homi K. Bhabha. Ghosh's postcolonial narrative directly addresses this impossibility, through formal innovation and hybridized characters. The novel's fragmented structure implements at the fundamental level, what colonialism did not allow to happen at the political level, placing the idea of borders as "shadow lines". This study adds to postcolonial literary criticism by depicting how the narrative form alone can serve as a political intervention and open up a literary space that allows colonial categorical thought to penetrate imagination and memory. The comparative approach shows that postcolonial literature inherits from colonial literature, but it changes impossibility into formal possibility, in other words- it creates new literary devices that coherence with the expression of hybrid consciousness.

Key Words: Hybridity, Postcolonial Literature, Third Space, Colonial Obstacles.

Acknowledgement

I want to acknowledge my supervisor Joutha Monisha ma'am and convey my sincere gratitude to her. Without her guidance and continuous suggestions, it was not possible to finish the entire writing of the paper. I would also like to give special thanks to my family for their support and understanding while conducting my study and writing my project. I have gotten by so far thanks to your prayer for me. Finally, I would like to thank Almighty Allah, for giving me patience and letting me through all the difficulties. There were days when I did not feel motivated to continue the writing, but believing in Him led me through the process and I am able to finish my undergraduate journey.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The postcolonial literary discourse offers a crucial lens through which the consistible impact of imperialism, fracturing of identity, construction of memory, and ultimately the impact of imperialism on formerly colonized nations can be examined. The Europeans came to India in the fifteenth century with the arrival of the Portuguese. Then came the Dutch, French and the British. The British came to India at the beginning of the seventeenth century and they ruled the region for almost four hundred years.

Two of the highly influential works that feature the themes of colonialism are E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988). Though separated by over six decades, these novels profoundly portray the nature of colonial experience and its aftermath. Forster's text was written during the final years of the British Raj, it shows the impossibility of genuine human connection under British colonial rule, exposing how imperialism erects impassable barriers between colonizers and colonized. Ghosh's novel was published four decades after the independence of India, it shows the effect of colonial trauma and responds to it through a hybridized narrative structure that changes fixed boundaries of time, space, and identity. This thesis argues that Ghosh's fragmented, non-linear narrative functions as a postcolonial response to the cultural and political barriers that Forster identified as innate to the colonial system in *A Passage to India*.

Colonialism also redefined culture by disrupting the established identities and introducing hierarchies that favored the values, language and worldview of the colonizer. This cultural influence is visible both in *A Passage to India* and *The Shadow Lines*; in broken relationships, and

the lack of stability of belonging. Colonial rule creates a space on which there is interaction of culture that is unequal and results in what could be termed as a form of restrained or blocked hybridity. Characters move between traditions and modernity imposed on them and in many cases, it does not bring them harmony, but confusion, alienation or even conflict. Through this, culture during colonialism is not formed as a stable or unified system, but a disputed field that is being shaped by power, memory and resistance- an idea that is central in understanding both novels.

The significance of comparing these two texts lies in their approaches to understanding the colonial and postcolonial condition. Forster's novel is set primarily in the fictional city of Chandrapore during the 1920s, it centers on the failed attempt at friendship between Dr. Aziz, an Indian Muslim physician, and Cyril Fielding, an English man, principal of the government college in Chandrapore. The novel's central incident is the mysterious events at the Marabar Caves and the following false accusation against Aziz - becomes the central issue for the impossibility of bridging the colonial divide. Hunt Hawkins observes in his analysis "Forster's Critique of Imperialism in *A Passage to India*," that the novel's core argument against imperialism is that it prevents personal relationships, making friendship impossible in the context of the British Raj (Hawkins 58). The novel ends with its subversive final exchange, in which even the empathetic Fielding and Aziz cannot sustain their friendship because "the earth didn't want it" and the sky proclaims "No, not yet" and "No, not there" (Forster 349). This colossal rejection of human connection under colonial conditions establishes the fundamental problem that Ghosh's postcolonial narrative will build upon.

Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is set across several cities (Calcutta, London, Dhaka) and expand over several decades (primarily the 1960s through 1980s), tells the story of an unnamed narrator whose life becomes intertwined with the memories and experiences of his extended

family, particularly his enigmatic cousin Ila and his uncle Tridib. The novel's non-chronological, fragmented structure mirrors the narrator's attempt to reconstruct memory and meaning from scattered fragments of his personal experience, family history and collective trauma. The narrative revolves around Tridib's death during the 1964 communal riots in Dhaka, an event that exposes the violent nature that arose from the unrestricted national borders created by Partition. Through its innovative use of memory as both narrative device and thematic concern, the novel explores the very concept of borders- geographical, temporal, psychological and how these affect the people and their lives. The political and social barriers that caused the loss of human collection Forster identified in *A Passage to India* is the reason for Ghosh's non-linear narrative structure and the fragmented characters.

1.1 Colonial Period of India

The colonial period of India lasted nearly two centuries of British rule from the mid-eighteenth century till the independence of 1947, radically changing the political, social, and cultural landscape of the subcontinent. The British East India Company started trading in this region which evolved into direct British Crown rule after the 1857 Rebellion. The Crown rule established the British Raj that forms the backdrop of Forster's *A Passage to India*. Forster's novel is set in the 1920's colonial India, by the time the region had become a place of intensifying political tension: several Indian independence movements, led by figures like Mahatma Gandhi, was challenging the British authority for their systemic violence, oppression against the Indian people- especially the Amritsar massacre of 1919, where British soldiers killed hundreds of unarmed protesters - it exposed the violent nature of colonial rule. The Raj operated through a stiff system of racial dissociation and hierarchical administration that sharply prevented friendly

interaction between colonizer and colonized, constructing what Forster identifies as impassable political and psychological barriers. The end of British rule brought partition but not liberation; the division of India and Pakistan in 1947 created unrestricted borders that divided communities, displaced millions, and injected communal violence that took thousands of lives. Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* addresses these traumatic mob incidents through the 1964 communal riots in Dhaka; it represents colonialism's most subversive impact: the imposition of fixed national boundaries in a place where previously different cultural and geographical spaces had existed. Understanding this historical transition - from the strict colonial world Forster shows the violently partitioned postcolonial scenery Ghosh inherits - is essential to understand how Ghosh's narration responds to colonialism's structural violence.

1.2 Research Question and Thesis Argument

This thesis aims to answer the question: How Amitav Ghosh's hybridized, non-linear narrative structure in *The Shadow Lines* be considered as a postcolonial response to the political and cultural barriers that Forster identified as responsible for splitting East and West in *A Passage to India*?

