Chapter- IV  
Magic Realism In Amitav Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason and The Shadow Lines

### Amitav Ghosh

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<th>Born</th>
<th>11 July 1956 <strong>Kolkata</strong>, West Bengal, India</th>
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Balaram, a school teacher, acts as Amitav’s Mouthpiece he says–

“It would be wrong; it would be immoral, children go to school for their first glimpse into the life of the mind. Not for jobs. If I thought that my teaching is nothing but a means of finding jobs; I’d stop teaching tomorrow.”

(The Circle of Reason, P.52)
The novel *The Circle of Reason* has three stories woven around three characters. First section, ‘Satwa’ (Reason) revolves around Balram, the second section ‘Rajas’ (Passion) revolves around Zindi and the third section ‘Tamas’ (Death) centers around Mrs. Verma.
The fourth chapter examines how Amitav Ghosh applied Magic Realism in his novels *The Circle of Reason* and *The Shadow Lines*. It examines Ghosh’s re-invention of history in the light of his narrative skills that incorporate the real and the unreal, the factual and fictive. The study attempts to re-read history through imagination, one can perceive his real to adopt alternative modes of perception of cultures and cultural representation, which reveal of subversion of colonial, imperial representations.

Recent Indian English fiction has added theoretical consciousness and sophistication of the sociological, historical, cultural, political and philosophical concerns to which it remained committed. The writers like Salman Rushdie, Sashi Tharoor, Vikram Seth and Amitav Ghosh etc. have experimented with the narrative technique in different ways. Magic Realism is one of the narrative techniques emerged in postmodern era with the publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, Magic Realism shot into fame and number of Indian English novelist have started to write novels in the tradition of Salman Rushdie and Amitav Ghosh is one of them.

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta (now Kolkatta) in 1956. He grew up in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), Sri Lanka, Iran and India. After graduating from the University of Delhi, he went to Oxford to study social Anthropology and received a Master of Philosophy and Ph.D. degree in 1982. In 1980, he went to Egypt to do field work in the Fallaheen village of Lataifa. *In an Antique Land*, the novel, which was published in 1993, was primarily the result of his work there. Amitav Ghosh has also been a journalist.

Inspired by Rushdie’s experimentation in style, Indian novelists have started twisting and turning English words in the ways that suit their creative expressions. They now started writing what they feel, experience
and ponder in English. They are no longer imitators of Western models as well as they are now free from political bondage and artistic hegemony. Writers like Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy and Shobha De have succeeded in attracting the attention of Western readers and even started receiving awards. The Indian English novelists now look at the India of present, the past and future as an outsider-insider, and an insider-outsider. The novelists like Amitav Ghosh, Kiran Desai produced novels of varied themes as they are with varied techniques. They started to present totality. Now the novelists have experimented with time and space. They are no longer story-teller but they are creating stories within stories, and their characters seem to be moving in different time-spans.

Amitav Ghosh’s first novel *The Circle of Reason* seems to be influenced by Salman Rushdie in terms of the narrative technique. In the art of Amitav Ghosh, there has been influence of Gabriel Garcia Manquez who uses Magic Realism as narrative technique. Ghosh is also influenced by Ford Madox and Ford Proust. The stories by Satyajit Ray and Rabindranath Tagore also have influenced, Ghosh’s writing.

The partition of the country, the creation of Pakistan, the communal riots, the imposed migration, the creation of Bangladesh and the partition of Bengali the wars of India with China and Pakistan, the rise of religious fundamentalism have left their everlasting imprints on the creative sensibility of Ghosh. But the most unforgettable event was the birth of Bangladesh and the communal riots that took place in Dhaka in 1964 that Ghosh witnessed as a child, made huge impact on his psyche. Ghosh saw the brutal violence, terror and bloodshed; he saw the killings and the hatred between the people of two communities. All these events became subject matter in Ghosh’s writings and set the tone for the creation of most of his fiction and non-fiction. It provides him serious insight into human relationship their complexity and impacts of socio-
political and historical events on the lives ordinary people. Amitav Ghosh also eye witnessed the events of 1980s which were too violent and tragic. When Ghosh was in Delhi, teaching at the Delhi University, he saw the scale of violence that followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi. In the essay *The Ghost of Mrs. Gandhi, The Imam and the Indian*, Ghosh recorded the violence that had been instigated against the innocent Sikhs throughout the city and all over the country.

The violence in Delhi moulded Ghosh’s insight into the problems of contemporary society confronting the world, religious extremism and fundamentalism caused the violence. All these situations in India made him conscious of his own responsibility as a citizen in such circumstances, and he expressed it through his writing.

Amitav’s first novel was *The Circle of Reason*, which published in 1986, and his second novel *The Shadow Lines* in 1988. Amongst his other works *The Calcutta Chromosome* stands out. It has been described as ‘a kind of mystery thriller’ (India Today). He has also done the field work in Cambodia, lived in Delhi and written for a number of publications. He has also stayed in New York and taught at Columbia University. In 1999, Ghosh joined the faculty at Queens College, City University of New York as distinguished professor in Comparative Literature. He has also been a visiting professor to the English department of Harvard University since 2005.

The 1980s has witnessed a galaxy of the “new” novelists. The first of them was Salman Rushdie who appeared with a bang, who has ornamented his novel *Midnight’s Children* (1981) with the new technique Magic Realism. He is a pioneer of Magic Realism in Indian writing in English. He uses various oral traditions, narrative patterns with distinguished style besides experimentation in the use of language. He has also been famous for his bold chutnification of English language
Rushdie’s application of surrealism and Magic Realism has affinities with oral tradition and narrative style of Lawrence, Gunter Grass, Steme, Gabriel etc. *Midnight’s Children* is said to be a multifaceted narrative. It is at once an autobiographical, a picaresque novel, a surrealist fantasy a political and historical novel.

For Amitav Ghosh, writing is a career he chose after, or in the course of, an academic career as a trained anthropologist with a doctorate from a good school. If his novels and essays show strong evidence of that anthropological training—in their careful observation of their characters, surroundings and history; their implied philosophical investigation of what it means to be a human being— they just as strongly show the novelist’s delight in narrative, in character development, in themes and symbols, metaphors, and other stylistic devices that might seem extraneous to strict academic investigation. Ghosh ties his wagon to imagination and especially to his stories through his Magical Realism in his works.

Actually the boom in Indian writing in English began with, Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* in which Rushdie used new narrative technique i.e. Magic Realism. And in that boom, it must be said that Amitav Ghosh has played an early and influential role. As Mukerji notes, Rushdie’s novel was published in 1981, but it was not until 1985 that “the first of the new crop of novels, Amitav Ghosh’s *The Circle of Reason*, appeared”. Vikram Seth’s *The Golden Gate* was published the next year, and then in 1988 three “near masterpieces” appeared: *The Trotterhama* by I Allan Scaly, *The Shadow Lines* by Ghosh and *English August: An Indian Story* by Upamanyu Chatterjee several others appeared in subsequent years, and then in 1996 Ghosh’s well-reviewed *The Calcutta Chromosome* was published along with Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance*. Amitav Ghosh himself acknowledges his indebtedness to Salman Rushdie, especially in *The Circle of Reason*. 

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In *Shame* (1983), there is a clever use of symbolism, Fantasy, and Magic Realism. It is based on the political theme of Pakistan in which political equations are quite clear. Omar Khayyam is its protagonist who is an illegitimate son of the three mothers and a British officer.

The young ‘new’ novelists of the 1980s emerged as impressive arrays who are the contemporaries of Salman Rushdie. These novelists have also used the newly emerged technique-Magic Realism. These novelists include Amitav Ghosh, Allan Sealy, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Upmanyu Chatterjee etc. They are also called as Rushdies Children (The New York Times: 16 Dec 1991).

As a writer, Amitav Ghosh has been immensely influenced by the political and social setting of the country. Also, the stories and events he heard from his parents during his childhood made an indelible impression on his mind. He was born several years after India’s independence. His mother grew up in Calcutta and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, non violence and disobedience, and the terrors that accompanied partition in 1947. The image of the changing India, politically and socially, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh’s mind.

The year 1984 was in some ways a turning point in the writing career of Amitav Ghosh certain events that took place in that year had a deep impact on his mind. In an article that appeared in the *Guardian* in 1995, Ghosh admits:

> Nowhere else in the world did the year 1984 fulfill its apocalyptic portents as it did in India? Separatist violence in Punjab; the military attack on the great Sikh temple of Amritsar; the assassination of the Prime Minister, the gas disaster in Bhopal- the events followed relentlessly on each other. There were days in 1984 when it took courage to open the Delhi papers in the morning. (Ghosh: 1995)

Of the years many catastrophies, the sectarian violence following Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s death had the greatest effect on Ghosh’s life. Looking back, Ghosh realizes that the experiences of that period were
profoundly important to his development as a writer. Being a witness himself, he never mustered courage to write about these events directly, even later.

Amitav Ghosh’s novels reflect a historicity as history is always present in his novels. An historical is nothing an evoluation of a segment of historical reality as projected by the novelist whose technique of writing fiction enable him to describe his vision or world-vision. In all his writing, Amitav Ghosh’s engagement with history is not the same kind as that of a historian, but this does not in any lesson its significance as historical fiction. Ghosh’s fiction reveals that the novelist’s involvement with history is his prime obsession. Indeed, he interjects a new dimension into his encounter with history. Ghosh’s fiction is imbued with both political and historical consciousness. Ghosh us a novelist who virtually bends his novels to the needs of history; they largely derive their purpose and shape from it.

Ghosh invests the third person narrator who relates a story in a spiral fashion that fictionalizes and makes real historical subject and event.

The first half of this chapter deals with Magic Realism in Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason. Ghosh’s first novel is written in the style of Magic Realism, popularized by Salman Rushdie. The Circle of Reason has been translated into many European languages; its French edition received the Prix Medicis Etranger, one of the France’s top literary awards.

Amitav Ghosh has been credited for successfully mastering the new technique of narration i.e. Magic Realism which is popularized by Salman Rushdie in India writing in English and Gabriel Garcia Marquez in South America, and Gunter Grass in Germany. Like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh perfectly blends fact and fiction with Magical Realism. He reconceptualizes society and history. Ghosh is so scientific in the
Amitav Ghosh shot into fame with the publication of his first novel *The Circle of Reason* in 1986. Apart from his Bengali background, his knowledge of Bangladesh, London, and Middle East helped him to give a realistic touch to his novels. The places in his novels are not imaginary lands (like Rushdie’s novels Nishapur/ ‘Q’ in Shame) but that can be located on the maps of the world. *The Circle of Reason* has three stories woven around three characters.

In *The Circle of Reason* depicts the history, politics and social realism through his technique Magic Realism. The theme of the novel is different from traditional concerns of Indian English fiction. It challenges a direct and simple appreciation. *The Circle of Reason* a journey from Sattva to Rajas to Tamas, the three parts of the novel.

The novel has three different stories woven around three characters. The first section, Satwa (Reason) revolves around Balram, the second section ‘Rajas’ (passion) revolves around Zindi and the third section Tamas (Death) centers around Mrs. Verma.

The first part of the novel, Satwa: Reason depicts the village life in West Bengal, near the border. The opening of the text is East Pakistan, and in the course of narrative, distantly becomes Bangladesh. The creation of Bangladesh is signified by the slow swelling of the village as refugees trickle and then flow across the border, and settle around the village. The entry of Alu (Nachiketa Bose), Balram’s newphew, in his (Balram’s) life adds a new dimension of Balram’s life and to his faith in Phrenology and scientific reason. Alu, having bumpy head becomes an interesting subject of Balram’s Pherenological scrutiny and detailed study.
Part two of *The Circle of Reason* **Rajas:** Passion is set in al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf. Alu, in al-Ghazria resumes his craft of weaving, but accidentally buried alive when a new building called ‘Star’ (in which he is working as a labour) collapses. But magically Alu having saved from the rubble of the collapsed building ‘Star’, Alu lectured them about money. Now he is thinking about life and death. Alu returns from death’s door but his knowledge only brings doom. This episode has allegorical significance. It shows cultural logic of global capitalism that destroys the ancient trading cultures of the Middle East.

The last section of the novel **Tamas:** Death, Amitav Ghosh distorts the rigid line of demarcation set between pure scientific reason and the values of real life, between girid scientific principles and goodness of human heart. In this section Ghosh introduces Mrs. Uma Verma, a microbiologist. She is the daughter of Dantu i.e. Hem Narain Mathur, Balram’s college-mate.

In the novel, *The Circle of Reason* Ghosh presents history as a collective memory embodying a symbolic relationship between past and present. The past, a reference point for understanding what is happening now is equally dependent on the present which determines how we look it. Dantu, Balram’s friend, a secondary character in the first part, surfaces again as Hem Narain Mathur, a crucial presence in the third section, for the immediate concerns of this part demand a greater attention to his history.

The mobility with which history traverses past and present is indeed due to the fluid pattern of time; yet time, with the poise and flavour of oral recapitulation coupled with chronological references, never lets us forget that history is situated in the past.

*The Circle of Reason* is a post colonial novel that focuses on the persisting colonial legacies and challenges binaries. Ghosh alludes to the
political ideologies of the Europeans that helped in sustaining the western myth of progress, rationality and history to further its claims and expand its empire. Europeans proclaimed their superiority in terms of knowledge, race and civilization, and treated “orient” as inferior, uncivilized, irrational and superstitious. Ghosh questions Western History and the validity of its narrative, especially its universalizing claims of bequeathing progress, reason and rationality to the colonized world.

Science doesn’t belong to countries. Reason doesn’t belong to any nation. They belong to history to the world. (TCR, P. 54)

The Circle of Reason has both historical as well as mythological elements. Mythical references have been moulded to reflect contemporary conditions in a true new historicist fashion. Girish Karnad is another man to have done so, so successfully in his plays. In the novel, The Circle of Reason, Ghosh weaves ideas, characters and metaphors through magic and irony and develops his fictional motifs. In the novel Ghosh use mythological references as well as names of the character. Alu’s real name is Nachiketa. Nachiketa in mythology is the boy who waits at Yama’s doors in obedience to his father. Waiting at Yama’s doors naturally means waiting at the door of death. Nachiketa is sage Uddalaka’s son. Nachiketa is known for his perseverance. In his pursuit of true knowledge of Brahman, Nachiketa incurs his father’s displeasure. In a fit of rage, uddalaka curses Nachiketa to go and suffer in the nether world i.e. Yamloka (the world of the death god Yama) Nachiketa wins Yama’s heart by his commitment to the chosen cause. He reaches the knowledge about the true nature of Brahman (Brahma gyan) from Yama. Nachiketa’s single mindedness is coupled with disinterested action. He is not working for getting something. As the myth goes the young sage is lured by Yama by the pleasure of heaven. Nachiketa refuses to go to heaven. As he was learnt the true nature of being he knows Braham- is all pervading.
Moreover Agni (fire) is a purifying agent. Fire, even in hell, does the work of cleansing. Here the myth begins to connect with the life of Alu and Balram in the novel. Carbolic acid is also a purifying agent. At Kulfi’s death, paste for puja is made of carbolic acid instead of ghee. The Circle of Reason is simply a response of Amitav Ghosh to the unhygienic condition of India. The mythical Nachiketa might have been interested in big things. Alu’s concern is simply how to overcome germ, and disease.