This thesis argues: Ghosh's innovative techniques - his fragmented commentary, his smooth transition across geographical and cultural boundaries, his use of memory to collapse time span, his creation of characters who does not belong to a fixed identity - builds a profound postcolonial response to the barriers documented in Forster's colonial-era novel. Forster's critique centers on the impossibility of friendship under colonial systems intensified by the typical British contempt toward South Asian people, Ghosh's novel vividly employs non-linear narrative,

memory and hybridity to transcend the fixed boundaries of place, culture, and time. While colonialism insisted that borders were real and wide, postcolonial narrative can depict them as illusions that produce real violence, but illusions nevertheless.

This argument is significant for understanding postcolonial literature. It represents that postcolonial writers inherit not only the critique of colonial era, but profoundly develop new narrative forms enough to express postcolonial consciousness. Reading *The Shadow Lines* as a response to *A Passage to India*, we can understand better how postcolonial literature transforms the problems identified in previous texts into new possibilities for representing identity and community.

1.3 Methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach and engages on textual analysis and close reading as its primary methodology, through the analysis of the characters, imagery, narrative structure and the function and development of the themes in each text and the comparison between them. Close reading helps to carefully understand the specific formal choices each author makes and how those choices produce meaning. Through analysis of passages in detail, concerning the language, structural patterns, metaphor - this methodology bridges connections between form and content that most researchers might overlook. The analysis proceeds comparatively, identifying aligned concerns in both novels while acknowledging how Ghosh's postcolonial narrative enables different formal and thematic solutions to problems Forster identified. This comparative approach enlightens both continuities and transformations across the colonial/postcolonial divide. The

analysis throughout remains grounded in the texts themselves while employing Bhabha's theoretical framework to highlight the significance of innovative narratives.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

This study engages on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity as its primary theoretical lens, with the analysis of related themes like identity, memory and imperialism. Bhabha's theory of hybridity is mostly articulated in *The Location of Culture* (1994), it challenges the oppositions between the colonizer and the colonized by identifying the "third space" where cultural meanings and identities are affiliated. Earlier postcolonial theorists emphasized on resistance or opposition to colonial power, whereas Bhabha argues that colonial narrative itself produces hybridity, that the relationship between colonizer and colonized always entails mimicry, uncertainty, and cultural mixing that weakens authority of colonizers. This "in-between" space is neither fully colonized nor fully colonizer, and it becomes a place of both doubt and possibility.

In Forster's *A Passage to India*, hybridity arrives primarily as a problem or absurdity. Some characters attempt to occupy this in-between space, especially Dr. Aziz and Mr. Cyril Fielding; they soon find their efforts gone in vain by the rigid structures of colonial rule. The demands of the British Raj are of clear boundaries and categorical separations, which makes the hybrid third space practically ineffective. The novel's tragic course depicts that under colonialism, attempts of cultural mixing or friendship through racial lines fail because the political structure prevents the emergence of genuine hybridity.

On the other hand, Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* shows hybridity through its form and structure. The narrator of the novel exists in multiple cultural and geographical places

simultaneously, moving between Calcutta and London. The character mentions Bengali and English cultural references, the mention of the events are from personal and collective memory. The text's take on non-linear narrative enacts a hybrid narration that resists the colonial mindset of "progress". Ghosh allows the past and present to coexist, creating a narrative space where the boundaries that colonialism insisted on become penetrable.

The theme of imperialism provides essential context for understanding both novels, as one is set in the Imperial era and another several decades after the Imperial period in India. Forster wrote the novel during the later phase of colonial rule in India, capturing how imperial structures corrupt both colonizer and colonized, confining authentic human relationships. The novel shows that imperialism's fundamental fault is not just the economic exploitation or political domination, but its destruction of the possibility of friendship- the most basic and needed human connection. Ghosh inherits this critique of colonialism but changes it, showing how the unrestricted borders created by colonialism (especially the Partition) continue to produce violence and division in the postcolonial era.

Identity emerges as a crucial concern in both texts, but publishes differently across the colonial/postcolonial divide. In Forster's novel, identity is quite fixed and categorical: characters are English or Indian, colonizer or colonized, though some of the characters struggle against these categorizations. In Ghosh's postcolonial narrative, identity becomes hybrid and constructed through memory and narrative. The narrator's identity is built through his relationship to Tridib's stories, to family memories, to several movements across national borders. This shift from fixed to evolving identity reflects the movement from colonial fixation to postcolonial hybridity.

Memory functions as both narrative technique and theme, particularly in *The Shadow Lines*. Ghosh presents memory as unreliable, fragmentary, and deeply subjective; yet it is no less "real" than

documented history. The narrator constructs his understanding of events through multiple memories that are conflicting, discovering that the past is not a fixed entity but something that continues to reconstruct in the present. This approach to memory challenges colonial histories' claims of authoritative truth, suggesting that people in the postcolonial era must create meaning from the fragmented memory they inherit.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Cultural Hybridity:

Cultural hybridity in literature depicts a significant conceptual aspect and represents issues of identity, power dynamics and cultural mixing. The process of culture mix may come as a result of globalization and people of different cultures living in the same place. Hybridity occurs when a person tries to imitate different cultures and form a hybrid identity that is neither indigenous nor external.

Homi K. Bhabha introduced the idea of “hybridity” and that changed the theories of postcolonialism by insisting that the cultural identities are always changing, it is not fixed. Bhabha introduced the theory based on thoughts of other theorists such as Edward Said and Frantz Fanon, and also proposed the concept of “third space”, an in-between cultural space formed among people of different cultures, generally among the colonizer and the colonized.

Scholarly writings bring more light on Bhabha’s theory. For example, in her article “Cultural Hybridity: A Postcolonial Concept”, Dr. Manisha Shah examines the concept of cultural hybridity through a Postcolonial perspective, arguing its relevance in today’s era of globalization and multiculturalism. She argues that globalization has transformed the cultural landscape, particularly for immigrants, whose experiences enforce viewing identity through a hybrid lens that blends both foreign and homeland traditions. Hybridity challenges fixed binaries, and promotes the idea of a “Third space”.

Similarly, scholar Dr. Elmo Raj adds more on the concept of hybridity. The paper “Postcolonial Literature, Hybridity and Culture” examines key concepts of postcolonial studies, specifically focusing on the idea of hybridity. Hybridity works as a central theme in postcolonial context, an operative factor that exposes the limitations of colonial binaries and oppositional structures. Hybridity also works as a creative space, influences the commentary of culture, identity, and the complex interactions between the colonizer and the colonized.