In The Circle of Reason the mythological elements are seen in Alu’s character. Nachiketa Bose (Alu’s) also waits at death’s door when in Al-Ghazira he is buried alive when a building collapses. Without food and water for days together, he does one thing and that is thinking. He knows the truth to be present in scientific reasoning. He wants to apply the scientific approach in removing the ills of present day society. When Alu safely comes out;

He declares that money is the enemy of mankind for ‘it travels on every man and every women, silently preparing them for their defeat’, turning me against the other. (TCR, P. 281)

In The Circle of Reason History is depicts as a main tool in the hand of the narrator which is the important feature of Magic Realism. Here in the novel History became main source and some historical elements are depicted, such as the Indian Nationalist Struggle of the 1930s, the Bangladesh war of 1971, and the international tide of migration to the Middle East of the 1970s onwards, are foregrounded in the novel. The novel is, however, more concerned with the period of British Colonization of India. Through the character of Balram, Ghosh explores the continuing impact of Raj’s educational policies on post-colonial India.

Amitav Ghosh mixes historical and fantastic elements to create an interesting work of fiction. In terms of history and its impact on Ghosh,
The Circle of Reason was writing in the very crucial period of India. The separatist violence in Punjab, Militant attack on a Sikh temple of Amritsar, the riots that broke out after the assassination were the major social and political events of the period. Throughout the city Delhi, Sikh houses were being looted and then set on fire, often with their occupants still inside. Such horrible events had stifling effect on the creative mind of Ghosh. Within a few months, Ghosh started his new novel which we eventually called The Shadow Lines, a book that led him backward in time to earlier memories of riots, once witnessed in childhood.

Migration, diasporic feeling, rootlessness and a new kind of sensibility born out of these factors- these things are unique to our age. The impact of migration also depicts here in the novel. Since the beginning of the human race, migration has been a major phenomenon. But that migration used to be in huge groups. The Aryans leaving central Asia and spreading across Asia and Europe was no solitary act. The whole race migrated! What is new, typical and unique of our age is loneliness and sense of vacuum that comes with individual migration or migration of comparatively smaller groups. Since time immemorial, the human race has been obsessed with ideas of belonging, heritage, clan, inheritance and native soil. Now we are surprised at our own condition. We want to sing our own songs-sangs of estrangement, dissociation and withdrawal. Suddenly everyone has become an emigrant- a village student in a nearby town, a semi-urbanite at Delhi or Mumbai, a Punjabi in Bengal, a Tamilian in Orissa, Asian in Europe and so on. Every one is away from the roots- where have all the roots gone?

The term migration is also belongs to Alu in the novel. Alu’s migration to Lalpurkar after his parent’s death is the beginning of the novel The Circle of Reason.
The first section of the novel **Satwa**: Reason depicts the village life in West Bengal, near the border. The opening of the text is East Pakistan, and in the course of narrative, distantly becomes Bangladesh. The creation of Bangladesh is signified by the slow swelling of the village as refugees. While the descriptions of these villages are stark, they are also strangely peripheral to the village community, to the relationship, intrigues, and battle of will that give it life. The great banyan tree under which people talk, rallies are held, rickshaws wait for customers. All these are metaphorically used for the village.

…brought up in the clamour and excitement of Calcutta, like Lalpukar, she had wandered as the cyclerickshawa, working with flurries of its rubber hooter, took her down the red dust lanes of the village, past the great vaulted and pillared banyan tree with the tea shop and….. (TCR, P.08)

In using the word ‘reason’ in the title of the novel, the novelist has invoked one of the key values of the nineteenth century Bangali culture. Tapan Raychandhari writes:

Rational assessment of current needs and received traditions, both indigenous and alien, become the hallmark of Bengali thought in nineteenth century. Arguably this development marked a total discontinuity in the history of the religion, a product of colonial encounter. It was a development with explosive potentialities which required a measure of autonomy. (Tapan: 1995)

*The Circle of Reason*, as its title suggests, is a novel that closely examines philosophies of reason, and the science and technology that is associated with these philosophies. ‘Reason’ is of course a contested term, which has been interpreted in vastly different ways by philosophers as diverse as Plato and Chomsky. It is also important to be aware that there is a plurality of concepts of ‘reason’. In India, for example, discourses of reason and logic long predated British expansion into the subcontinent and were not confined only to the Hindu tradition.

In the first part of the novel Balram Bose (Uncle of Alu) surprisingly considers himself to be an embodiment of reason. Balram’s
passion for Pasteur, for scientific theories and rationality is revealed through the activities that he and his friend, Gopal pursue under the rubric of Rationalists. The Young ‘Rationalists’ are engaged in disinterested act of teaching people the actual application of scientific principles to practical life.

Their aim was the application of rational principles to everything around them to their own lives, to society, to religion, to history. (TC R P.46)

Ghosh here in the first part of the novel depicts the adventures of Balram Bose, a local school teacher. Balram strictly adheres to reason and logic prescribed by the dectates of Western Science and admires the Western scientists like Madame Irene Joliot Curie, Louis Pasteur and their discoveries that led to a break through in the world of science. Balram is greatly enamoured of the work of Louis Pasteur and his discovery of the ‘germ’. But at the same time he is found of phrenology, a science that deals with the study of human personality through an examination of bumps on the head. In this novel, there is juxtaposition between western science and pseudo-science phrenology, long deemed to be futility by main stream science. Ghosh challenges the binaries of the East/West, Science/Pseudo-Science, modernity and tradition. Claire Chambers observes:

Ghosh’s allusions to a vast range of scientific projects encourage the reader to think about how western science drastically alters and yet is itself hybridized by its encounter with Indian society. In this novel, Ghosh makes the important point that science, technology and medicine were not conveyed to India by the British in a one-way process of transfer, but were in fact involved in a complex series of cross-cultural exchanges, translations and mutations. (Chamber 2003: 37)

The Circle of Reason deals with the application of scientific reasoning to the practical affairs of day-to-day life. Here, Ghosh questions the universal claim of Western science and reasoning to expose the dichotomy between the ‘truth’ of Western science and its relevance to
the problems of everyday life. Balram uses the antiseptic, the carbolic acid to kill germs, to purify human beings and cure them of their moneymadness. Balaram uses the carbolic acid to clean the refugee Shanties to prevent the outbreak of epidemic, and also extends it to Bhudeb Roy, his neighbour and employer. Balaram sees in Bhudeb Roy the germs causing spread of corruption and contamination of the whole society. Balaram is a slave to Western Science, as well as a beliver in Phrenology, astrology and criminology.

Balram points out the religious politics of Hindu who have fragmented the image of Brahma, the creator of the universe into innumerable gods. It is a kind of emotional blackmail done in the name of religion as religion is used as a means of earning money. Gopal says, “Brahma is nothing but the Atom that the universal Egg of Hindu mythology is nothing but a kind of cosmic Neutron. Ghosh depicts a judicious synthesis of Western Science and the Eastern philosophy of Hinduism and the way they have influenced each other. The achievements of Pasteur, his major discoveries and the admiration that Balram has for them, spring from the passion that drove Pasteur to solve the problems of everyday life. The discovery of germs that led beer to rot the cure of rabies, the restoration of livelihood to the silk farmers who were worried about the disease that struck sikworms:

It wasn’t talk of reason, it wasn’t the universal atom. It was passion, a passion, which sprang from the simple and the everyday. A passion for the future, not the past. (TCR, P.50)

It is the same passion of Balram, the concern for everyday life that makes his ideas too for fetched. His love for western theories starts ruling him. Balram’s campaign against the dirty underwear in the college, and his mission of establishing a clean society with carbolic acid pats into his mind abstract nations of reality. The drive for cleanliness; the fight aginst
money and corruption become an obsession with him. Balram’s eager is to put people into a fixed pattern of logic and reason. He wants to have an ideal world based on pure scientific principles. Balaram is of the opinion that the people until for his idea of logic and idealism carried the germ of corruption. He assumes the responsibility of eradicating the germ. In this derive to kill the germ; Balram’s thinking becomes rigid and restricted.

Balram embarks on an absurd journey as he tries to locate the germ in human body and society,

But the trouble with people like Balaram was that theories came first and the truth afterwards (TCR, P.13)

Balram is a schoolteacher, acts as Amitav’s mouthpiece his view about education is:

It would be wrong; it would be immoral. Children go to school for their first glimpse into the life of the mind. Not for jobs. If I thought that my teaching is nothing but a means of finding jobs; I’d stop teaching tomorrow. (TCR, P. 50)

The above statement of Balram shows that the impact of Pasteur’s Louis on him. Pasteur’s view about education is very clear– Education should be aimed at answering the common everyday problem of people. Paster is Balarams ideal, logic his God.

Rational thinking is his only goal in life. But Ghosh point out that scientific temper, the cause and effect theory do not work in real situations.

Balaram considers Pasteur his model and shapes his life since childhood with scientific temper and rationalistic outlook.

Balaram’s relationships with his group of friends all they are in their mid-thirties. In the discussions with his friend about science that occur in the novel. Louis Pasteur is taken to be the archetypal objective, disinterested scientist. Vallery Radot’s biography, The Life of Pastaur is an important motif in The Circle of Reason and both Balaram and Alu interpret it as presenting Pasteur as the epitome of reason. For example,
here is a passage from the novel, in which Balaram first introduces Alu to the biography of the great scientist:

….he (Balaram) reached for the copy of vallery-Radot’s Life of Pasteur which always lay beside his chair, and began to read him the chapter about the turning-point in the history of the world- 6th July 1985 when Loui’s Pasteur took his courage in his hands at the risk of his reputation and his whole professional life (for her had never lacked for enemies) filled a Pravoz springe and inoculated poor, hopeless ten years-old Joseph Meister, only that day savaged by a rabid dog, with his still untested vaccine.

When he stopped and put the book down he saw tears in Alu’s eyes. (TCR, P. 28)

In part first of the novel Balaram teaches Alu, about society and science and its importance in our life. Balaram idealizes scientific ‘genious’ seeing his favourite scientists as men who work alone in the hope of making discoveries that will benefit mankind. He holds Pasteur in the highest esteem, making the following impassioned comments to the Rationalists society.

Do you remember why he left his promising studies in crystallography? It was because the brewers of France came to him and said: What makes our beer rot? It was that question, asked by simple people, which led to the discovery of what he called the infinitesimally small– the Germ, in other words (…) who did the silk farmers of Europe go to when disease struck their silkworms (…)? Who but Pasteur? They went to him and they said: save us and when he saw their wretchedness not all the powers on the earth could have kept him from answering. That is why the world still has silk. (TCR, P.49)

In the novel Amitav Ghosh narrates the social, cultural, an educational and political condition of contemporary rural India- through the entry of Alu in the life of Balaram Bose his uncle. Alu, having bumpy head becomes an interesting subject of Balaram’s Phrenological scrutiny and detailed study. Balaram finds a conclusion that Alu has all the qualities of a weaver. Alu is apprenticed with Shombu Debnath,
Balrama’s neighbour and a gifted weaver with the help of May daughter of Shombu Debnath. Alu becomes a skilled weaver.

Balaram invites the wrath of Bhudev Roy and his four sons due to his strong dislike of Bhudev Roy’s Practical side of life his drive to fulfill his greed for money and his other material pursuits. Bhudev Roy closes the school where Balaram works a teacher. But Balaram not escape from is earge to give education to Alu and his society. Quickly Balaram establishes the Pasteur school of Reason with two departments the Department of Pure Reason and the Department of Practical Reason.

The Department of Practical Reason would deal with weaving where Alu the protagonist May and Shombou Debnath would teach. Here Shombu the novelist focuses on the importance of the fusion of the concrete and abstract human thought. It is Balarams acknowledge of the weaving represented by the loom, and his decision of making Alu a weaver depicts Ghosh’s attitude of blurring the boundaries between two antagonistic systems of thought Claire Chamber aptly suggests that:

‘Balaram’s approach towards science in a sense evinces a hybridizing tendency, and in this respect, he unwittingly challenges Western Scientific discourse. (Chamber 2003: 43)

Amitav Ghosh point out that migration of the people across the borders has resulted into that no culture or nation can lay its claim to being pure and discrete. And it is the result of the scuttering of people due to wars riots and political turmoil A small village like Lalpukar is peopled by migrant of Burma and its remote district of Noakhali:

They had emigrated to India in a slow steady tickle in the years after East Bengal become East Pakistan. (TCR, P.26-27)

Ghosh refers to the history of partition that enforced thousand refugees from Bengal to seek shelter in different parts of India and diving lines(borders) were drawn between India and Pakistan even Balaram is originally from Dhaka, “then the capital of east Bengal,now Bangladesh”
Alu’s migration is the result of the tragedy that strikes Balaram’s family and kills everyone except Alu. Alu is forced to leave Lalpukar in an attempt to give a tough fight to Bhudeb Roy the carbolic acid and the bomb material that Rakhal, Shombu Dehaths son had kept in Balaram’s house explodes and the house goes up in flames. All die except Alu who is saved by the sewing machine that Toru Debi Balrams wife had given him to throw out. Unfortunately Alu is declared a terrorist and police chase him he keeps running from Calcutta (now Kolkata) to Mahe to al Ghazira in the gulf and finally traces the growth and historical development of societies their materialistic progress and finully the coming to terms with a vision of life that is based not just simply on pure reason but also coupled with passion, humanity and goodness. Ghosh presents Alu’s adventures his migration and his attainment of worldly and spiritual wisdom.

Amitav Ghosh focuses on migration of Alu from Lalpukar to al Ghazira is turning point in the life of Alu. Alu escapes to al Ghazira with a helf of companions of a ship called ‘Mariamma’ carrying the passengers to the oil rich city. His fellow passengers on the ship are Zindi the huge brothel madam the prostitute kulfi Chummi and Karthamma, Prof. Samual Rakesh and others. On reaching al Ghazira another tragedy befalls on Alu. Alu is buried in the debris of the huge building which collapses. But Alu is miraculously saved by two sewing machines kept there.

The future of Alu shifted from Lalpukar to al Ghazira but Alu decides to carry on Balaram’s task that was left incomplete at Lalpukar. The past remains with him in the form of the book the most priceless possession of Balaram. The *Life of Pasteur* and the boils on his body is the history of weaving and the international cloth trade that in this and Ghosh’s subsquent texts, intricate network of difference in which all
cultures are enmeshed with their neighbours when Balaram decides to make the young. Alu a weaver, he tells him a history of the technology of weaving that evokes cultural instability and borrowing across borders.

Balaram says:

(the loom) has created no separate worlds but one for it has never permitted the division of the world. The loom recognizes no continents and no countries. It has tied the world (TCR, P. 55)

Balaram has developed the idea that culture is a process of circulation that has nothing to do with national borders.

Indian cloth was found in the graves of the Pharaohs. Indian soil is strewn with cloth from China. The whole of the ancient world hummed with the cloth trade. The silk route from China, running through central Asia and Persia to the ports of Mediterranean The Arab world to Europe in equal bountiful trade. (TCR, P. 55, 56)

Amitav Ghosh juxtaposes the East and the West with the practical learning of weaving and tailoring against the abstract ideology of rationalism in *The Circle of Reason*. Amitav calls Balaram a rationalist and a believer in science and reason Balaram’s knowledge of science and his faith in reason have no base in real life situation. Balaram’s possess the abstract knowledge that lacks worldly wisdom and is likely to bring about disaster. In the first part of the novel there is ironical description of Balaram’s behaviour at the time of Saraswati Puja, his passionate handling of the cleanliness movement with carbolic acid and his love for Phrenology. Toru Debi’s practical sense of belief in the sewing machine saves Alu’s life twice from the disaster created by Balaram’s ideologies. When the machine stops working Toru Debi thrusts in into Alu’s hand and asks him to throw it away into the pond and a new one for her.

Nothing of any use now. She muttered. It is the end Sue ran her hand over the machine’s shining wheel and pulled with all her strength... she stood up and put the machine in Alu’s arms throw it into the pond, she said. Its dead... get me another. Alu, my bit of gold, won’t you? (TCR, P. 147, 148)
In *The Circle of Reson* Balaram comes to be seen as an expert on the subject simply by purchasing a copy of Practical Phrenology and having a set of head measuring calipers made phrenology possessed medical and scientific respectability in the third decade of 19th century and may be seen as an early form of psychology but its reputation then suffered a decline and it began to be seen as a pseudo science in the latter half of the century.

Amitav Ghosh depicted Balaram’s estacy showing how ironical the situation is instead of the discovery and Bhudeb Roy’s humiliation Balaram finds the engulfing fire that breaks out. Though Alu’s eyes we can glimpse this.

He (Alu) saw it reach its zenith and curve downwards and fall out of his sight, behind the bamboo… and then the earth shook and the air seemed to come alive and hit him with walls of force, and when he opened his eyes again exactly where the house ought to have been thre were orange flames shooting into the sky (TCR, P.148)

For Balram the book *Life of Pasteur* is an epitome of reason He considers weaving to be reason because it has connected people of the world; it has always been part of history. In one meeting he opposes Gopal on the basis of reason:

Weaving, is hope, a living belief that having once made the world one and blessed it with its diversity and it must do so again (TCR, P.58)

Between parallel long threads.. so that they lock the weft in place.

(TCR, P.74)

Balaram is idealist to a certain extent He doesn’t involve with people. For him others are mere objects of observation and change. Eventually he takes his whims to extreme and become self destructive Ghosh clearly patterns Balaram’s character upon historical figures such as Nehru and Rammohan Roy who attempted to forword a progressive rational programme of social transformation. Balaram decides to setup
the Pasteur school of reason where learner’s could learn practical skills as well as more conventional subjects.

The figure of the circle also works against the linear logic of modernity and of enlightenment nationality. Circling is invoked in three ways; in the title, in the form of narrative, and in terms of travel. It is contrasted with the straight lines that have quality of fetish for Bhaeleb Roy:

The time has come, he said, his tears drying on his cheeks, for straight lines. The trouble with this village is that there aren’t enough straight lines. Look at Europe, look at America, and look at Tokyo: straight lines that are the secret. Everything is in straight lines the roads are straight the houses are straight; the cars are straight (except for the wheels). They even walk straight that’s what we need: straight lines. There is a time and an age, and this is the age of the straight line. (TCR, P. 99)

In the above long passage has linked linearity with the modern and prosperous Europe, America and Tokyo. The image of the straight lines symbolizes development, while the village by contrast seems to be a place with unrepaired cycles resting against the banyan tree.

In *The Circle of Reason* the narrative moves between past and present the city and the country and from character to character in a highly associate way.

Part two of *The Circle of Reason* **Rajas:** Passion is set in al-Ghazira on the Persian Gulf. It depicts the future of Alu which is shifted from Lalpukar to al-Ghazira but Alu decides to carry on Balaram’s task that was left incomplete at Lalpukar. The past remains with him in the form of the book, the most priceless possession of Balaram, *The Life of Pasteur* and the boils on his body.

In the second part of the novel Ghosh narrates another story belongs to the life of Alu a travelar, It begins with Alu’s arrival in al-Ghazira, and his adventure, and his love for Zindi. Some other characters
also introduced like Kulfi, Mrs. Verma, Abu Fahl, Zaghloul, Haji Fahmy, baby Boss, etc.

The second section of the novel is truly ruled by passion. The Ras people indulge in talking, listening, and telling stories, gossiping having tea at Zindi’s house. Zindi have a house in al-Ghazira in an area called The Severed Head or the Ras, near the water. There, Zindi takes in all sorts of refugees, some with questionable histories or occupations. When Alu arrived in al Ghazira Alu meets the rest of the character’s in Zindi’s little world, including Abu fanil- who drinks too much; Forid Main, an old tailor; Jeevanbhai Patel, by for the richest merchant in the area; Haji Fahmy, a wealthy teetotaler whose family had been among the earliest settler in the area and must Ram, who falls in love with Kulfi.

Ghosh narrates the life style of al Ghazira and entry of Alu in this new land. But accendently Alu burried alive when a new building called the ‘Star’, in which Alu is working as a labour collapses. This episode can be read as an allgory about the effect of post modernity on the traditional societies of the Middle East. The collapse of buildings is contrasted with the traditional market place.

The old bazar’s honeycomb of passage ways …..Obsoured every trade of the world outside….Nor did any but the most alert in the souq feel the soil of al-Ghazira tremple when the Star fell. (TCR, P.194)

When Alu is buried in the ‘Star’, the novelist contrasts this mobile trading culture with the modern oil economy that threatens to subsume it. Alu’s friends Rakesh and Ismail go inside the ruins to search for him. They find themselves lost in the postmodern space of a collapsed glass and concrete dome:

It was like the handiwork of a madamhimmense steel girders leaning crazil, while sections of the glass dome scattered about like eggshells….. ‘A voice in the Ruins; turns out to be a transistor radio…which echoes through the ruins. (TCR, P.232)
The second part moves forward through Alu, the nephew and only survivor of Balaram’s family. He brings his community to death and destruction by his attempts to create a co-operative community which tries to dispense with money and trade.

In this part Ghosh narrates weird happenings in the life of Alu. The narrator’s own description acquires realistic connotations in tune with his characters propensity to mix fact with fantasy. The weird happening is described in a prose:

People said later that the fall shook the whole of al-Ghazira, like an emptying wave shakes a boat. A tornado of dust swirls out of the debris while the rubbles was still Shyddering and heaving like a labouring beast and for a few moments the whole city was wrapped in the darkness, despite the mid-afternoon brilliance of the desert sun. (TCR, P.193)

The survival of Alu despite the might of the inanimate cement and bricks is indicative of the victory of creative mind over ruthless mechanisms. The far-off Middle East country, al-Ghazira is one such mechanism. The cut-throat business interests of the place were already hinted at when Alu lay huddled in a heap in the lap of Zindi aboard mariamma’ and observes the light of al-Ghazira in the distance. The description of the artificial glitter of the whims of capital and its exploitative mechanism is invested with human skills a metaphor for mercantile activity. In the second part of the novel speculation runs high in the locality and a sense of relief is experienced in telling stories and experiencing them even while they wait for the arrival of Alu. When Hajji Fahmy narrates the story of Nuri the Damanhour he could command a captive audience. Abu Fahl is good at narrating real life experiences with a tinge of magical note when he first visit Alu beneath the rubble and returns home he too commands an ethralled audience as he two sewing machines had saved Alu’s life.
Abu Fahl is very good narrator or story teller like Zindi in the same part Abu Fahl narrates one more occasion which belongs to Alu’s life when Alu was attacked by the labour contractors they were brought before Hajji Fasmy to pronounce judgement; Abu Fahl relishes the prospect of narrating the whole incident to an attentive audience. Abu was more interested in the very act of narrative rather than the justice he was entitled to. Amitav Ghosh uses magical gift of story telling in *The Circle of Reason*. Ghosh’s famous story telling character is Zindi who was the master story teller with her superior powers of narration. Zindi knows her abilities and commands a sure audience even if she repeats the same story any number of times. On hearing the news of Alu’s fall she gets to tell the story of misfortunes that befell frowning Abusa and Mast Ram the inmates of her house before Alu and others had admired the audiences as usual are even more prepared to listen to Zindi yet again. The scence of Zindi holding centre stage like a presiding deity by her powers of narration is brought in ritualistic terms.

They crouched on mats around Zindi listening intently to every word. They had lived through everthing Zindi spoke of and had heard her talk of it time and time again yet it was only in her telling that it took shape changed form mere incidents to a palpable thing, a block of time which was not hours or minutes or days but something corporeal, with its own malevolent willfulness. That was Zindi’s power she could bring together empty air and give it a body just by talking of it. (TCR, P.212-13)

Ghosh narrates Alu’s adventures and magical operating style of loom which his creative abilities. Alu’s initiation into the world of weaving is to be viewed as much an act of admiration for the pristine simplity and creativity of Shombhu Debnath and his daughter Maya as a refusal of Balarams idealism if not his values. The loom functions as a viable metaphors for Alu’s longing for Maya and his mastery then the subtle pattern of weaving including the intricate Jamdhani pattern coincides with his wining over the love of Maya which is described in
physical and psychological terms. The description of the creative surge of weaving one again defies words and assumes magical incantation.

So many words so many things. On a loom a beam’s name changes after every inch. Why? Every nail has a name, every twist of rope every little eyelet, every thing of bamboo on the heddle. A loom is a dictionary glossary thequrus why? Words serve no purpose nothing mechanical No its because the weavery in making cloth makes words too, and trespassing on the territory of the poets gives names to things the eye cant see that is why the loom has given language more words, more metaphor, more idiom than all the words armies of pen-wielders (TCR, P.74)

When Alu saved from collapsed building ‘Star’ Alu lectured them about money buried under the two sewing machines he is happily thinking about life and death unlike Nachiketa of the Mahabharata who had returned from Yama (Door of Death) the Lord of Death after acoquiring knowledge about life and death. Alu thinks only purity and dirt. Nachiketa had gained the phylosophy of life. This Nachiketa i.e Alu returns from deaths door but his knowledge only brings destruction. It talks about Louis Pasteur and his failure as Balaram had done earlier But Alu believes that he has acquired real or true knowledge.

“Purity, purity was what he had wanted purity and cleanliness not just his home or in a laboratory or a University but in the whole world of living men. It was that which spurred him on his greatest hunt the chase in which she drove the enemy of purity the quintessence of dirt the demon which keeps the worl d from cleanliness the infinitely small the germ.” (TCR, P.280)

Here in the above passage Ghosh uses the element of magic realism. Amitav’s use of mythological elements and name of characters, Actually Alu’s real name is Nachiketa the name of boy who obeying his father waits at Yama’s door. When Yama grants him boons Nachiketa goes for the ultimate knowledge the secret of life and death.

The element of fantasy in Alu is backed by legend of Nachiketa two vital connecting points of magic realism.

Amitav Ghosh uses magic and fantasy in Alu’s head also:
His head had that “big spectacle shacked lump which covered a large part off the back and sides (TCR, P.9)

Boloida gives Alu his life long name as well as part of his identity. No, it’s not like a rock at all. It’s an Alu, a potato, a huge, freshly dug lumpy potato. So Alu he was named and Alu he was to remain.

In the second part, Ghosh focuses on tradition and modernity or discrete oriental and accidental cultures. The history of weaving and the international cloth trade keep on recurring in this and each of subsequent novels. When Balaram decides to make the young Alu a weaver, he convinces him by citing the history of the technology of weaving and how weaving too evokes the cultural instability and porous boundaries, a result of borrowings across borders.

Weaving is not the only binding factor in the novel. GIV Prasad comments on weaving and the accompanying patterns:

“The Circle of Reason is not merely circular but a finely patterned novel and when seen as a whole displays the intricate buti work of a master weaver in the making. The Journey from Satwa through Rajas to Tamas, the three parts of the novel is not a straight forward narrative but one full of resonances harkening back and fourth like an unfolding Raga circling and repeating notes and sequences of notes, each contextnally different. And like a singer, Amitav Ghosh points to and expects appreciation of the subtle variations, the nuances, the resonances, the patterns in the rendition, and hence the whole narrative structure.” (Prasad 2003: 59)

Ghosh focuses on use of Carbolic acid. The carbolic acid creates trouble in al-Ghazira when the displaced persons living around. Zindi decides to clean every house and shop. It is Zindi only who does not believe in this cleanliness movement. He tries to implement cleanliness movement in the foreign place. It result into that they are shot by the police and most of them die except Alu, Zindi, Kulfi and the child Boss. Alu, having saved from the rubble of the collapsed building ‘Star’, lectured them about money. Now Alu is thinking aboput life and death. All returns from deaths door his knowledge only brings doom. We talks
about Louis Pasteur and his failure as Balram had done earlier; Alu believes that he has acquired true knowledge.

There, in the ruins, he (Alu) had discovered what it was that Pasteur had really wanted all his-life-on intangible things, something, he had not understood himself, yet a thing the whole world had conspired to deny him. (TCR, P.280)

Alu lectured the spellbound crowd that this Germ is money. No money, no dirt, Ghosh have been mesmerised by Alu’s people who have been mesmerised by Alu’s speech. In India money is commonly believed to be the root cause of all vices. This is paradoxically depicted. On one hand these people have arrived at the oil city of al Ghazira illegally to try their hands for earning more money, on the other, they are prepared to hand over their earning to professor for safe-keeping. Alu, who was once a silent person and kept weaving continuously, discovers dirt and purity; and becomes an eloquent orator preaching evils of money, Alu believes—that germ, is the root cause of spread of dirt and corruption. We explain to the people of the Ras, the legacy of Pasteur. Pasteur had discovered the enemy that he had never been able to find him.

All his life he had tried to launch War, but, like a shadow the enemy had eluded him and in the end Pasteur had died, defeated and bewildered. (TCR, P.280)

Alu wants to apply the scientific approach in removing the ills of present society when he finally comes out: Alu declares that money is the enemy of mankind.

Which is the battleground which travels on every man and every women, silently preparing them for their defeat, turning one against the other, helping them destroy themselves. (TCR, P.281)

The second part of the novel- Rajas: Passion shows India’s passion for socialism. Linda Hutcheon calls Amitav Ghosh’s The Circle of Reason a “historiographical metafiction.”

The word metafiction attempts to blur the line between fiction and reality. In the novel Magic Realism is indeed a way of showing reality more truly with the help of various magic of metaphor. The Circle of Reason is indeed a story of metaphors. (Hutcheon 1989: 31)
Amitav Ghosh uses elements of fantasy and metaphor to explore his narrative techniques magic realism. In the *The Circle of Reason* various metaphors are used like- Carbolic acid, birds, germs, the life Pasteur and sewing machines etc. are the main metaphors used by Ghosh to explore his plots.

The book ‘*The Life of Pasteur*’ in the novel is a symbole of pure reason while the loom stands for concrete reason. Alu is trapped into the vicious circle of reason. Alu displays care and affection by retrieving the book from fire when Torudebi had set all his books and fire. But he is magically saved from the fire the book life of Pasteur. Carbolic acid, functioning as structural dimension and metaphor, runs through the novel like a cleansing mechanism.

Balaram uses it as an effective disinfectant to keep the settlements of the refugges clean and force from dirt, disease and death. Carbolic acid is also works as a psychological therapy, as a means of awakening the dormant villagers against the repressive suffrcation unleashed by the village strong-man.

Sewing Machines indeed save the life of Alu when he falls beneath the collupled building named ‘Star’. Two sewing machines take away the impact of the fall. Sewing mahines were initially the passion of Toru-Debi. Ghosh, in *The Circle of Reason* showing life as a journey larger than death, The Circle makes death find its identity in the horror and sadness which embalms this process.