Homi K. Bhabha’s book *The Location of Culture* introduces his theory of hybridity, which was later criticized by several scholars. In the article “Critical Review of Postcolonial Theory of Homi Bhabha’s Hybridity: A Study of *The Location of Culture*”, Abdullahi Dahiru Umar critiques Bhabha’s theory of hybridity, specifically through Bhabha’s book *The Location of Culture*, published in 1994. Bhabha argues that culture can no longer be viewed individually, but must be understood in hybrid terms. Hybridity describes the function of colonial discourse in creating new cultural forms in the context of colonization. For Bhabha, cultural identity is evident within the “Third Space”, a space of inconsistency and ambivalence that makes hierarchical claims of cultural purity obsolete. Bhabha suggests that the colonial subject is built on conflicting positions and is always responsive, threatening colonial rule through various mechanisms. Scholar Dahiru Umar criticizes Bhabha’s theories for their reliance on complex criteria like psychoanalysis, elitism, and Eurocentrism. Focusing on hybridity can minimize or ignore natural imbalances and inequality present in power relationships, it might reinforce the colonial process. Umar’s critique of Bhabha’s theory makes sense, because if we consider hybridity in the context of *A Passage to India*, characters like Dr. Aziz and Cyril Fielding tries to establish hybrid relationships. But eventually it backfires and Aziz’s gesture of friendship becomes a topic of laughter among Ronny Heaslop and

other English characters. Thus, the attempt for establishing hybridity reinforces the colonial process.

The novel *The Shadow Lines* explores the themes of cultural hybridity and postcolonial identity in a larger context. Many scholars analyzed these themes in their papers. In the paper “Cultural Hybridity and Postcolonial Identity in the Diaspora: A Study of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*”, Chandrakant Suryawanshi argues that the characters go through different cultures, facing obstacles while moving through nations. *The Shadow Lines* highlights the key components of cultural hybridity, memory and narrative are highlighted as key forces in creating and maintaining postcolonial identities among immigrant peoples, making the characters elaborate on their history and preserve cultural heritage. The partition of India in 1947 is a crucial backdrop for the narrative and is responsible for creating transgenerational trauma on the protagonists.

A Passage to India by E.M Forster explores the issues that arrive in a hybrid context: identity formation, race relations etc. In the paper “The Problematic Issues of Identity Formation, Race Relations and Complexities of Colonial Discourse in Hybrid Contexts: A Comparative Study of the Complex Relationship between the Colonizer and the Colonized in a Novel *A Passage to India* by E.M Forster”, Farhana Haque analyzes the novel through a post-colonial lens, exploring the issues that arise from British rule in India. She argues that the system of colonization forces the newly arrived Britishers to adopt an aggressive, hostile colonial identity in order to maintain their privileged status. The relation between colonizer and colonized is constantly hampered by the innate racial hierarchy and wide cultural difference present in the occupied nation. The paper further examines how India is often portrayed as a hostile and hazardous land that prevents the British from ever feeling truly at home. From this problem, the issues of identity formation occur.

This creates a psychological state of permanent exile and alienation, which forces the Britishers to form an identity that makes the racial barrier more evident among the colonizer and the colonized.

Dr. Ranjana Kumari in her paper “Postcolonial Themes and Cultural Hybridity in South Asian” analyzes the lasting impact of British colonialism on South Asian literature, especially the complex issues of identity, displacement, and resistance - that arose after the independence in 1947. It focuses on cultural hybridity, which involves mixing of indigenous communities with colonial influences resulting in a state of “divided consciousness”, reflecting the fragmented postcolonial life. Literature can be used as a medium for resistance, addressing socio-political critique. The impacts of imperialism, trauma of partition finds a place to express itself through the postcolonial literatures. She also emphasizes on nonlinear storytelling which helps to reclaim agency for the marginalized communities to narrate history in their own ways. Overall, the paper enlightens with a theoretical overview of postcolonialism’s fundamental concepts and their reflection in the South Asian literatures.

2.2 Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism refers to the period after British colonial rule in former colonized countries but it also refers to the literary works written during and after colonial dominance. One of the notable works of postcolonial literature is Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*. It narrates the story of a family which goes through several trauma, displacement, and identity crisis in post-colonial India. Several critics have also shared their thoughts on the themes and approaches in postcolonial literature.

Hunt Hawkins discusses on E. M. Forster's critique of imperialism in the novel *A Passage to India* in his paper "Forster's Critique of Imperialism in *A Passage to India*". He argues that the central anti colonial theme of the novel is the British Raj prevents personal relationships between an Englishman and an Indian, a view that was unique for that time. The inequality of power within the imperial structure and its corrupting influence on English officials like Ronny Heaslop and it even restrains friendly characters like Fielding and Aziz. Other incidents of the time like economic exploitation of India, non-political barriers complicated the possibility of human connection - these incidents are ignored in the novel. Forster intended the novel as a clear critique of the Raj, making people question the nature of friendship between Indians and Britishers.

The novel *The Shadow Lines* is a novel written in the postcolonial era, and to analyze it, it should be seen like that. Hamid Reza and Naghmeh Kasikhan analyze the novel through a postcolonial approach in their paper "Postcolonial Approach to Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*". The authors explore how the novel narrates the aftermath of British colonialism on the societies and cultures of Calcutta and Dhaka. The text identifies several postcolonial elements in the text, such as hybridity, diaspora, identity, memory, and also the themes of nationalism and detachment. Ghosh uses these literary concepts to show the political and psychological struggles of South Asian people post-independence.

Another paper "An Exploration of Postcolonialism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*" also focuses on *The Shadow Lines* through a postcolonial lens, focusing on its treatment of themes like identity, memory, and history. Focusing on the protagonist Tridib and the concept of "The Shadow Lines"- it represents the invisible but enduring psychological and social divisions created by colonialism, the partition of India, and forced displacement. The novel portrays identity as a

fluid; hybrid construct constantly shaped by historical and cultural forces and shows the readers colonialism's lasting impact on contemporary society and global contexts.

The research paper "Postcolonial Approach and Multiculturalism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*" explores the intertwined relationship among Postcolonial Approach and Multiculturalism in *The Shadow Lines*. Here, Ambreen Altaf argues that colonization, decolonization, and globalization have been able to leave a significant effect on migration which has impacted the global relationships. It also led to the rise of concepts like cultural hybridity and multiculturalism. In the novel, Ghosh explores the possibility of creating a multicultural society where various cultures co-exist peacefully through characters who form new identities despite displacement and cultural clashes.

Rajkumar Bera in his paper "Decolonization of Mind in Amitav Ghosh's Writing: A Postcolonial Study of *The Shadow Lines*" explores how Amitav Ghosh's novel functions as a postcolonial critique of national borders and the Eurocentric mindsets imposed by it. Through examination of characters like Tha'mma, Tridib, and the narrator- it shows the tension between nationalism and an imagination that seeks to transcend physical boundaries. Borders are often considered as severe realities; they are like "Shadow Lines" that fail to contain human memory or cultural identity. Decolonization requires a mental shift for the colonized people to reject the prejudices left behind by imperial rule. This argument of Bera resonates with Altaf's argument that the characters in *The Shadow Lines* tries to create a multicultural space to forget about the prejudices of colonial rule. The space enables the characters to form new identities and be able to free from fixed boundaries imposed by colonial rule.

2.3 Identity and Memory

Both identity and memory are important elements of colonial and postcolonial literature. In colonial literature, the identity of the colonizers is shown as superiors, often considering the indigenous people as inferiors who need to be civilized. Hence the true identity of indigenous people is repressed, making them victims of situations. Postcolonial literature features the identity of indigenous people as fragmented, displaced even in their own lands. This is a direct result of the traumatic memories of the colonial period. The characters are still processing the memories and it shapes their course of action in the books. Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* shows these elements effectively through the narration and through the characters. Several scholars have examined these elements in the novel through their scholarly works.

Theo D'Haen explores the intertwined relationship between cultural memory studies and postcolonial studies in the article "Cultural Memory and the Postcolonial". In the beginning of the twentieth century, the rise of both fields established new ways of literary and historical research, scholars like Pierre Nora, Edward Said, and the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* explore the studies in their writings. Postcolonial writings function as "counter-memories", challenging the Eurocentric narratives of history and literature by the former colonizers. Written forms such as memoirs, autobiographies, novels are the most notable mediums of literature which narrates the themes of postcolonial memory and postcolonialism. Postcolonial writers often employ counter-forms, privileging oral traditions or using mixed language, to create an "ex-centric" viewpoint, which refers to a perspective situated outside the colonial center of power. It helps to enforce identity formation for those marginalized by Eurocentric colonization.

Md Tabish Nawaz discusses memories as a narrative mode in *The Shadow Lines* in his paper “The Study of Memories as a Narrative Mode in Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Shadow Lines*”. He argues that memories are important in identity formation, and Ghosh uses them as primary narrative technique to describe the characters’ experiences. In the book, the narrator’s remembrance of events is fragmented and unsure, mostly narrating other characters’ stories (like Tridib’s) to construct a personal, complex map of the past. Concepts of illusion, memory, diaspora are seen as a prison for characters like Tha’mma and the narrator, depicting how their differed relationships with their past residence and the land shape the novel’s narration.

Ranju Padikkapparambil also explores central themes of *The Shadow Lines* - identity and transnational separation in post-colonial India in the paper “Exploring the Impact of National Borders and Identity Trauma in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*”. Ghosh broadly critiques nationalism and unravels the insignificance of political borders, especially those created during the partition of India and Pakistan. Unrestricted boundaries that strike excessive trauma in individuals who struggle with migration, diaspora, and a sense of belonging. The character of Tha’mma, whose protective national views are gradually challenged by the complexity of human connections across borders. This paper mainly explores the impact of the partition of 1947 on characters like Tha’mma, though now living in Calcutta, she still feels the belonging to her birthplace, Dhaka. This analysis is crucial to analyze *The Shadow Lines* because it focuses on important characters like Tha’mma who is a victim of the unrestricted boundaries created by the partition, her experience sheds light on the actual scenery and violence of partition.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, postcolonial approach in these novels, memory as a narrative technique, identity crisis - most studies focus on the fundamental concept of hybridity, how it is reflected in both of these novels. Also, memory and identity crisis as a narrative device has been separately explored by scholars in the context of these novels. A key study remains: can Ghosh's non-linear, hybridized narrative be considered as a postcolonial response to the political and cultural barriers that Forster identified responsible for separating the East and the West.

Forster's critique of colonial discourse centers on the impossibility of friendship under the former colonial system in India, enhanced by the typical scorned outlook of the British towards South Asian people. Ghosh's novel extensively uses memory, non-linear narrative, and hybridity to transcend the fixed boundaries of time, place, and culture, arguing that borders are just illusions. This thesis focuses on Ghosh's hybridized narrative structure and characters in *The Shadow Lines* as a postcolonial response to the colonial barriers identified by Forster – that this formal hybridity does not just reflect on the superiority of colonial boundaries, it actively produces a counter narrative that shows the impact of those boundaries in a postcolonial society.

Chapter Three: *A Passage to India*

E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) is one of the strong and well-known critiques of British colonialism in colonial-era literature, exceptional for its accurate portrayal of how the colonial system makes real human connection impossible among people of different race and culture. The novel is set in the fictional city of Chandrapore in India during the 1920s, it exposes the cultural, social, political, psychological barriers in the colonial era that prevent the emergence of hybrid "third space" that Homi K. Bhabha theorizes. Bhabha's postcolonial theory says that hybridity is an inevitable product of colonialism, but Forster's novel depicts that under the rigid categories of the British Raj, hybridity remains obstructed, potential rather than actual situation, a possibility hindered by the fixed categories of the colonial power.

The novel's fundamental question is posed in its opening pages when Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali debates on "whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman" (Forster 6). This seemingly friendly huddle about relationships becomes the key question that Forster imposes; and Forster's answer is also as devastating: "No, not yet...No, not there" (350). Scholar Hunt Hawkins also argues that the core argument of the novel is that "it prevents personal relationships" (Hawkins 54). The novel not just shows the impossibility of friendship under colonial rule, it goes beyond that and vividly demonstrates how the colonial system operated to destroy genuine human connection between individuals. The colonial system operated showing the English people superior than indigenous people that they are well-educated, well-cultured, and the local Indians need to learn manners and education from them. Whenever an Indian tries to be friends with them, the British did not take that as a positive gesture. This is what happens with one of the main characters of the novel- Dr. Aziz, a Muslim Indian physician. All of his good gestures

and attempts to be close with British officials are dismantled throughout the novel. The novel also elaborates on how this colonial system also corrupt British individuals like Cyril Fielding and Ronny Heaslop- who tries to maintain good gesture with Indians but later offers prejudiced attitude towards them as like other British individuals.

3.1 Structural Obstacles of Colonial Rule

Forster delicately shows how the colonial structure confines hybrid third space from upholding. Two key characters of the novel - Dr. Aziz, a Muslim Indian physician; and Cyril Fielding, an English schoolmaster - who actually tries to establish friendship in spite of colonial categories among two nations. However, their efforts are mitigated due to the political reality of colonial times. Farhana Haque argues that the novel shows how colonial power works through the creation of differences and barriers among colonizers and colonized, hampering cultural mixing that might be troublesome for the colonial authority (Haque 3).

The character transition of Ronny Heaslop is an example of how corruptive the colonial system is even to those who come with good intentions. Ronny tries to be friends with the Indians when he first arrives in India as a City Magistrate “I came out I asked one of the Pleaders to have a smoke with me” (Forster 25) - here, the pleader was Mahmoud Ali. However, this attempt backfires when Ali’s clients thought that he has a special position with the Magistrate. Then Ronny consoles himself by saying, “I prefer my smoke at the club amongst my own sort, I’m afraid” (25). The corruption inherent in Ronny is not a problem of his own morality but a problem of structure. According to Hawkins, “officialism worked to corrupt the English, whether they began as decent fellows or not” (Hawkins 56). The system demands segregation in order to ensure the continuation

of colonial power, avoiding the development of hybrid relations which may shatter the evident distinctions between the ruler and the ruled.