Balaram and Alu consider Pasteur to be reason incarnate. He is an ideal scientist who knows the treatment to cure the ills of the world. They consider his scientific theories and discoveries absolute and valid in all matters of practical life. Thus Balaram and Alu live in the inventions of Western Science believing in tis claims, but their beliefs do not correspond with practical reality. When the people of Ras decide to go on
a shopping spree, they dance jubilantly and the remark of Ismail. Haji Fahmy’s son becomes a bitter augury of the disaster that is to follow. Abu Sahal invites him to dance and he replies,

   The germs are out today, they are all around the bed. I can’t get off… they are all over the floor, can’t you see. (TCR, P.339)

   The ASP, Jyoti Das is already on Alu’s trail from India. When the police get the news of Alu and his companions going on a shopping spree, they suspect their motive. Actually, the Ras people were going to the ‘Star’, to the site where Alu lay buried for two days. They wanted to buy for him the two sewing machines that had saved his (Alu) life as a token for all that he had done for them. He had restored then a sense of self respect and dignity in the rich town of Al-Ghazira. But unfortunately the police open fire killing some of them. Alu, Zindi, and Kulfī anlong with Boss (Karthamma’s son) escaped to El oued in Algeria.

   Ghosh narrates in a chain of thoughts. Ghosh describes one incident and if the incident links to any past happening he immediately goes to that past incident. This shifting of times in the novel has its own logic.

   Ghosh derives there from *The Bhagavad Gita*. Satwa is described as light of consciousness by most scholars and it is called reason in this novel. However, this reason is essentially based on western thought with its components like rational thinking, scientifically choosing between right and wrong, discording superstitions, progressive attitude, and advanced civilization.

   In the IIInd part of the novel Alu, alone in the desert, is terrified of the future. Jyoti Das is enchanted by Kulfī but even as he starts wooing her when they rehearse for the dance drama Chintragada, Kulfī dies of a heart attack.
Birds, as Joyti das sees them, contribute to the central idea of the novel. As he observes birds at various times, they seem to highlight a journey from water to desert and in the end again to water. Jyoti Das recalls that he saw ducks and cormorants and stroks when he had visited the zoo, then he is in search of paradies.

The most interesting character in the novel is Jeevanbhai Patel a business man from Gujrat. The Durban Tailoring House belongs to him. He constantly worships money. According to him ‘money is power and knowledge.’ He moves from place to place, loses his name and fame, struggles a lot in his life, and after his wife’s death (Bhoragirl), once again he succeeds in establishing his business. He is the founder of New Life Marriage Bureau. He constantly lives under the shadow of death, and one day he hangs himself with his belf, lonely without relatives.

The character of Dr. Mishra appears in the third section of the novel. Apart from being a doctor, he knows Sanskrit and Indian scriptures. He is a rationalist like Balaram. We can see the mark of his genius when he says,

“The world has come full circle, he groaned. Carbolic acid has become holy water. (TCR, P.444)

In the third part of the novel Ghosh depicts the Zindi’s character is fully developed, Zindi’s full name is Zindi al-Tiffaha. Formerly she was a prostitute and brothel owner. Ghosh describes:

She is clad all the time in “black deress which enveloped her in a coccon of cloth, billowing outwards with quivering breast rested on her stomach and then ballooning over her massive hips to fall to the ground like a tent over her feet. (TCR, P.185)

In Part III Ghosh narrates politics and power emotions within India. There are a set of people, traditional and perhaps out dated, who are worried about decolonizing what the British did in India. The novel focused on decolonization and neo-colonization of the globe by
multinational companies. The novel also tries to point out how
democracy has failed in this country.

Ghosh attacks both the colonizers and the colonized; the colonizers
because of the harm they have done and the colonized for their hypocrisy
and lack of sincerity. One day Mrs. Verma shouts at Misra.

Who sabotaged Lohia? Don’t think we’ve forgotten. We’ve forgotten nothing. We
know your kind inside and outside, through and through. We’ve heard your sugary
speeches and we’ve seen the snakes hidden up your sleeves: “we’ve seen you
wallowing in filth with the congress while High Theory drips from your mouths.
We’ve heard you spouting about the misery of the masses while your fingers dig into
their pockets. (TCR, P. 411)

In the third part Tamas: Death we find the trio in Elqued on the
north eastern edge of Algerian Sahara. Tamas also indicates a tendency to
decay, to die. Dr. Uma Verma helps Zindi, Alu and Kulfi- the same way
she helped Joyti Das. In Dr. Uma Verma’s library, Alu finds the book life
of pasternr given to her by her father Dantu who was a friend of
Balaram’s. Zindi and Alu meet metaphoric deaths as Zindi is no more the
same powerful and dominant woman.

In the novel there is a mockery of Hindu death rituals, as carbolic
acid is considered as pure as Gangajal, and put in Kulfi’s mouth. Throughout the novel, Ghosh makes fun of the so-called scientific
attitude, rationalism, and Hindu philosophy and rituals.

Satva: Symbolizes the search of wisdom. Rajas symbolizes the life
of passion Tamas stands for darkness and destruction. The number of
pages devoted for each part that is 189 pages for satwa, reason 160 pages
for rajas passion and 74 pages for Tamas.

Besides Alu, Balaram, Zindi’s story the Indian, Puranic manner
stories are interwoven. The story of Chitrangada, a dance drama written
by Tagore, originally it was told by Hem Narian to his daughter
Dr.Verma now in the novel Dr. Verma tells it to Dr.Mishra to seek his
opinion in order to enact it during the annual gathering of Indians in EI Oud. The theme of story is that we should not give much importance to physical appearance and the inner beauty is more important than the exterior beauty.

This narrative device serves the purpose of decolonizing from the Western tradition of novel writing and reinstating the tradition of colonized countries.

Ghosh depicts Alu’s mystical renunciation of profit sends Zindi into paroxysms of concern. So, she plans to purchase Jeevanbhai Patel’s Durbon Tailoring shop and start business. But, before her plan materializes Jeevan Bhai commits suicide. Though it is not male explicit, Jeevanbhai has been acting as a spy and has betrayed Alu to Jyoti Das. In the procession to fight against money several of Alu’s followers die but, Zindi, Kulfi, baby Boss and Alu move further west to Algeria.

At, EI Oud in Algeria Alu and Kulfi presented as a couple. They call themselves as Mr. & Mrs. Bose and Boss is their son and Zindi acts as their ayah.

Balaram’s mission of using carbolic acid in part first has not been stopped. It is continued in the third episode of Dr. Uma in EI Oud. Zindi, Alu, Kulfi along with Boss happen to meet Mr. Uma in Indian doctor. On taking Boss to Uma for treatment for his fever, they are sheltered in Uma’s house. Unfortunately Kulfi dies while doing the rehearsal. While performing the funeral rites of Kulfi a dispute arises. The conservative Dr. Mishra insists upon the Gangas water to be dropped in the mouth of Kulfi and to clean the corpse and the place. Whereas Dr. Uma uses carbolic acid instead of the Gangas water to carry out the funeral. This evokes appropriation and hybridization of the western concept. Definitely it is not an espousal of Western Science because Alu and Dr. Uma realize
the futility of western science and decide to burn the book the *Life of Pasteur* along with the corpse of Kulfi on pyre:

I don’t want your book, he said in a rush, holding it out to her. The *Life of Pasteur* …..Oh, she said, pushing it back, that’s a problem. I don’t want it, either, what do we do with it now? I don’t know, Alu said, she took the book from him and turned it over in her hands. Then she gave it back to him. May be we could give it a funeral, too? She said, she left him staring at it silence. After a long while he raised it high in both his hands and placed it reverently on pyre. (TCR, P.415)

From the funeral of *Life of Pasteur*, it is very clear that Alu and Dr.Verma are disillusioned with the Western Science. It also marks the subversion of Western Science and Reason. Balaram and Hem Narian have reverence for *Life of Pasteur* and preserved it. But Alu and Dr.Uma, heirs of Balaram and Hem Narian respectively, respect it but place it finally on the funeral pyre. Alu and Dr.Uma, who represent the second generation of beneficiaries of science, by rejecting life of Pasteur,

In the novel, The ‘Circle’ is closing, for if Balaram came to his vision of reason through biology, attacking deviant microbes with his panacea of carbolic acid, Dr.Verma comes to a Hindu reverence of life also from a basic in microbiology. Dr.Varma even has a life of Pasteur. In it she points to Alu that the germ brings both death and makes the possibility of life.

It says without the germ life would be impossible because death would be incomplete (TCR, P.356)

*The Circle of Reason* moves through an intricate weaving to backwards and forwards in time. Narrative sequence is constantly frustrated by the intrusion of memory working not as in James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, as a stream of consciousness, so much as remembered family histories, restructured in a search for meaning.

Amitav Ghosh based his narration on the facts and figures of history but uses his imagination to recreate the live atmosphere it was
deliving into the minds, attitude and behaviour patterns of people and how their collective thinking and behaviours modulated and controlled their lives. *The Circle of Reason* deals with the continuing tradition of culture exchange for India westwards across the Indian Ocean to the Gulf states and Egypt.

*The Shadow Lines* (1998) represents the different narratives of the self and nation which can conflict only with the destructive results. Set in Calcutta of the year 1960s, it moves through Calcutta and Dhaka and London. The time span of the novel extends from 1939 to 1979 with 1994 being a very important year for the characters. Memory links the past and the present.

In *The Circle of Reason* convention is a postmodern way fragmented, provisional and openly subjective. The collusion of orthodoxy and unorthodoxy in the last part of the novel, results in a magical contortion of reality. The serious business of cremating Kulfi in the desert assumes mock-serious proportions when Dr. Mishra says:-

“Poor Mrs. Bose….Didn’t she know that she ought to have made a gift of cow to a Brahmin before dying? All she had to do was to call out for me, I’ve always wante a cow…..she’ll be stauk on the banks of vaitrani’ with no cow to lead her across it into the underworld (TCR, P.407-08)

The third and the last section of the novel *Tamas: Death*, Ghosh narrates the rigid line of demarckation set between pure scientific reason and the values of real life, between rigid scientific principles and the goodness of human heart. In this section Ghosh introduces Mrs. Uma Verma, a microbiologist. She is the daughter of Dantu i.e. Hem Narian Mathur, Balaram’s college mate. The book *The Life of Pasteur* holds a place of pride in bookshelf of Mrs. Verma, which belongs to her father.

Amitav Ghosh is a story-teller almost equal in Indian English to R.K. Narayan. Ghosh is one who sympathies with the attempts of his characters, however they may seem to be ridiculous. It is due to Ghosh’s
involvement in the same enterprise as his characters, and hence he is bound to be less distant than other master-story-tellers, more anxious to ensure that the point gets across, eager to make clear that there is a point to the stories of his characters. *The Circle of Reason* provides not one, but many stories knitted around three characters. And these stories are telling about science, philosophy, history, politics, culture, art, language, the joy of living, the despair of repeated loss etc.

In this part of the novel Ghosh narrates a new story of Mrs. Verma, who out rightly rejects traditional thinking Mrs. Verma tries her hand at creating an Indian model of community life in the desert of Algeria. In Algeria, Alu finds a new community with Zindi and seeks a new rootedness in a foreign land to be sure, but with a sense of new connection. In Algeria, Zindi, Alu and Kulfi pretend to be married, and they call themselves Mr. and Mrs. Bose. In this new setting, we are introduced to a small emigrant Indian community Mrs. and Mrs.Verma, Mr. & Mrs. Mishra, and Miss KrishnaSwamy, the nurse.

In the third part Ghosh presents the dichotomy between the chance of reason and the story of connection take on a political edge when, in something of set piece, Ghosh portrays an exilic Indian community in this novel though few in number, they are sharply drawn and displayed as being at each others throats, vying for authnectibility as the spokes person for an ‘authentic’ Indian culture. In this regard, Mrs. Verma decidedly gets the better of the argument, which expressing a sincere appreciation of Hinduism. For exam- While Dr.Mishra seems completely deracinated. The ironies mount up, as they propose to put on a tableau vivant of the tale of Chitrangada and Arjuna, with Kulfi, former prostitute, as the heroin.

*The Circle of Reason* as its title suggests, is a novel that closely examines philosophies of reason, and the science and technology that is
associated with these philosophies. Dr. Mishra clearly knows the detailed rubrics involved in Hindu rituals, but he has not imbibed its true spirit.

Uma’s father devoted his life for the upliftment of rural masses with his knowledge and wisdom of books and scientific theories, but he remained as an unsung hero in history. Like her father, Uma doesn’t approach life with a get of predetermined rules and principles. She doesn’t search for the causes of ills in human body or society. Uma firmly believes in the human touch, that is necessary while dealing with crisis in life.

…..the tyranny of your despotic science forbade you to tell them the one thing that was worth saying the one thing that was true. And that was there is nothing wrong with your body all you have to do cure yourself is try to be a better human being. (TCR, P.413)

Uma knows the difference between the abstract world of books and theories she doesn’t believe in the fixed principles of different ideologies of science, religion or socialism. That’s why she tells Dr. Mishra, “You worry about rules and I worry about being human.”

In case of Uma, the act is more important than the philosophy. She tells Dr. Mishra:

what does it matter whether its Ganga-jal or Carbolic acid? It’s just a question of cleaning the place, isn’t it? People thought something else clean once, now they think something else clean? What difference does it make to the dead, Dr. Mishra? (TCR, P. 411)

It focuses on Uma’s practical approach towards the tradition and religion. It may also depict the encounter between tradition and modernity.

Uma’s plain and human logic transforms Alu. Both of them give the copy of, *The Life of Pasteur* a burial with Kulfi’s corpse. Alu gains an insight into life. It is journey doesn’t end in El Oued. In fact, it signifies hope, a new beginning. Alu’s journey enables him to attain freedom-
freedom from past from its legacies and ideologies. Now Alu has fixed his eyes on the future. Amitav Ghosh says,

The circle of cloud, within the parameters that I have used here, be indentified as an exodus novel, a story of migration in the classic sense of having its gazeturned firmly towards the future (TCR, P.314)

The tries in El-Oued on the north-eastern edge of the Algeria Sahara are helped by Dr.Uma Verma. She gives shelter to Jyoti Das, the Indian police officer who had followed Alu at al-Ghazira to El-Oued. Here, Alu finds the book *The Life of Pasteur* in the library of Dr.Uma Verma that was given to her by her father Dantu who was a friend of Balaram. Ghosh connects up the third part with the first with carbolic acid and *The Life of Pasteur*.

In *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh mocks at the Hindu death rituals. It is carbolic acid that is considered to be as ‘pure’ as Ganga-jal and put in Kulfi’s mouth. Througout the novel, the novelist has mocked at the so-called scientific attitude, rationalism, Hindu philosophy and rituals. The novelist pointed out to the blind faith of millions of Indians in Ganga-jal even though the water of the giving river is so badly polluted.

In the manner of Rushdie and Marquez there is a fine blend of fantasy and realism in the novel helped by myths and symbols. Indian myth and European myth meet and mingle in the character of Shombu Debnath. The way he learns the secrets of jamdani weaving from the Boshaks has echoes both of the legend of Karna and the promethean legend.