The structural barriers are very evident in *A Passage to India* as Forster argues “Every human act in the East is tainted with officialism” (Forster 161). Which means every interaction among people is judged by their political and social status. The colonial administrative system functions as a mechanism that ultimately reinforces colonial hierarchies through interactions between Britishers and Indians rather than undermine it. When Mrs. Moore casually tells Ronny about Dr. Aziz’s criticism of the Callendars, Ronny abruptly tells that he will reach these words to Major Callendar, “If the Major heard I was disliked by any native subordinate of mine, I should expect him to pass it on to me” (28). This comment of Ronny reveals how the colonial system works, every interaction of the Indians are surveillanced by the colonizers, friendship becomes impossible in this scenario.

3.2 The Marabar Caves: Beyond Political Obstacles

Though Forster is thoroughly portraying the political obstacles to friendship, the novel shows that there are even deeper obstacles. The Marabar Caves part introduces the fundamental misrecognition the Western people have of the Eastern territory. The caves create “echo” that minimizes all human speech to the same “boum” sound that hints Mrs. Moore of the place as an unknown potentially harmful place. This is a metaphysical crisis that surpasses all the political barriers, suggesting that maybe there is some obstacle to human belonging that goes past colonial institutions altogether.

The echo's effect on Mrs. Moore was devastating, and it even destroyed her will to stay friends with Indians. She "didn't want to communicate with anyone" (125), suddenly lost all interest in seeing the caves. She was no longer interested even in Aziz, when she is questioned whether Aziz is innocent, she answers in a grumpy tone: "When shall I be free from your fuss? Was he in the cave and were you in the cave...am I good and is he bad and are we saved? ... and ending everything the echo" (177). This indicates that after being stable from the devastating situation of the cave, Mrs. Moore realizes that Ronny and others are trying to gather evidence against Dr. Aziz. The implication of this response is that besides political obstacles of colonialism; there are profound philosophical or existential obstacles that produce questions of existentiality. The novel therefore produces two levels of obstacles, the political obstacle of the Raj and a cosmic impossibility indicated by the echo produced by the walls of the caves. The Marabar caves scene also depicts to some of the fundamental power dynamics of colonization, particularly with truth or who controls the outcome of an incident like this. Due to what happened inside the cave, Aziz is already seen as suspect, Mrs. Moore's silence reinforces that accusation. The "echo" is seen as a challenge to the colonial authority, which depicts the differences that the British officials are not appropriate to rule here as they fear a natural incident like "echo". The power dynamics here works that the British accuses Aziz as he is an Indian and present on the scene, without any concrete evidence of his crime. In this scene, the British are trying to spread their supremacy that whatever they do is right, and as the local territory is terrorizing an English individual, indigenous people should be responsible for that.

3.3 Identity as Imposed Classifications Under Colonialism

The functioning of colonial power and how it operates by imposing fixed, necessary identities is one of the fundamental aspects of the novel. Umar and Lawan argue that the colonial rule requires definite categories between colonizer and colonized. The characters of the novel by Forster are compulsively classified as either “English” or “Indian”, either “Anglo-Indian” or “native”, with a few positions between and outside these classes (Umar and Lawan 3).

The trial scene solidifies these categorical divisions. When Aziz is accused by Adela of assault in the Marabar Caves, the colonial community instantly views the incident through strict racial lines. Mrs. Turton says “they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an Englishwoman’s in sight” (Forster 186) - this indicates the humiliated category which the English people think of the Indians fit in. The Anglo-Indians form ranks to the absolute, and it is basically the colonial community’s technique to maintain boundaries among English and the Indians. Any cultural mixing or hybrid identity collapses when it is put on pressure, and the exaggerated quality of colonial civilization is exposed as a system that requires the violent imposition of racial hierarchy.

Moreover, these predetermined categories are internalized by Aziz himself. Throughout the novel, Aziz tries to be friends with the British but certain incidents completely change his perception of the colonial ruled regime. It is evident in his words by the end of the novel: “we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea” (279). It indicates Aziz’s perception towards the British; it has completely changed in the course of time, now he does not want to be friends with any of them. Colonial conditions give rise not to hybridity, but rather its antithesis: a claim of pure, unmixed identity as the only form of protest.

3.4 Hybridity as Confined Potential

Reading *A Passage to India* through the lens of Homi K. Bhabha's theory of hybridity, it reveals what we can term as "blocked hybridity"- the everlasting frustration of the third space under colonial rule. In *A Passage to India*, Forster presents characters who should be in hybrid positions but ultimately could not justify that hybridity. The character of Dr. Aziz is Western educated, speaks English, wears European clothing and works in the British medical system but all these signs of cultural mixing do not give rise to the ambivalence and negotiation that Bhabha talks about. Rather, they turn into objects of anxiety and embarrassment.

The famous collar-stud incident from *A Passage to India* perfectly shows this blocked hybridity. When Fielding breaks his collar stud just before his tea party, Aziz instantly gives him his own, assuming it to be a spare. Afterwards, Ronny looks up and sees Aziz with his collar up and says: "Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tiepin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race" (70). The irony here is frustrating: what should be a gesture of friendship is transformed, in the biased perception of Ronny, into a sign of racial inferiority. The situation in which Aziz tries to maintain a hybrid position - maintaining Indian identity while engaging with English traditions is misinterpreted as failure and incompetence. According to Shah: "Hybridity thus stands in opposition to the myth of purity of racial and cultural authenticity, of fixed and essentialist identity" (Shah 3). So, the hybrid position that Aziz tries to maintain here is demolished by Ronny's comment; that Indians are not organized in their manners and attitudes, indicating that both English and Indian cultures should not mix, they should remain distinct. Ronny's comment here indicates how colonial power operates.

Even Cyril Fielding, who got as far as to be in a state of true hybrid consciousness, is unable to maintain the position. Throughout most of the novel, Fielding is in an exceptional position: he is employed in the field of education instead of administration, no family ties, establishes friendship with Aziz and keeps it as a rebellion against the Anglo-Indian society. However, Fielding's exceptional position proves to be brief later on in the novel. When he gets married to Stella Moore and becomes a school inspector, with family ties, and joining the government service, he is "Thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations" (Forster 277). Fielding starts to justify the imperialist arguments of Ronny, saying that the British Empire "really can't be abolished because it's rude" (277). The colonial system absorbs even the most sympathetic members.