Alu returnes home like Karna he carries the curse of his guru on his head. Just as Karna’s knowledge of weapons deserts him at the mist crucial point of his life, Debnath’s knowledge is refused by his people when he tries to teach them his newly acquired art. As we examine the fantasy and realism, the myths and symbols we realize that the *The Circle*
of Reason is some thing more than just a picaresque novel. It is an allegorical commentary on the contemporary situation which makes us sit up and ponder deeply over the message the book contains. As Shombhu Debnath says:

“Skill is not enough: you have all that you ever will. Technique is just the beginning. The world is your challenges now, look around you and see if your loom can encompass”. (TCR, P.88)

The novel seems to suggest that every thing is actually a matter of how we look at it. Attitudes matter. History is no unchangeable it, very much get molded by the way we look at it. Time in this novel is characterized by remarkable fluidity. The lives that this novel depicts are all lived on brink of abnormality. These are dangerously lived lives driven by focused passions. The charactersd are uncompromising. They are mostly talented people given to their specific causes. They fire within them may not be visible at times, but it is always there. Amitav Ghosh builds his extraordinary tale with the help of extraordinary characters. This novel The Circle of Reason places Amitav Ghosh as a master craftman in the art of fiction. Darshana Trivedi remakrs:

…the most significant novel by Amitav Ghosh deals with the modern man’s problem of alienation, migration and the existential crisis in life. Divided into three different sections called Satva: Reason, Rajas: Passion and Tamas: death. The novel symbolically deals with the three phases of human life. Satva: symbolizes the search of wisdom, Rajas symbolizes the life of passion and Tamas stands for darkness, and destruction. (Trivedi 2001: 34)

The last section Tamas: Death indicates a tendency to decay or to die. Here, we find Zindi (a landlord lady), Alu and Kulfi in the small town El Oued located in the mid Sahara desert. Zindi and Alu meet metaphoric deaths as Zindi is no more the same powerful and dominant woman, and Alu for whom weaving has been an expression of his self, is unable to weave as his thumb has gone stif. There is also a description of
the death of the nun who died by falling over board of the ship culminates in the death of Kulfi who Jyoti Das wool her, during the rehearsal of ‘Chitrangada’ life of Pasteur falls open presaging death.

“Life would become impossible because death would be incomplete.” (TSL, P. 356)

Zindi describes Mr. Verma’s house as a house of death. I can smell death in this house. Its there in writing one of us isn’t going to leave this house alive. Still, at the end, there are hints of restoration of life, of reason; there comes a new realization, a new light as Mr. Verma says:

If there’s one thing people learn from the past, it is that every consummated death is another beginning (TCR, P.414)

In the last section of the novel Ghosh presents the place of religion in postcolonial societies, societies that have emerged out of a negotiation with European modernity. It also considered the character of socialism, but this time as it is championed by members of the Indian bourgeoisie, and once again the novelist has depicted the experience of diasporic migration.

In the last passage of the novel the subaltern migrants are shown much vulnerable and desperate. After passing through Egypt, they return to Zindi’s village. Alu, Zindi and Boss comprise and unlike holy family of surviving subaltern migrants. They experience a sense of resignation rather than oxultation.

But Boss was looking the other way, towards the Atlantic, and soon they were looking there, too, scanning the water. They saw nothing expect sleepy, crawling oilatankers, so drowsily warmed by the clear sunlight, they settled down to wait for virat singh and the ship that was to carry them home. (TCR, P.423)

The new Indian novel in English is a phenomenon of the 1980s. The founder was Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children. Realistic fiction and chronological narrative have been discarded, as being insufficient to convey the vastness and complexities of experience and life. Allegory, symbols, fantasy, magical realism, narrative fluctuating backwards and
forward in time, the compelling use of narrator, fluency in story telling and the unveiling of layers and layers of meaning have all becomes a mode of writing.

Hence, through Magic Realism Ghosh made distinction between man at the loom as mechanical man and the loom as a traditional craft, the novelist points up the narrative’s larger description of moral and historical distinctions between modernity and tradition, West and East. Ghosh means that the machines of weaving are the oldest and most fundamental manifestation of the reasoning mind. Ghosh also means the cloth is reason, it explains histories, the making and breaking of empires, the movements of people why they (people) are where they are and how they are

Thus, the novel The Circle of Reason focuses one the absurdity of perceiving life with the inflexible framework of logic and reason. Ghosh’s point of view is that logic and rationality need to be merged with emotions in the day-to-day life affairs of modern society. Ghosh’s anxiety is that scientific principles can possibly lead us away from human emotions morality and purity of feelings. Hence the vicious circle of reason needs to be destroyed the germ causing contamination of human body and the germ of dirt and money causing corruption can not be eliminated. The germ is inherent part of the two. And the remedy lies in shunning the perception of establishing an ideal germless society that may be free from dirt, greed, money and corruption. By means of different types of characters, Ghosh has depicted the multiple versions of reality and the disaster that the aspiration of having an ideal society based on pure reason and logic can bring in different societies at different times.

In the novel Alu’s campaign to destroy the power of money which Alu has identified the root of all evil, is crushed. The campaign of Alu is depicted through Magic Realism in the novel.
All the characters in the novel are caught up in a futile circle. Alu’s and Maya’s non-productive love for each other, Mast Ram’s one sided love for Kulfi, Kulfi and Abusa’s love for each other; Jyoti Das’s infatuation for Kulfi and Alu and Karthamma’s love, all affairs are famires. Balaram’s school of Reason, Zindi’s attempts to purchase Durban taioloring house, Toru’ Debi’s attempts at making blouses for Parboti Debi, Ghaziri people’s zealous mission to bring sewing machines and the desire to get rid of money. Jeevanbhaus cunning attempts to establish Malik’s superemaly and consequently his own; and Mrs Verma’s plan to put up Chitranganda are, utter failures. Jyoti Das chases Alu but he is suspended. All the characters are trapped in unproductive circle and reap nothingness. But still hope never dies as the novelist himself says, “Hope is the beginning.”

The characters in *The Circle of Reason* think that they are walking a straight line, but they go round, powered by hope, in the non-productive circle that life too often imposes on the poor.

Through *The Circle of Reason* Amitav Ghosh portrayed his disasporic feelings, loss of homeland and rootlessness which were clearly understandable and warmly left. Towards the end of the novel, Mrs. Verma is shown using carbolic acid instead of Ganga Jal:

“What does it matter whether it is Ganga Jal or Carbolic acid? It is just a question of cleaning the place isn’t it? People through something was clean once, now they think something else is clean. What differenced does it make to the Dead, Dr.Mishra?”

(TCR, P.411)

The story of the book comes to an end when deying all efforts by Balaram and Alu, Kulfi eventually die. Her death is the defeat of reason because the course of action doesn’t move along rational lines as the author says:

“Without the germ, life would become impossible because death would be incomplete (TCR, P.396)
Though, the title of the novel seems to believe any magical content, the contradiction inherent in it cancels the rational in favour of the cyclical. Magic Realism is indeed an attitude on the part of the characters towards the world. They think that they are moving is a straight line, but they are actually going round in that non-productive circle that life too mysteriously imposes on them. Surely, “if you can explain it, then it’s not magical realism’ (Wikipedia)

It is quite obvious that characters tale is told by the novelist himself. Ghosh tries to weave together the different stories through reference of sweing machines, carbolic acid, life of Pasteur, money and dirt, purity and cleanliness, and rationalism and science. He uses all these devices to make a coherent whole of the novel. Alu’s love for weaving is the only metaphor that binds and weaves the episodes together.

In the novel The Circle of Reason Ghosh focuses on creative abilities of his characters. Balaram at Lalpukar is obsessed with Phrenolgy and carbolic acid; Toru-Debi, wife of Balaram, is always preraupied with the world of sewing machines; Alu with weaking; Jyoti Das, the only character to have accoumpained Alu through the three parts from the structural entities, is called a Bird man; Zindi herself is obsessed with Durban Tailoring House; and Professor Samuel with theories of queues.
The first part of the novel *The Shadow Lines* ‘Going away’ deals with the family’s exist from Dhaka during, the riot ridden days of the partition and the second part of the novel ‘Home coming’ deals with the grandmother’s futile attempts to rescue her only living uncle ‘Jethamosai’ from their ancestral home surrounded by Muslim refugees who would become violent at times.
The second half of the fourth chapter deals with Magic Realism in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines*. *The Shadow Lines* is a good example of Magic Realism. This novel explores the Ghosh’s major concern about wider, cross border humanity with striking insights into the issues of ethnic nationaslim and communalism; it also reveals new levels of this technical skill.

The postmodernist writers have widely used the storytelling technique. Lyotard gives the famous postmodern condition in which the accounts of power, value and knowledge amount to nothing but telling stories.

“Producing narratives from a series of indifferently assumed position” (Reading 1992: 65)

The Indian postmodernist writers have also adopted from the classical Indian tales like Panchtantra, Brihatkatha and Kathasaritsagar where in the main tale consists of many others. In *The Circle of Reason*, Ghosh has successfully employed this story telling technique. Though Ghosh does not use this technique as explicity and extensively as he had used it in *The Circle of Reason* he uses it thus producing a tremendous impact. The first person narrator tells his stories supplemented with the ones he had heard from others from Tridib, from Ila and mainly from his grandmother.

The narrator of *The Shadow Lines* uses sub-narratives to explain matters he could not have known:

Still shooting, I told them the truth as I knew it: that Tridib had been to London, with his parents, many years ago, when he was a boy…. (TSL, P.12)

*The Shadow Lines* is written in a first narrative, but as Ghosh fuses family chronicle, political and social document with the main autobiography it becomes imperative to have a more complex narrative device. Hence, the first person narrative is used from a dual viewpoint that of the child and the adult “I”, this technique enables the writer to
coalesce past and present together. It is similar to Toni Morrison’s ‘The Bluest Eye’ wherein she has used the perspective of Claudia as a little girl and Caludia as an adult. The narrative voice now that of the child’s, now the adults criss-crosses the novel. The adult narrator makes comments with depth and understanding on the child narrator’s naive observations. This multiple narrative scheme gains one more level as the narrators consciousness meditates and frames other voices, stories and experiences.

Ghosh uses multiple narrative technique child narrator, adult narrator and (Ila’s creep) with great tact and power. The child narrator never comes to know things that the adult is supposed to know, while on the other hand the grown-up-narrator possesses the ability to analyze the complexities of human life and relationship with the help of his childhood memories and newly acclaimed knowledge and sensitivity.

*The Shadow Lines* began to be written after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the year 1984. The riots and the general massacre that began in Delhi and followed in other cities have on oblique bearing on the novel. *The Shadow Lines* led him backward in time to earlier memories of riots, once witnessed in childhood. It became, says Ghosh, “a book not about any on event, but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them.”

*The Shadow Lines* is a family saga which rides through the currents of history. The novel covers a large span of period: it tells the story of the three generations of the narrator’s family spread over Dhaka, Calcutta and London. Chronologically, the story begins with a passage about the time in colonial India when the narrator was not even born.

“In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my father’s aunt, Mayadebi, went to England with her husband and her son, Tridib.” (TSL, P.1)

The first part of the novel *Going away* deals with the family’s exist from Dhaka during, the riot Ridden days of the partition, and the
second part of the novel ‘Homecoming’ deals with the grand mother’s futile attempts to rescue her only living uncle ‘Jethamosai’ from their ancestral home surrounded by Muslim refugees who would become violent at time.

In the second part of the novel Ghosh focus to the Indian subcontinent, mainly to Calcutta and Dhaka where he tries to find the meanings of political freedom.

Amitav Ghosh utilizes the device of the folk-tale and fairy tale to relate the past to the present. The childhood memories of happenings and adulthood experiences of life, of “heard things, imagined events and experiencing realisties” are skillfully brought together by the shifting narration of the child narrator and adult narrator. The perspectives change and understanding follows.

The Shadow Lines explore the narratory growth from a tiny world, reverent of this mentor to a matured and grown up man of the same age as Tridib and in London too. So great is the influence of tridib that he warily or unwarily copies him and toes his line. The narrator does his Ph.D. on the textile trade between India and England in 19th century as tridib did on Sena dynasty of Bengal.

In The Shadow Lines, Ghosh tells the tale of two families, one is in India (Dutta Choudary) and other is in England (Prices) Time and distance in the novel are illusory. The novel moves back and forth and the events are not narrated sequentially. The narrator is a man with great and penetrating insight. He cannot only peep into the past and future but also into the lives of characters.

The narrator is forced to ponder on various issues and he is ultimately made to realize the shortcoming of identity on the basis of national divides. Significantly, the narrator remains unnamed throughout the novel. This is quite intentional on the part of the novelist. Amitav
Ghosh, by this design, perhaps tries to convey the message that identity can not be arrested in a proper name; a name is not an identity; identity is self-revelation and the quest for identity is the quest for ‘self-a-journey towards the discovery of the self. The narrator discovers himself and shapes his identity in and through his response to the characters he engages with.

The narrator is mostly influenced by Tridib who enables him to recognize the liberating power of the imagination. The narrator lives through the experiences of Tridib; most of his activities reflect the activities of Tridib, such as, his first visit to London is almost literal replication of Tridib’s first visit to London. Significantly, before the death of Tridib, the narrator has been and experienced the world through the eyes of Tridib, and after his death the starts exploring him and the world as if he were Tridib himself. Hence, the narrator seems to shape himself in the identity of Tridib which was hidden within him right from his childhood, and this is justified by the ending of the novel. Where the Narrator and May are found to have physically united?

Narrator’s grand-mother dies in Calcutta in his absence and is cremated, and he feels guilty.

“She had always been too passionate a person to find a real place in my tidy late bourgeois world the world that I had inherited in which examinations were more important than death” (TSL, P.90)

Near her death, his grandmother correctly summarises that he had visited prostitutes in Delhi, and she passes the information along to his death. In order to save his academic career, he denies the accusation.

Part one **Going away** ends with the narrator looking back eighteen years, when Ila went away to London for University even though she knew he loved her, and thereby

“Wrenched (him) into adulthood by demonstrating for the first time, and for ever the inequality of (their) needs. (TSL, P.110)
The narrator focuses on Tridib-May relationship, we find that their identity is not subject to any border; here identity is too restrained by any cultural or national boundary, rather it is enhanced by the concern and respect for one another. Here we find neither the rejection of the existing identity nor the acceptance of a new one; rather we find a mutual sharing of identity through understanding. It is this understanding that makes May realize that her behaviour is not acceptance when she kisses Tridib at the Calcutta Railway station. This implies that human being acquires identity and self-consciousness only through the recognition of the ‘other’. Each self has before it another self, in and through which it secures its identity. May recognizes the cultural identity of Tridib and this prevents her from imposing her own cultural behaviour while dealing with Tridib and other members of his family. This in a way makes them to understand and accept the cross cultural and transnationalistic identity of man.

*The Shadow Lines* is set in Calcutta of the 1960s and moves with a easy felicity through Calcutta and Dhaka and London. It has usually been interpreted in terms of what Novy Kapadia calls it ‘political nuances and its portrayal of interpersonal relationship of ten viewed as a kind of metaphor, an objective correlative, for the truths embodied in the tittle of the novel. The first section (‘Going Away’) depicts the condition of India after partition and the second section (Coming Home) as the title indicated, the returning to own home before partition. The maps and the mirrors that Meenkshi Mukherjee noted:

‘Identical realities across territorial borders which are originally meant to mark out differences or across communities that are imagined to be different, reiterate the theme of the novel as spelt out in the title.’ (Mukherjee 1970: 40)

In an essay published in 1995, Ghosh stated that he got inspiration to write this book from the anti-Sikh riots of 84’ in Delhi. He says;
“It became a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them” (Ghosh: 1975)

Interview to India Today in April 2000, Amitav Ghosh has declared that his early novels, including The Shadow Lines; are about the castaways of history.

In The Shadow Lines the narrator meditates on the difference between ‘coming’ and ‘going’ in the context of his grandmother’s journey to the town of her birth, Dhaka, but a town that post-1947 and Indian independence has become a foreign place to her. The narrator says;

Every language assumes a centrality, a fixed and settled point to go away from and come back to, and what my grandmother was looking for was a word for a journey which was not a coming or a going at all; a journey that was a search for precisely that fixed point which permits the proper use of verbs of movement. (TSL, P.150)

Beyond the specific historical realities which have complicated the distinction between going and coming in the Shadow Line.

The title alludes to the blurring of the lines between nations and families as well as the blurred lines within one’s own self-identity. Ghosh depicts the characters of the novel as caught between two worlds, and the struggle to come to terms with both their present lives as well as their past, forms the core of the narrative.

The Shadow Lines, the term lines in the title symbolically represent all such lines that divide nations and peoples in the name of nationaslim, religion, language and caste. What is new in the novel is that the novelist denies the very existence of these lines and hence calls them ‘Shadow’ or ‘illusory.’ This makes the novel debated whether it is about ‘the meaning of political freedom in the modern world or an escape from the reality.

The first person narrator in The Shadow Line is a well experienced adult who looks back into his childhood and recollects his evolution into
a research scholar and the memories of his personal life are recalled and narrated in the context of public chronicles-partition of India, riots, the Second World War, the partition of Pakistan; India’s war with China and Pakistan, Communal riots in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan and other incidents of consequence that happened between 1939 and 1980. *The Shadow Lines* appears to be structured on a pattern contrast between imagination and reality, present and past, childhood experience and an adult’s response to them. The two sets run almost parallel to each other. This is a recurrent device used in this novel and it gives a cinematic effect and metaphorically serves to expose the illusory nature of the dividing lines between the present and the past.

*The Shadow Lines* is divided into two parts’ **Going away** and **Coming home**. Both parts are journey images. But they are also related to home. It is interesting to see how the unnamed narrator weaves together the multiple stories of three generation of two families Mayadevi and Mrs. Price, past and present, private and public life, childhood and adulthood, love and violence, India, Bangladesh and Britain, partition of India and Pakistan, Meenakshi Mukherjee rightly says:

“The apparently simple narrative of The Shadow Lines is in fact a complex jigsaw puzzle of vaunted time and place segments including some magic pieces that mirror other” (Mukharjee : 1970:40)

*The Shadow Lines* deals with events and actions and things, which are suffered and done, and this is what that constitutes the plot. The plot means- a systematic organization and arrangement of incidents.

*The Shadow Lines* began to be written after the assassination of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in the year 1984. The riots and the general massacre that began in Delhi and followed in other cities have an oblique bearing on the novel, the undertones of political vendetta are pervasive in the
novel and can be felt when the efficacy of nationalism is questioned in trady’s context.

In History in 1905, Lord Curzon, one of the able viceroys to rule India, tried to split Bengal into two halves on the plea of better administration and management. He tried to take advantage of the religious gulf between the two major communities but his efforts ended in failure in 1911 when the Bengalis irrespective of their religious got together and a bloody revolt proved that Bengalis were more prone to nationalist sentiments than to religious passion.

In The Shadow Line Ghosh narrates a story of two families, one is Indian and other is English. The Indian family is further subdivided into two families. They are Choudharys. One consists of the unnamed narrator, his parents and grandmother, Tha’mma. The other family comprises Mayadebi and her husband, the Saheb. They have three sons. Jatin, the eldest son, an economist with the United Nation and is settled abroad with his wife and daughter Ila. The younger son, Tridib, stays in Calcutta, pursing his Ph.D. in Archeology. The youngest son is Robi who lives with his parents. The English family of the Price is settled in London. It consists of Mrs. Price, a widow and her two children May and Nick price. The close family ties between the families had prevailed since the decades. It dates back to the friendship established between Lionel Tresawen, Mrs.Price’s father and justice chandrashekhar, Uatta. Choudhary, Tridib’s grand father.

The Shadow Lines is a complex novel interweaving memory and contemporary life. More memory than contemporary life. It converges on the traumatic life of a family, in Calcutta and Dhaka in 1964. When a member of the family, Tridib was killed in a communal riot?
There are sixteen sections in the first part (Going Away) and fifteen in the second part, but the sections do not add up to an organic whole with a proper beginning, middle and ending Nivedita Bagchi observes;

“The story or the chief narrative line evolves sporadically and is constantly interrupted and diverted by other narratives. The only fixed center is that of the chief narrative voice through whom the other narratives are filtered.” (Bagchi 1993: 188)

Amitav Ghosh tells us that he was greatly upset by the riots that followed Indira Gandhi’s assassination, and that his novel came out of the turmoil of that moment. The incident revived his memories of 1964 riots in Calcutta, Dhaka and elsewhere, ‘an enormous crevasse had opened.” It was when he was living with a ‘conflict; or we may say, having ‘a quarrel with himself’, that he felt impelled to write the novel.

*The Shadow Lines* is based on historical reality, it creates a complete piece of fiction.

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* is a memory novel. Then one question rose before us: What is memory? We know that memory is a psychological process as much integral to our consciousness as thinking is. We are rational because we think, and also because we memories. We use there faculties consciously when we learn our lesson for taking examinations, or subconsciously when different experiences leave their impressions on our minds, without our becoming aware of this. So, both thinking and memory are the very essence of our rationality; they contribute equally to our learning. But, then, they are not identical. Memory is both rational and emotive. This is why; it is an apt instrument and sustainer of the creation of a work of literary art.

Socrates long ago mentioned some important features of memory, which we need to discuss in the context of The Shadow Lines.
Socrates said to Theaetetus about memory:
Imagine, then, for the sake of argument, that our minds contain a block of wax, which in this or that individual may be larger or smaller, and composed of wax that is comparatively pure or muddy, and harder in some, softer in others, and sometimes just the right consistency. Let us call it the gift of the ‘Muses’ mother. Memory, and say that whenever we wish to remember something we see or hear or conceive in our own minds, we hold this wax under perceptions or ideal and imprint them on it as we might stamp the impression of a seal-ring. Whatever is so imprinted we remember and know so long as the image remains; whatever is rubbed out or has not succeeded in leaving an impression we have forgotten or do not know? (Socrates 1935: 121)

*The Shadow Lines* is a once upon a time type of story narrated autobiographically yet with a multiple perspective, using memory as a means of recapturing fragments of the past. Though it begins at the beginning in the London during 1939 war period and ends in the London in 1979, it takes us back and forth in time and space, going away and returning home both geographically and intellectually. All the characters are often on the move, traveling with their own experiences, their acquired experiences through imagination and then reliving the past linking it with the present realities. The journey motif is clearly established through the title of the two parts *Going Away* and *Coming Home*. They elude the first moving to outward and then returning to the interior under standing and knowledge of the living forces of life. The past and the present are intricately woven with memory linking the events magically. Memory is bound to focus on certain aspects accurately and on certain in blurred manner. The narrator emphasizes the tricks that memory plays:

….I cannot remember when it happened or I don’t know, I cannot tell; (TSL, P.13)

Amitav Ghosh in his *The Shadow Lines* makes the narrator to recall his own experiences with a fondness another emotive element. Take for instance the narrator’s following recollection of an incident is a good example of memory or once upon type of novel.
When I was about nine Tridib once stayed away from his haunts for so long that regulars began to wonder what had happened to him. Then, one evening I heard that he had surfaced at Gole park again. I found him and heard him say ‘I have been to London; I have English relatives through marriage.’ It was then that I cried; Tridibda, you made a mistake. You were in your room, smoking there was a howl of laughter and a chorus of exclamations; you fraud, you liar you haven’t been anywhere; another sharper voice broke in and said the fact is that he is a nut he has never been anywhere outside Calcutta. (TSL, P. 12)

In *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh depicts the world of memories and reminiscences with the narrator recalling his past associations in order to trace the gradual shaping of his vision under the guiding voice of Tridib who is relationally an uncle doing research in anthropology from whom the narrator learns how ‘to see’. In the first section of the novel called *Going Away* the story teller concentrates on London on the eve of, and during the war, of which he has only a vicarious experience. His knowledge of war was not gained from books but from the experience of his uncle who exercised the greatest influence upon the adolescent story teller.

Memory plays a major role in shaping the narrator’s consciousness and the ambivalence of this factor is constantly emphasized. One is at a loss to understand in the intention of the narrator when he states, “I remember” along with “I don’t remember”. The sharpness of the narrative is contingent upon the mnemonic ability of the narrator who as a child confesses to a certain confusion and incertitude, and as he grows up realizes that memory need not necessarily provide clues to understanding and enlightenment.

*The Shadow Lines* Ghosh focuses on certain issues such as time, freedom and history, which are closely related to the postmodernist thought. While attempting to explore various concepts of freedom, the writer tries to free himself from the conventional narrative form. The
narrative does not follow a linear pattern of time sequence and arrangement of incidents. The back and forth movement of narrative and the story told in scattered pieces reflects the fragmented thought processes of the narrator’s mind. The incidents are scattered in time as well as space. There is a sudden shift from Calcutta to Dhaka to London without an account of a ‘Proper sequence of time, which ranges from 1939 (the year Tridib first went to England.) to 1964 (the year Tridib died and 15 years after that the mystery of Tridib’s death is resolved.

*The Shadow Line* explores the implications of a nationalism that is enforced on an ethnic community living on either side of a political divide. Narrated in the first person ‘the novel is about a 1952 born Calcutta boy, who grows up and simultaneously discovers the world around him. Through the help of his uncle Tridib, the narrator is introduced to various worlds, even before he leaves Calcutta. It is through the story of his grandmother, however, that he directly comes to address an issue like nationalism. The grandmother belongs to the Dhaka of the 1920s and is ethnically much closer to Dhaka than to a political unit called India, formed in 1947. Having migrated to Calcutta in 1936, she had to divide her allegiances between a new ‘nation’ and an old ‘state.’ Her nationalism was born out of the terrorist movements among nationalists in pre-independence Bangal and was, therefore, forged out of the struggle for freedom against the colonizers.

In sharp contrast, Ila, the narrator’s cousin, almost a foil to the nationalist stereotype embodied in the figure of the grandmother, finds post-independence nationalism stifling and looks towards London for freedom, albeit of a different kind than her grandmothers. Surprisingly, even though she has once been the victim of a racist attack, she prefers Britain to the in the light of this interesting dialectic on nationalism, prodided by the clashing and conflicting ideas and attitudes embraced by
the narrator's grandmother and his cousin Ila, that the narrator or Ghosh introspectively picturizes repeatedly his own national dilemma in the novel. Both positions, though extreme, remarkably have Ghosh’s sympathies. Grandmother aggressive nationalism and Ila’s equally aggressive transnationalism or internationalism ultimately leave the narrator himself divided, for instance, when his grandmother says,

The English known they are a nation because they have drawn their borders with bloods that’s what it takes to make a country. Once that happens people forget they were born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi. They became a family born of the same pool of blood. (TSL, P. 58)

The narrator fully understands the need for an intergrative nationalism, no matter how bloody it is in its demands. According to him, this nationalism was of a kind that could never accept any breach of its politico-national status and was inextricably bound up with the concepts of a united nation and territory, self-respect and national power. To Ila, she comes across as a plain “war-mongring fascist” and the narrator partly acknowledges this appraisal. But soon enough he empathizes with the grandmother in her condemnation of Ila for having purchased her freedom “for the price of an air ticket.”

In *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh suggests that there are two major stages in individual development, marked by ‘Going Away’ and coming Home, literally and metaphorically. The novel is in fact full of ‘Going Away’ and ‘Coming Home’, each journey impinging upon and paralleling the others, and thus extending its scope and its range. In Suvir Kaul’s words

In *The Shadow Lines*’ it is of course the male narrator’s growing imagination, empathy and intellectuality which allow for the exploration and understanding of complex themes. As his horizons expand and become international in scope, his questions, memories and experiences provide the structure of the narrative. But even as his consciousness mediates and frames other voices, stories and experiences, we become aware that even interrogate his telling of the story…. (Kaul: 285)
In *The Shadow Lines* Amitav Ghosh gives a new twist to an old theme of partition the Lines symbolically represent all such lines that divid nations and people in the name of nationalism, religion, language and caste. What is new in the novel is that the novelist denies the very existence of these lines and hence calls them ‘Shadow’ or ‘Illusory’ this makes the novel debated whether it is about ‘the meaning of political freedom in the modern world or an escape from the reality. However, the ground reality is that there exist dividing lines as the narrators father tries to explain to his mother the boundary between India and Bangladesh. But external reality is that there is no dividing line as such. Artificial lines have been created by men between countries and people have been dismantled by them as per their convenience. So we encounter two realities running parallel in the novel.

The discrimination that is made in the process may be viewed as the most radical aspect of the moral issues explored in *The Shadow Line*. The central male characters in *The Shadow Line* are the narrator, his cousin, Tridib, and Nick Price, all of whom may be described as ‘passive; by nature. The chief women characters are the narrator’s grandmother, his cousin Ila, and May Price, who we shall call ‘active’, in contrast to the men in the novel.

In *The Shadow Lines* Amitav Ghosh depicts the social realism of modern India through female characters. In the novel, female characters have been sketched as active and male characters as passive except the May Price. Female charaters have on edge over the male characters and it goes without saying that the male characters are influenced by their counterparts. Tha’mma was born in Jindahahar in Dhaka in a joint family, and she grew up when the Indian National Movement was gaining a militant note and fight against the British was jointly being sepearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi and the militant nationalists together.

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In the novel Tridib does not find favour with Tha’mma. She regards him as a wastrel and a loafer who does nothing fruitful but wastes time and for her nothing was as distasteful as wasting time. Twenty seven years of school mistressing had made her a strickler for discipline and proper use of the time. Tha’mma is a nationalist: she wants to get rid of British rule. She has sympathy for the militant nationalist. She wants to fight shoulder to shoulder with them and does not mind to pay a high price, as high as killing a British officer and get hanged in the process. She has radical views about nationalism and nationality.

The women characters in the novel Tha’mma, Ila and May from different cultures and generation. Provide an apt study of this dilemma. Each has an incomplete understanding of the true nature of freedom. It is the narrator’s point of view that is paramount. He interacts with each one of them and we get to know of their limited vision and their idiosyncrasies and foibles by watching them through his eyes. In the process, the theme of freedom is explored, developed and assessed. Freedom means different things to the different characters, depending on the stage they occupy in the backdrop of recent Indian history. Tha’mma had been a young girl in Dhaka when the freedom struggle had reached its peak. Later she had witnessed the birth of two new nations, experienced the pain associated with the partition of the lands and participated in the new order and the new political system that evolved out of that experience.

To Ila, two generations later, the spirit of nationalism that had inspired Tha’mma is a thing of the past. She is a post partition child. She is unable to conform or adapt to the society that has developed in independent India and escapes to another society with a different set of values, a different social system. For each one of them namely, Tha’mma
Tha’mma’s family lived in Dhaka before partition. As a college girl, she had witnessed the nationalistic fervour that gripped the entire subcontinent. The political atmosphere in India was ignited with nationalistic zeal. Thousands of young men and women were ready to sacrifice their lives for their motherland. Tha’mma’s mind too was fired desires by the fervent of becoming a part of the freedom movement and securing freedom for the nation. In Bengal, the terrorist organization like ‘Anushilan’ and ‘Jugantar’ carried out clandestine activities against the British. Here in the novel Thamma was greatly mesmerized by the heroic tales of the terrorists and hated Bagha, Jatin, and Khudiram Bose as real heroes. She was fascinated by the rebellion.