3.5 The Cosmic Impossibility: "No, not yet...No, not there"

The novel's ending provides its most deep statement about the impossibility of hybridity in the conditions of the colonial period. Aziz goes on to say that once India has become independent, he and Fielding shall be friends. Fielding responds: "Why can't we be friends now? It's what I want. It's what you want" (280). This question indicates the uncertainty of relation among two people of different races under the colonial condition. Forster then provides one of the most popular passages in the twentieth-century literature:

"The earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there" (280).

This is an intentionally ambiguous ending. In one sense, it can be argued that it indicates that in time, when India gains its freedom, friendship would become a possibility- “not yet” meaning that it is a possibility in future, once the colonial rule has ended. The phrase “not there” implies a spatial instead of a temporal impossibility that maybe, there is no place that such friendship can exist. The cosmic extent of the rejection - earth, temples, sky, everything colluding against the connection between human beings indicate barriers that are beyond political.

Such ambiguity is important to understand Forster’s novel as a colonial era text that identifies the problems it is unable to resolve. *A Passage to India* shows the impossibility of hybridity under the colonial conditions with severe accuracy, revealing how the colonial institutions do not allow the third space to arise, impose strict categorical identities, and corrupt even the people who have good intentions. But the novel also recommends that perhaps there is not enough to be done to demolish these political obstacles, that there could be some more fundamental philosophical or existential rift. This is precisely this dual impossibility - political and cosmic, that Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines*, must address. Where Forster only documents the barriers and impossibility, Ghosh has to find the narrative forms enough to articulate a postcolonial consciousness which is capable of negotiating such obstacles and shows them as constructed, although subject to the indisputable power and their ability to divide and ruin.

Chapter Four: *The Shadow Lines*

While E. M. Forster's work on the impossibility of hybridity under colonial rule is documented in *A Passage to India* (1924), Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) responds by constructing a narrative structure that depicts the hybridity that colonialism had prohibited. Published forty years after Indian independence and sixty years after Forster's novel, it shows the colonial trauma of rigid boundaries, enforced categorizations, and separations that are violent - which are mostly recognized during the 1947 Partition. However, Forster could only document the obstacles and the impossibilities, where Ghosh employs inventive narrative techniques in order to construct what Homi K. Bhabha theorizes as the hybrid "third space". The novel shows that the boundaries colonialism demanded are on the one hand, just shadow lines - the dismantling of geographical boundaries, the creation of hybrid identities, and the acts of constructing hybrid identities by radical non-linearity, the privileging of memory over time, the collapse of geographical boundaries, all generate the very real violence.

4.1 Memory as the Central Narrative Form

The most noticeable aspect which *The Shadow Lines* offers is its rejection of linear narrative form, instead offering a narrative form built through memory and association. The novel shifts seamlessly through time over decades, from the 1930s to the 1980s, but it does not present any clear indication of change of time in the narrative. It is confusing for the readers to hold on to the story but also important technique to tell a story that spread over nations and decades of time. In this method, memory itself becomes the structuring principle of the text, and subjective

reconstruction is dominant over objective chronology. The unnamed narrator does not recount the events of the story in chronological order but rather in the order he remembers and constructs them, as Frantz Fanon argues “Imperialism leaves behind germs of rot which we must clinically detect and remove from our land and from our mind as well” (Bera 2).

This type of hybridity opposes the momentary categories the colonial world presented by Forster enforced. Where the colonizers demanded strict boundaries between the culture and modernity, between the colonized and the colonizer, between past and present, Ghosh presents a narrative where every moment of time exists simultaneously. The narrator depicts that Tridib told him that “a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one’s imagination” (Ghosh 36). This is also applicable to time: by memory and imagining, the narrator is able to occupy several spatial/temporal places at one time, forming what can be called as temporal hybridity that does not follow the demands of the colonial project of progressive historical time.

The narrator’s connection to the stories of Tridib, is the exact depiction of this time breakdown. Tridib’s childhood experience in the 1940s London; in the wartime, becomes as graphic to the narrator in the 1960s that this is his own experience. When the narrator goes to London, he sees the place as Tridib described it, “I had seen it before, thousands of times, in Tridib’s stories” (234). The past is not closed but it is accessible, variable, and is integral to the present identity. Padikkapparambil argues that the shift in memories of the narrator allows Ghosh to show how the colonial trauma endures into the postcolonial present, but not as something historical yet as a memory that continues to shape them (Padikkapparambil 52) .

4.2 Regional Hybridity: Transcending Geographical Boundaries

Whereas the geographical scope of Forster's novel is limited, almost entirely taking place in Chandrapore, with some part in the Marabar Caves, Ghosh's narrative moves across continents, establishing a postcolonial technique and multiculturalism where no particular place is preferred. The setting of the novel is Calcutta, Dhaka, and London, with no restrictions on the movement of the characters between these worlds. This geographical flexibility plays out at the thematic level on which the novel makes its argument: that national boundaries are artificial impositions, "shadow lines", which just exist on maps, not in reality.

The narrator's outlook on borders reflects this argument of the novel. Looking at an atlas, he sees that there were no gaps or separation or distinction between India and East Pakistan on the actual land, just the same old peaks and rivers and forests. "It seemed to me, then, that within this circle there were only states and citizens; there were no people at all" (345) - this reflection of the narrator after seeing the atlas shows that modern political borders categorize human beings as "citizens", belonging to a particular nation. This creates the illusion of borders, differentiating people from others, growing discrimination among humans; the "shadow lines", which is the main conflict of this novel. This inquiry crucially raises the core of the violence of the Partition, the effort to institute categorical division among communities that were culturally, linguistically, together. Ghosh's narrative technique shows us that the issue of hybridity-the combination of cultures, languages, and identities- is not just a thematic issue, but is a technique of resisting the categories that colonialism has exerted. The 1964 communal riots in Dhaka, which was part of a broad Indo-Pakistani communal violence, ultimately resulted in Tridib's death, shows the fatal consequences of these unrestricted divisions. The riots of 1964 started after a Muslim relic was stolen, it caused communal rioting in East Pakistan and India. This incident indicates that religious

and national categories construct what the novel demonstrates as being fluid and hybrid - can be used to generate very tangible violence. The narrator comes to know that Tridib was killed attempting to rescue an old Muslim rickshaw puller from a Hindu mob, and the death just came upon them with no notice. According to Ms. Anshu, “*The Shadow Lines* delves into the complexities of national identity and the artificiality of borders, highlighting the human cost of political divisions and the shared experiences that transcend geographical boundaries” (Anshu 7). Here, the human cost is what happened with the narrator’s family in 1964, especially with Tridib. The unrestricted borders may be imaginary but it has material consequences like displacement, violence, death.