The British government arrested the rebellion as preventive measures. One of Tha’mmas classmates a shy, beared boy was arrested. He being a part of a terrorist organization was planning to kill the English Magistrate in Khulan district. Years later, Tha’mma narrates that incident to her grandson, and also how she was ready to sacrifice anything for the sake of the important places that the nation occupied for her narrator.

Narrator asks Thamma, ‘Do you real mean Tha’mma, and I said that you would have killed him? (The English Magistrate Thamma replied, yes I would have killed him. It was for our freedom: I would have done anything to be free)

Tha’mma represents all the Indians who pinned for independent India. But Independence or freedom unexpectedly followed by the partition and India had to face the heartbreaking situation. Hopes and dreams of Indians were shattered by the partition of the country. Nationalism as well as the nation to their dismay had failed to homogenize differences. Tha’mmas mother land Dhaka was separated
from India and became a part of new country, Pakistan. Innumerable common people rendered homeless and forced to migrate to distant lands as refugees. Ghosh has beautifully portrayed the disintegration of the two families of Thamma and her uncle Jethamoshai who had since generations lived together in their ancestral house. The mounting resentment had estranged the two families and the house was eventually divided into two by a wooden partition wall:

But the building of the wall proved to be far from easy because the two brothers, insisting their rights with a lawyer-like precision, demanded that the division be exact down to the minutest detail. The brothers even partitioned their father’s old name plate. It was divided and their names were inscribed on the two halves of necessity in letters so tiny that nobody could read them (TSL, P. 123)

Both Tha’mma and Ila are active characters of the novel and are bold, realists and unimaginative. Both are dislocated characters in a broader sense. Tha’mma has been uprooted from Dhaka while Ila has failed to cultivate her roots to any one place. She has no place to call her own, no culture to which she could say she belongs. Both crave for freedom though of different types; and in different ways and are willing to pay any price for it. Both are sailing in the same boat but are also at loggerheads.

Ila has a poor notion of her motherland and its people.

“What happens here is not history. There are famines, riots and disasters; these are local things. Not like revolutions or anti fascist wars, nothing that sets the political example to the world, nothing that is really remembered.” (TSL, P.84)

Ila wants to stay in London because she wants to be free, free of Indians, free of their culture. She actually wants no restrictions so that she can live the way she wants and according to Tha’mma this is not freedom. Ila lives in the present with the memories of the past and the imaginization of the future she does not have to do anything.
Tha’mma and Ila stand on two extreme ends of bar. Ila lives in present she could not be persuaded to believe that a place did not merely exist but it had to be invented in one’s imagination. That is why although she had lives in many places. Ila attaches no values to the past and does not have any good reminiscences. That is why her boy friends change as quickly as one change the toothbrush.

Ila’s childhood relationship with Nick is founded on an illusion of infallibility and decency of the British society. When the adult narrator discovers that Nick sleeps with other women even after being married to Ila, it does not surprise him much. The cultural or radial divides do the work here and the burden of indivisible shadow lines is borne greatest by her. Her marriage with Nick Price is a total disaster but she hides the fact as she goes on to believe that one day it would be all right. She tells the narrator:

I wouldn’t leave him if he moves a whole bloody massage parlor from Bangkok into the house. He knows that perfectly well. He knows that I love him so much that I would never leave him. (TSL, P. 119)

Ila and the grandmother are unrooted characters typifying two of the characters forms of twentieth century diaspora. Ila is the post-colonial cosmopolitan, while her great aunt is though she refuses the term—a refugee constant travel has paradoxically made Ila impervious to novelty, blunted her curiosity and vision, so that although she lived in many palces, she had never traveled at all. For Ila, names on the map are only a worldwide string of departure lounges; for him they are magical talismas; Ila lived intensely in the present and through her senses; for Tridib and the narrator it is memories of the past that make experiences.

The second major area of human behaviour that the novel explores via the opposition passive actie is sexuality. There is on the one hand romantic love, best exemplified by Tridib’s for May Price, which intense
despite the distance separating them. (Tridib’s ideal is the story of Tristan, ‘a man without a country, who fell in love with a woman across the seas). Similarly romantic is the narrators love for his cousin Ila which grows from adolescent infatuation to adult passion, but remains unfulfilled to the end.

Both Tridib and the narrator do finally posses May but in the terms of consummated love remain unspecified; it is imbued with transience and desperation, not by any assurance of permanence or fulfillment. If a certain ‘passive’ romantic love is invested with beauty and spiritual value, there is a corresponding aggressive sexuality which is briefly manifested in the narrators drunken advances towards May, as quickly withdrawn is shame and remorse. Romantic love is depicted as a way of connecting with another human being, ideally an expression of solidarity against a hostile world.

The male protagonist’s capacity for ideal romantic love is contrasted with of Ila and her grandmother who are failures at love Ila’s obsession with Nick Price, in spite of his ‘betrayal’ of her in their childhood and his repeated infidelities thereafter, reveals a kind of gratuitous and regressive masochism. Her love for Nick is unrequitted in terms that are more brutal than that of the narrators for her. With her incessant travels she has not been able to achieve successful relationships, only brief liaisons fantasized ‘conquests’ a pretended promiscuity.

But more than Ila- in whose portrayal some pathos is permitted- it is the narrator’s grandmother who displays the negative aspect of love most calamitously. The old woman is violently jealous of her grandson’s love for Ila, and sends off a vituperative note to the principal of his college. Accusing the young boy of visiting prostitutes, she has warned him earlier that Ila is a whore who will destroy him. This warped attitude
to love is one of the two kinds the novel contains. The novel has a vision of both redemptive loves transcendent and romantic even if unconsummated and destructive love aggressively sexual possessive failed; these are represented by the male protagonists and two of the female characters; an aspect of the gendering of human behaviour and attitudes whose significance is inescapable.

Like these other women, May Price too is impetuous and quick, but committed to a more purposeful and principled social and political activism. This difference brings us to the crucial issue of how Amitav Ghosh’s the passive and the active as attitudes and as modes of behaviour. The passivity of the male protagonists as reflected in their cultural rootedness with its paradoxical openness to the world through the operations of the visual imagination, and of memory and curiosity; their capacity for romantic love; and their detachment from active politics. The opposite qualities in the female character their migrancy and consequent blindness to and alienation from the world; their limited conception of sexual love; their violent intervention in human affairs is represented in negative terms. But the division of experience in the narrative is not wholly generated and we find notatable exceptions to this scheme of attributes. It is complicated by the deployment of other categories of difference such as cuture, history, generation and family.

May and Ila are crucial figures in the narrtor’s development and represent the two love affairs of sexual involvement of the bildungsröm. Interestingly, in the traditional Indian social ethic both would be regarded as unsuitable and unacceptable as sexual partners for the protagonist. May, because she is Tridib’s beloved, Tridib is after all her uncle according to Indian social norms. Much older, and significantly, no even particularly sexually attractive even when she was young and Ila herself as his cousin stands in the position of a sister, so the narrators’s feelings
towards her appear quite incestuous. According to the patriarchal norms of the male development plot both women should be unattainable, and both liaisons doomed. But both women help to mould the narrator’s life and personality.

Ila is the first to enter in his life. If the narrator is Tha’mmas only grandchild Ila is Tha’mma’s sister only grandchild, and as much they from a carefully contrasted couple:

It was said when we were children, that she and I were so alike that I could have been her twin- it was that very Ila who baffled me yet again with the mystery of difference.(TSI, P.31)

Ila functions as a kind of opposite to the narrator, enabling him to define himself through her where he is bound to a strictc and conventional middle class upbringing in Calcutta. Ila leads an apparently exciting life abroad, visiting Calcutta only occasionally. But, he has worlds to travel in his imagination, while she remains static and unimaginative. He is culturally rooted in the soil of Bengal/India, but Ila has to roots and attempts to find herself in insignificant political activities in London and in a home by buying herself a house and a reluctant husband. If Tha’mma had shown him the dangers and the emptiness of warped notions of nationalism, freedom and selfhood, Ila, the product of a colonialism in which the colonized rejects her past and her community and tries to internalize and participate in the world of the colonizer.

Through Ila, the narrator learns to recognize the meaning of cultural dislocation and national identity. Even as a teenager, he can see through Ila’s pretences and her need to cover up for her sufferings as an outsider in a society she longs to join but which will not accept her as much the superficially of her ideas of personal freedom and identity.

Ila deals with the narrator the way she does, because to her, he is the brother she never had she is not insensitive or deliberately
exploitative, but she makes him aware of his own sexuality. When Tha’mma sees that his adolescent infatuation has developed into an adult passion, she warns him that Ila is no better than a whore. The truth, however, is very different. Ila is as much a victim of her husband and the patriarchal world as Estelle (The Great Expectations) was and chaste and virtuous:

You see, you’ve never understood, you’ve always been taken in by the way I used to talk, when we were in college. I only talked like that to shock you, and because you seem to expect, it of me somehow. I never did any of those things; I am about as chaste, in my own way, as any woman you’ll even meet (TSL, P.188).

May Price’s influence on the narrator’s development is different but important. She is solidly a part of her own culture and shares none of Ila’s anxieties and insecurities. She is the woman across the seas to Tridib’s man without a country. The boy narrator is infatuated with her as much as he is infatuated with Tridib and everything about Tridib, so that his feelings for her become a marker, as it were, of his self-identification with his mentor. In a sense, therefore, she stands in the way of his attainment of selfhood, though she is much more sympathetic and kindly than Ila. As the product of an alien culture, moreover, she cannot comprehend the realities of the Indian situation. The same moral earnestness and humanitarian impulse within her that are repelled by what the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta stands for make her ruthless and even destructive in her kindness. Though the narrator admires and respects her honesty, her commitment and her obvious kindness, he has to understand that he must travel beyond her.

The desire to be free is not cultivated. Instinctively, every human being possesses this desire. It is ingrained and always from the core of heart. The Shadow Lines deals with the spirit of freedom possessed by most of its characters i.e. three major women characters, the nameless grandmother, Ila and May. These three women pine to be free from their
troubled past, unbearable present or bleak future. The narrator is very closely attached to his grandmother and Ila. That’s why he is capable to explore their inner conflicts and struggles. Tha’mma is complex in the sense that she wants to get rid of her traumatic past, but yet she is unable to disentangle herself completely from that very past. She hates to be nostalgic. The narrator recalls that hatred:

She hated nostalgia, my grandmother, she has spent years telling me that nostalgia is a weakness, a waste of time, that it is everyone duty to forget the past and look ahead and get on with building the future. (TSL, P.208)

And that is exactly she does. She leaves her past behind, holds of the reins of her family, and in the process of survival, she hardens herself and becomes self reliant and independent. All her life she had tried to escape from the painful realities of life, but now it was time to be reconcited with whatever had happened in the past. The first realization comes to her when she gets to know that there are no visible demarcation lines between two countries and she says,

But if there aren’t any trencues or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where is the difference then….what was it all for them partition and all the killing and everything if there isn’t something in between. (TSL, P.151)

May Price is one of the characters of the novel who is also in search of freedom. May is a free woman. She lives on her own, makes her own decisions and has the gets to call a spade a spade. May is blinded by her love for Tridib in a very strange way. She feels that she is guilty of being responsible for Tridib’s death. She even begins to question her love for Tridib because of that incident:

I don’t know whether everything else that happened was my fault, whether I’d have behaved otherwise if I’d really loved him. (TSL, P.175)

She seems to undergo penance for purgation of her soul of the sin of nobody could understand her anguish. But she reveals the facts to the narrator:

Do you think I killed him? (TSL, P. 251)
She asks the narrator. She finally gets a glimpse of the ‘final redemptive mystery.’ He gave himself up; it was a sacrifice (TSL, P.251-52) and it at peace with herself. Till the time she understands the nature of his ‘sacrifice’ she is a tortured being who spends almost seventeen years of her adult life trying to understand why Tridib had died. She knows that if she had gone out to save Jethamoshai, the crowd would have melted away on seeing her, she being a young English girl. At that crucial moment, it was she who had goaded Tridib to go and help. She had no other motive to save the life of the old man and the rickshaw-puller. She did not realize that she was virtually sending tridib towards his death. It is this guilt which haunts her. So traumatized is she that she is scared to be alone. The moment she enters her room in England lights switch on by themselves and the television automatically starts functioning. May Price feels free, when she gets an insight into the mystery of Tridib’s death.

She said I didn’t know what I was doing, and I get everyone killed. I didn’t listen; I was a heroine. I wasn’t going to listen to a stupid cowardly old woman. (TSL, P.250)

The narrator saw May Price rescuing a stray dog from an accident. It was also impossible for May to see the old ‘Jethomoshai’ and ‘Khalil’ die on the streets of Dhaka. By accepting reality she achieves freedom. She attains freedom and confesses:

For years I was arrogant enough to think I owed him his life. But I know how I didn’t kill him; I couldn’t have, if I’d wanted. He gave himself up; it was sacrifice I know I can’t understand it, I know I mustn’t try, for any real sacrifice is a mystery. (TSL, P. 251)

Through this confession of may price Ghosh projects Tridib as the heroic person and may stupid to think of saving people from the mindless violent mob. There does not seem to be any mystery about Tridib’s death, nor does it prove a convincing sacrifice. For May who had seen Tridib running towards the mob and then being dragged in:

He vanished. They had cut Tridib’s throats from ear to ear. (TSL, P.251)
It is tragic that Tridib could realize his dream only in death. He tries to save a helpless old man from being attacked by a frenzied mob. He must have known in that movement that he was not going to come back alive but it was in that moment when the border between oneself and one’s image in the mirror had ceased to exist for him. It was his final redemption.

The three situations of love making in the London of 1939, in the Calcutta of 1964 and again in the London of 1979 are presented with a view to give meaning to love in life even against the violent historical events. Amitav Ghosh has portrayed the narrator’s relationship with Ila using the device of parallel situations. It is a game of house played by Ila and Nick in London and Ila and the narrator in Calcutta. The narrator remembers Ila in Raibajar:

It is the other eight years old Ila and I, my own other- both of us sitting under that table in Raibajar and she is crying because she had just finished telling me the story of Nick Price and Magala. (TSL, P.181)

Tha’mma, Ila and Nick dwell in a world which is founded on the constructions of history, culture, civilization, race and religion. It restricts their vision of reality. They experience only a partial dimension of reality. Actually, it is the perception of people in the world who are restricted to believe in the differences of race, caste, religion and nationality, find it is, to a much extents root cause of the present day religious and political conflicts throughout the globe.

Finally, Amitav Ghosh distinguishes between passive and active attitudes in the sphere of what we might designate ‘politics’. His passive male characters chiefly Tridib and the narrator, are, as we saw, primarily observes of events rather than participants. This gives them a quality of detachment, even aloofness, from human conflict and passions.
The study attempts to examine how Ghosh develops the theme of violence and how public turmoils are interwoven with private upheavals in the novel. In *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh depicts the history and violence through his unnamed narrator. To depict the history is one of the most important characteristics of Magic Realism. *The Shadow Lines* has woven fact and fiction in a complex, absorbing narrative that mirrors lives across nation and spans almost half a century of recent Indian history. *The Shadow Lines* presents historical dates going back to 1939. The dates are significant not for an examination of historical events, but for the reconstruction of the events of public history and their shaping discourses on the narrator. The narrator’s enlightenment also coincides with the recovery of history through personal memory; a memory, which had remained buried in the interstices between the domain of public knowledge and private understanding. This history includes immediate personal experiences. History is thus documented and foregrounded through personal perceptions and memories. Tridib, Ila, and the narrator all pursue disciplines like archaeology and history. So, these characters are supposed to have a historical sense.