4.3 Hybrid Identities in *The Shadow Lines*

In contrast to the characters in *A Passage to India*, who are confined to certain fixed categories- English or Indian, colonizer or colonized- characters in *The Shadow Lines* are dynamic, in-between that Bhabha links with hybridity. The narrator himself is a person holding several identities: he is Bengali, whose identity is rooted in Calcutta but very familiar about London. The identity is not determined by predefined categorical membership but by the interactions, memories, and movement across nations.

Ila is possibly the most hybrid character of the novel. Being a resident of Calcutta, London and other cities, she is a native of no particular place, residing in what could be termed as the “in-between” space by Bhabha. The narrator explains, “For Ila the current was the real: it was as though she lived in a present which was like an airlock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel floodgates” (Ghosh 49). This explains what type of character Ila is; she

can easily adapt with the place she is living on. However, in London, she is always labeled as “exotic” and never truly becomes part of the English culture. Ila represents not only the opportunity but also the fear presented by the experience of being in diaspora, inhabiting an endlessly hybridized space which could not be embraced by colonial thought.

But this hybridity is not glorified by Ghosh. Ila is cosmopolitan at the expense of being rootless; she rejects the attachment of the narrator to Calcutta, and says, “I probably did you no end of good; at least you learnt that those cities you saw on maps were real places, not like those fairylands Tridib made up for you” (40). It is clear to the narrator that this statement is wrong, and that places do have meanings, history and attachments that could not be forgotten by just moving them. The novel, without being entirely liberating and without being entirely alienating, presents the concept of hybridity as something that both the characters must negotiate in their own unique ways.

The most significant character of the novel, Tridib, serves a different form of hybridity although he died before the narration of this story. His education in England and the knowledge of European culture does not make him a foreign person; instead, he employs his cross-cultural knowledge to invent new ways of imagination and connectivity. The fact that he could transform London lively to the narrator- shows how hybrid consciousness can be used to form instead of being occupied by the third space that Bhabha writes about. Kasikhan argues, “The kind of hybridity employed in this story is not merely confined to characters’ identity, but includes various aspects of their approaches to life” (Kasikhan 6). This quote perfectly mirrors Tridib’s vision of life, like the way he describes his experiences to the narrator.

4.4 Fragmented Narrative as Main Form of Hybridity

The fragmented structure of the novel itself performs hybridity at the formation level. The story does not unfold in adjacent chapters or clear sections but in a sequence of embedded memories, narratives inside other narratives and time jumping from present to past which keep coming back to themselves. This discontinuity resembles the fragmented nature of postcolonial vision, which is pieced together from fragments of colonial history, autobiographical memory and transnational experience. This approach is not only a matter of innovation in style, but a political interference and rejection of the linear narrative, form that colonial historiography enforced.

The novel approaches the revelation of the death of Tridib in a unique way. Instead of building the story with suspense leading to the climax, the text moves around it, approaching it through different angles, giving us pieces of information that are the partial memories of various characters. The narrator learns about Tridib's death and then gradually binds together the events that happened through conversations with his grandmother, May and other characters. This disconnected revelation depicts the way traumatic memory works- not the entire memory as a continuous narrative, but as disjointed fragments that should be carefully put together. According to Raj, "Postcolonial literature as hybrid opens up countless intense and unwrapping possibilities taking beyond the claims of canonical universalisms" (Raj 3). This intensifies that the fragmented nature of postcolonial literature like *The Shadow Lines* actually creates the possibility of knowing colonial history more accurately and descriptively.

The narrator's own narrative style depicts the fragmented nature of postcolonial literature. He often breaks his narration to give some background information, pursuing irrelevant memories,

or to ponder on the process of remembering. At one time he reflects: “Nobody knows, nobody can ever know, not even in memory, because there are moments in time that are not knowable” (Ghosh 105). This demonstrates that one cannot remember all the crucial incidents of life. This surplus of memory creates a hybrid narrative that cannot be enclosed in traditional forms. The novel becomes a space where there are multiple timelines, places, or perspectives, creating a “third space” which is relevant to Bhabha’s theory of hybridity.

4.5 Existence of Violence: The Limitation of Hybridity

Ghosh does not imply that hybrid narrative can disperse the boundaries colonialism established or erase the violence it generates. The death of Tridib is a stark reminder of the fact that imagined boundaries have real implications. The fact that the narrator is aware that borders are artificial, that they exist only in maps and minds, does not stop the violence that they bring about. Thousands of people were killed in the 1964 riots; many families torn apart; several communities got destroyed.

The novel’s formal engagement of the impact of arbitrary boundaries and the violence it creates most profoundly mirrors the problems Forster identified in *A Passage to India*. Forster showed that friendship among colonizers and colonized people are impossible, Ghosh demonstrates the borders colonialism created are still dividing people and are a reason for violence. However, the novel continues to assert that these boundaries are not natural or predetermined. The very structure of the hybrid narrative form is a claim in favor of other possibilities, how to live in the world that is not based on categorical thinking despite its power.

Ultimately, Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* responds to the colonial impossibility Forster depicted through narrative forms appropriate to articulate postcolonial hybridity. Through a non-linear narrative, fragmented form, creation of hybrid identities, mixing of language, the novel depicts what colonialism prevented; the hybrid third space where identity, relationships can be discussed rather than enforced. The novel argues that the borders colonialism created are imaginary lines, shadow lines- that do not have natural existence although produce real violence. Despite offering unrealistic optimism, Ghosh offers a narrative form against that violence. The non-linear narrative form enforces mixing of culture and people, rejects categorical thinking, and creates a space where multiple identities coexist. Therefore, the novel offers what Forster was only able to point: a postcolonial imagination that is able to break through the limits colonialism imposed, and is still able to see the continuing presence of the impact of that.

Chapter Five: From Colonial Impossibility to Postcolonial Possibility

The interrelationship between E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is of succession and change. Ghosh inherits the issue of the colonial barriers from Forster - the strict categorizations, divisions, and imposed separations that made hybridity impossible under the Raj. But where Forster ends his novel with cosmic impossibility- "No, not yet... No, not there" (Forster 280), Ghosh transforms this impossibility into formal innovation, developing through hybridized narrative structure the "third space" that colonialism denied. This chapter explores how the barriers that Forster identified is reflected in Ghosh's non-linear narrative, showing that *The Shadow Lines* is a postcolonial response to the critique of the colonial era.

5.1 Temporal Severity Against Consistible Fluency

A Passage to India is set within a rigid chronological scope of its setting. The story follows a linear pattern with clearly defined parts- "Mosque", "Caves", "Temple"- that reflect the logic of the time of colonial modernity: progressive, linear, moving relentlessly forward. This structure reinforces the tragic inevitability of events in the novel that friendship cannot exist under colonial conditions. The novel centers on unfolding events in the chronological order without any central figures in the story beyond those events themselves. The past remains in the past, the present in the present, every moment closed off to other moments. According to Hawkins, "Ronny was at first friendly towards the Indians, but he soon found that his position prevented such friendship" (Hawkins 56). This is indicating how over time, even the best-intentioned individuals, such as

Ronny Heaslop, become corrupted in the colonial system. Here, time becomes a tool of colonial corruption, which increasingly turns the sympathetic into the prejudiced.

Ghosh responds that this transient severity is radical non-linearity. *The Shadow Lines* rejects the chronological sequence and the story flows freely over the decades through connected memories but not in any sequential time. “I lay on my back, staring up at the ceiling, and as the hours passed, I saw Ila again and again as she was when she stepped out of that car at Gole Park, eighteen years ago; on that morning when she wrenched me into adulthood by demonstrating for the first time” (Ghosh 170). This shows that the narrator is going back in time, and again coming back to the present to remember about a certain character. Where Forster’s characters are stuck in their moment in history unable to leave the progressive corruption of that time, Ghosh’s characters inhabit two or more time periods at the same time. Tridib makes 1940s London as present and real as the 1960s Calcutta which the narrator is living in at the time. This hybridity in time is a direct response to the strict time-bound categories Forster inscribed, that postcolonial consciousness does not necessarily be seen as confined within the typical linear progression.

5.2 Permanent Terrestrial Boundaries Against Variable Spaces

The terrestrial boundaries described by Forster enforces separation. There are distinct physical and social divisions between the English living in the Civil Station, and the Indians who live in the native section of Chandrapore. When Aziz invites Adela and Mrs. Moore to the Marabar Caves, this boundary breaching becomes the core catastrophe of the novel. This is where everything starts to fall apart among the Indians and the English. But the caves are a space outside of colonial control, and it is precisely this uncontrolled place where the crisis is produced. The

novel implies that in colonial India there is no “neutral territory” where the English and Indian meet on equal terms, all space here is categorized, claimed and divided. According to Haque, “Aziz became aware about his friendship with Fielding as it has to retain the colonial hierarchy between the colonizer and the colonized” (Haque 11). This indicates that eventually Aziz realizes that there will always be a barrier between an English and an Indian no matter how close they are.

Ghosh documents a world in which this terrestrial division has become a violent reality which can be observed through the Partition. The Partition of 1947 is the culmination of colonial categorical thinking- which is, the ultimate separation of the spaces claimed by Hindu and Muslim people, Indian and Pakistani people. While Forster shows the terrestrial division as political realities, Ghosh’s story-telling technique defies it. It does not only privilege Calcutta as the central setting, the novel shifts from place to place, suggesting an unconventional notion of “postcolonial multiculturalism” that resists any terrestrial classification. The narrator being in London through Tridib’s memories shows the variability of geographical space, and that imagination and memory are penetrable, even in the face of the political division of space.

5.3 Blocked Hybridity Against Actual Hybridity

The most crucial distinction between the novels is the way they depict hybridity. Hybridity is presented only as a potential in Forster’s text. Dr. Aziz’s proficiency in English, his Western education, his European attire- all are indications of cultural mixing, which eventually brings humiliation upon him. The collar-stud incident is an example of this: a gentle gesture of friendship becomes evidence of ethnic inferiority due to Ronny’s biased commentary. Aziz fails to inhabit the hybrid “third space”, because the colonial power is not able to accept, insisting on categorical

identities. Even Fielding, the most empathetic character of the novel, fails to hold up with a hybrid position. After his marriage and in the service of the government, he is described as “He had thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a countrywoman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations” (Forster 277). It explains that the colonial prejudice even absorbs those who are against it; hybridity is not possible as the colonial system requires categorical separation.

On the other hand, Ghosh’s characters embody actual hybridity. The character of Ila shifts between Calcutta and London, fully belonging to neither of the places but comfortably exists in both. The narrator exists concurrently in different places both as Bengali and Anglophone, shifting through past and present timelines. Most significantly, Tridib’s character depicts the potential for the “third space” to be active. His “stories” enables the narrator to visualize worlds that he has never actually been to: “Tridib had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them with; she, who had been travelling around the world since she was a child, could never understand what those hours in Tridib’s room had meant to me, a boy who had never been more than a few hundred miles from Calcutta” (Ghosh 34). Through Tridib’s stories, the narrator is able to imagine himself as part of another culture, containing a hybrid identity in himself. Where Forster’s colonial world could not include this creative hybridity, it becomes possible in Ghosh’s postcolonial narrative.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is a postcolonial reaction to the colonial boundaries E. M. Forster documented in *A Passage to India*. Ghosh shows how the problem of colonial categorical thinking- the denial of the space for hybridity in British Colonial India is transformed into a creative formal innovation, a space made through hybridized narrative structure, the "third space" that colonialism prohibited. The analysis of *A Passage to India* demonstrated how colonial power operated by hindering hybridity at all levels. Forster's text shows that the emergence of hybrid "third space" was hindered by the British Raj and they also enforced categorical separation among colonizers and colonized. Other characters in the novel, such as Dr. Aziz and Fielding, try to break the chain of these barriers- but eventually their effort becomes subverted by the colonial system.

The analysis of *The Shadow Lines* illustrates how Ghosh's narration directly refers to the colonial impossibilities of *A Passage to India*. The novel uses non-linear narrative to demonstrate the collapse of transient boundaries and denying the colonial definition of progress in a linear sequence. It challenges the territorial divisions through the characters moving and associating with each other across nations. Hybrid characters such as Ila and Tridib, shows that postcolonial subjects can inhabit the "third space" that colonialism denied, mixing across several linguistic, geographical, cultural areas. Most importantly, the novel's fragmented memory-based structure performs a form of hybridity itself, a narrative form that defies colonial categorical thinking.

The significant distinction in Forster and Ghosh's writing is that where Forster can only write about blocked hybridity in typical linear narrative, Ghosh developed an alternative formal method suitable to the expression of the postcolonial consciousness. But Ghosh does not show that the violence of colonial legacies is taken away with the innovative formal narrative. The imaginary borders are still causing casualties, as is shown by the death of Tridib in the 1964 Dhaka riots. Communal violence is so perpetually present in India decades after independence because of the impact of colonial categorical thinking. Tha'mma's character is a tragic reflection of this; accepting the reason behind partition though being a victim of it.

The importance of this study transcends these two novels, depicting postcolonial literature can transform colonial problems into formal possibilities. Ghosh's creative narration and innovations show that the postcolonial writers are not only critiques of colonial literature but also create innovative techniques through which new hybrid consciousness can be created. *The Shadow Lines* is a formally shaped reflection on *A Passage to India*, that a literary structure can itself create spaces where the colonial categorical divisions become penetrable to memory, imagination, thought of the postcolonial hybrid characters. Forster depicts the cosmic impossibility, Ghosh shows that the frontier is still there, the violence is still there, but narrative forms can emerge imagining and thinking beyond colonial categories.

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