Amitav Ghosh to examine, the various facets of violence and now it masquerades as freedom. Violence runs as an undercurrent throughout the novel. It is explored at both the personal and the social level, as Ghosh investigates the complex connection between freedom and violence in our lives. Can one really be free? Does one have to kill to get freedom or to preserve it? How does violence enter our lives? Can there be violence, on the psychological level, even when there is no physical abuse, in a relationship between a man and a woman? These questions need to be answered.

War, terrorism, riots” – contemporary man thrives on violence, lives amidst it and becomes its victim. Amitav Ghosh in *The Shadow
*Lines* narrates a glimpse of this world where violence and crude barbarity prevail. Almost all the characters in the novel are caught in the vortex of murderous rampages through various violent times as the narrator suffers in the riots of 1964 in Calcutta, Rabi, Mayadebi, Tridib, May and Grandmother are trapped in the mob violence of Dhaka, and Tridib and Mayadebi witness London during the days of the Second World War in 1939. Even though the places are different being Calcutta, Dhaka and London, human beings suffer equally at the hands of violence.

The novel opens with the introduction of Tridib’s character and the first use of the looking glass image is related to this idealistic desire for a world without borders. Similarly, the novel ends on the memories of Tridib’s self-sacrifice and the final use of the image are evoked by them. The novel therefore achieves the unity required of a work of art, as the structure, characters, themes and image coalesce with one another.

The horror of violence is not restricted only to riots. Referring to the Second World War in 1939, when Tridib and Mayadebi had gone to London for Saheb’s operation, the writer indirectly describes the cruelties of war. Destruction pervades London, all the places are ruined. Solent Road where Alan and his three friends reside is bombed. Tridib witness the coupling of causal strangers in a theatre and strikingly, that place is “bombed out.” Nevertheless, this episode also suggests that even amidst worst circumstances humanity remains alive somewhere, people do strike union when the surroundings are antagonistic. In this memory novel, the unnamed narrator remembers Tridib reporting the conversation that had occurred in 1939 between Alan and Mayadebi about Mayadebi and her family’s stay in London in a difficult time like during a war.

Amitav Ghosh even criticizes militant nationalism. According to him, though nationalism is considered to be a very positive feeling, it nourishes the feeling of hatred and antagonism and leads to violence.
The Shadow Lines deals with the effects of fear on memory and one’s engagement with the world. The memories of the 1964 riot traumatise the narrator, and he successfully blocks them until a chance remark that he overhears during the 1984 riots prompts a personal crisis and a detailed unpacking of the earlier trauma. As he recounts the events, he recalls snippets of conversation with relatives and friends that suggest that they, too, had been redefined by their experiences that day. In her conversations with him seventeen years after the actual events, for example, May Price looks back, still wondering if she had visited India when she did because she was in fact in love with Tridib and her still cannot answer her question.

“I don’t know whether everything else that happened was my fault: whether I’d have behaved otherwise if I’d really loved him.” (TSL, P. 172)

The plot of this novel engages readers and deeply resonates for many Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis. Anyone reading the novel, though will recognize that its impact can be attributed more to the manner of the telling than to the recitation of the events themselves. The Partition, after all, has been the subject of several very good novels. Savir Kaul puts it:

The pressure of this question—do you remember—generates the form of the novel: its partial answers, its digressions, its looping, non-linear, wide-ranging narrative technique …for the Shadow Lines in an archaeology of silences, a slow brushing away of some of the cobwebs of modern Indian memory, a repeated return to those absences and fissures that mark the sites personal and national trauma (Kaul 1994: 126)

The Shadow Lines is a very different book and a surprise after The Circle of Reason. Ghosh alters his writing agenda and his style after 1984 because the riots in The Shadow Lines emerge from the author’s memory only after the riots of 1984. Regarding the communal rioting in Srinagar,
Calcutta, and Dhaka in 1964, the narrator of *The Shadow Lines* remarks that,

“It actually took me fifteen years to discover that there was a connection between my nightmare bus ride back from school and the events that are fell Tridib and the others in Dhaka…. I believed in the reality of nations and borders.” (TSL, P. 214)

As in *The Circle of Reason*, we see Ghosh’s fascination with chance, reminiscent of the chanced memory that launched the authors literary hero Marcel Proust, into his vast autobiographical novel *Rememberance of Things Past*.”

For Proust a very long chain of memories had been suddenly triggered by the taste of a particular cookie dipped in tea, a taste that reminded him of his grandmother’s house, his future’s death, and everything else. So too with Ghosh;

*The Circle of Reason* had grown upwards, like a sapling rising from the soil of my immediate experience; *The Shadow Lines* had its opening planted in the present, but it grew downwards, into the soil, like a root system straining to find a source of nourishment. It was in this process that I came to examine the ways in which my own life had been affected by civil violence. I remembered stories my mother had told me about the Great Calcutta killing of 1946. I remembered my uncle’s stories of anti Indian riots in Rangoon in 1930 and 1938. At the heart of the book, however, was an event that had occurred in Dhaka in 1964, the year before my family moved to Colombo: in the unlit depths of my memory there stirred a recollection of a night when our house, flooded with refugees, was besieged by an angry mob. I had not thought of this event in decades, but after 1984 it began to haunt me…. I went to libraries and sifted through hundreds of newspapers and in the end, though perseverance, luck and guess work I did find out had happened. The riots of my memory were not a local affair: they had engulfed much of the subcontinent. (Ghosh 2002: 315)

Chronologically, the story of the novel begins with a passage of time in colonial India when the narrator was not born. The year 1939 is historically significant for the outbreak of the Second World War and phenomenal changes caused by that agonizing epochal event. Mayadebi’s visit to London around this time, her warm and consequential contact
with the Price family and Tridib-May component of the story is recounted by Tridib to the narrators twenty-one years later when the latter is an eight years old inquisitive child. Although May was a little baby when Tridib saw her in London—and they have not met since then—a romantic relationship develops through correspondence between them.

The narrative structure of *The Shadow Lines* is fragmentary. There are sixteen sections in the first part, and fifteen in the second part, but the sections do not add up to an organic whole with a proper beginning middle and ending Nivedita Bagechi observes:

“The story or the chief narrative line evolves sporadically and is constantly other narratives. The only fixed center is that of the chief narrative voice through whom the other narratives are filtered.” (Bagechi 1993: 188)

Ghosh’s unnamed narrator shuttles not only from Calcutta to London to collect material for his Ph.D. theises, but across the loom of time from 1981 to the 1960s onto the 1940s and earlier. Especially his mind is drawn on the troubled time of the 1960s when Tridib, his uncle, was killed in a Hindu-Muslim riot in Dhaka; At the time this tragedy took place, the narrator, a twelve years old boy has been told that Tridib had died in an accident. It is only in 1981 that he learns from Robi another uncle an eyewitness how Tridib had been killed, also from May Price, an English Family friend, also an eyewitness to the tragedy. The oblique manner of the revelation of Tridib’s death is more effective than a direct presentation. It is a timeless moment in the tortured consciousness of the family. The narrator—whose name is not given is the bearer of this troubled memory.

The heart of *The Shadow Lines* is the death of Tridib and it is only towards the end of the novel the narrator approaches this experience. It is a struggle with silence as he has no words to communicate what happened.
“It lies outside the reach of my intelligence, beyond words--- it is simply a gap, a hole, an emptiness in which there are no words” (TSL, P.218)

A little later he says.

“I can only describe at second hand the manner of Tridib’s death: I do not have the words to give it meanings. I do not have the words, and I do not have the strength to listen” (TSL, P.228)

The narrator loved and admired Tridib as a hero. So he finds it difficult to accept the fact of Tridib’s death.

“So complete is this silence” the narrator declares that it actually took me fifteen years to discover that there was a connection between my nightmare bus tide back from school and the events that befell Tridib and the others in Dhaka”. (TSL, P.218)

The narrator’s struggle with the presentation of Tridib’s death makes it all the more agonizing.

Amitav ghosh dramatizes the violence that is at the heart of The Shadow Lines; characters in the novel- Robi, May and the narrator (Amitav’s alter-ego like Rushdies Saleem Sinai in Midnight’s Children)

Tremble “likes a leaf” to recollect the scene of tridib’s death”

Fifteen years later thousands of miles away at the other end of another continent.” (TSL, P.247)

As in Greek tragedies, the volience comes through in a terrible manner because it is conveyed through chotic characters. Robi, May and the narrator peform such the role of mediator truely, the violent bear it away. But for what? People kill for freedom. But do they achieve it? It seems to be a mirage, as The Shadow Lines that divide one people from another keep ever changing.

It is tragic that Tridib could realize his dream only in death. Tridib tries to save a helpless old man from being attacked by a frenzied mob. He must have known in that movement that he was not going to come back alive. But it was in that moment when the border between coneself and one’s image in the mirror had ceased to exist for him. It was his final redemption.
In *The Shadow Lines* Ghosh depicts not only physical violence but psychological violence also it is normally seen in a relationship that has gone sour. This violence is not visible, it is subtle and soul-destroying and leaves behind it emotional and mental scars. Nick acquires sundry girl friends for the sake of variety after his marriage, to Ila. Nick has no job as no job is good enough for him. The couple lives in an apartment bought by Ila’s father and he lives off her salary. Perhaps the best way Nick could establish his power over Ila is by being unfaithful to her. He knows she loves him and will never leave him even if he allows girls from a ‘massage parlour from Bangkok’ in their house. She hits back in the only way that she knows by haunting him for living off her father’s wealth. To humiliate him, she sarcastically says, in front of others that Nick meant to get into a partnership in a warehousing business. The narrator reports:

She gave him a long look, her face going hard in a way I had never before noticed in her. Of course she said, it takes hard work to make a success of a thing like that, and Nick, well. (TSL, P.189)

This marital violence, partly on the emotional level, is a sad reflection on the marriages of Indian Dias-pora. The cultural pulls and the stringent economic demands of the present day would reduce many marriages into strained relationship.

While exploring the genesis of violence on the social level, Ghosh reveals that sometimes, the seeds of discord are sown, unconsciously, in the minds of the children by the parents themselves. In early January 1964 when the narrator as a young boy catches the bus to school, he notices that there were only a few boys, all sitting huddled together at the back of the bus. In a tearful sing-song sound, a boy tells him that:

His mother did not let him drink any water that morning because she had heard that they had poured poison into Tala tank that the whole of Calcutta’s water supply was poisoned. (TSL, P.199)
There was no need to ask any questions. All the children knew who ‘they’ were. It was a reality that existed only in the saying.

So when you heard it said it did not matter whether you believed it or not, it only mattered that it had been said at all. (TSL, P.200)

Amitav Ghosh believes that the atmosphere of violence created by religious fundamentalism in India’s chilling and fearful when the enemy is identified not as an outsider but as one living within one’s own country then the country can only be seen as going downfall. We see such violence and chaos through the eyes of the uncomprehending innocent children. Religious riots suddenly break out in Calcutta in free India. In their classroom, the children find it difficult to concentrate upon their lesson. Voices could be heard outside the window- quite different from the orderly roar of a demonstration. A little later Ghosh narrates:

A shout followed by another and another, in a jaggedly random succession and then suddenly silence and just when they seemed to have died away there were one voice followed by a dozen and then again a moment of silence (TSL, P.201)

When we see the world through the eyes of the narrator child we come to realize their worries as well. Nothing frightens kids more than anxiety and agitation in adults; adults are expected to hold their world together when May is expected at railway station. Tridib gets nervous. Another rare peep into child psychology comes when the child narrator gets to know that Tridib had died. Tridib was very close to him his friend philosopher, and guide. His influence on the narrator as a child was absolutely absolute. Yet when narrator listens of his death:

I felt nothing –no shock, no grief I did not understand that I would never see him again my mind was not large enough to accommodate so complete an absence. (TSL, P. 239)

In our lives also when children for the first time ask what is dying or why are you crying we do not know what to say we do not realize that children do not know what is meant by death.
The tragedy of Tridib is the central focus of the novel his presence and his absence haunt the reader from the first page till the end when the mystery of his death gets unfolded the absence of Tridib and the violent manner of his death is like an unexpected sorrow a silent pain and a suppressed sub. When finally Ghosh talks about the killing of Tridib, violence is foregrounded and we see the helplessness of the individual in the face of collective frenzy.

The novel shows how futile it is to draw lines and to expect people to stay within neatly drawn religious boundaries and it show that there is a thin line between life and death unless we value life and care. The novel the shadow lines raises many political and ethical questions but over and above there is hope the tenderness and concern that the narrator feels for Tridib, Ila and his grandmother; the strength of the narrators mother and her loving and caring attitude the bonding and the affection between the price and the Datta Chaudhris- these vignettes of hope and love endure throughout the novel.

Writers like Khushwant Singh and Bapsi Sidwa have dealt with violence that spring up from riots but they have confined themselves to the event of partition though Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* refers in passing to partition as grandmother talk about it the novel mainly deals with riots in independent India. Ghosh even widens the scope of the novel as he shows the narrator remembering the riots of 1964 and in 1980. Significantly the writer does not elaborate on the actual events or violence. There are no detailed the description of physical harassment, brutal murders, of ghastly dead bodies and yet the novel remain one of the most appealing Indian English novels as Amitav Ghosh goes beyond actual violence and points out what lies beneath violence.

The narrative of *The Shadow Lines* is in two parts *Going Away*, (Page -3-112) and *Coming Home’* (page -115-256). The words going
and **coming** are used in relation to home a place of ones birth and upbringing a place to which a person is deeply attached especially if one lives in another place. Though in the growth of a human being it would be ideal to feel that all places are ones place and all people ones people and he/she is a citizen of the world most people are circumscribed by the contexts of their life. They either ‘go away’ or ‘come home’ Amitav Ghosh’s characters go as far as Delhi or London on work or travel and come home to Calcutta or Dhaka only to learn that peace is as elusive as ever.

The novel *The Shadow Lines* divided into two parts 1) Going Away 2) Coming Home. These homes are very significant In fact coming and going arriving and leaving meeting and parting all metaphors of movement are very important with Amitav Ghosh. His vision seems to hover around these two polarities Coming and Going. Going Away section comes to an end with Ilas marriage and her going on honeymoon. Coming Home section begins and ends in the narrator and may lying arms in arms haring unfolded the whole truth of Tridibs death going away symbolizes the authors going way from his real self. His futile chase to get her is nothing but his drifting apart from his self. It symbolized diviation from self. Coming home, it naturally follows, is the narrators coming to terms with his self and life. It is journey back home not running away from roots. After Tha’mma’s retirement come the family roots business and her Dhaka trip. One cannot go on living just like that one has to sort out one’s past for one self. And family is part of ones self Tha’mma and Tridib are part and parcel of the narrators self. Therefore he comes home with his understanding of Tridib’s death. *The Shadow Lines* ends with the mystery of tridib’s voluntary a death symbolic of his sacrifice for humanity.
Amitav Ghosh has used memory in all its dimensions not merely as the effect but also as the material cause of the novel. Just as the activity of the carpenter is the ‘efficient’ cause of the table similarly the act of recalling done by the author / narrator is the ‘efficient’ cause of the novel. Further the content of recollection is the memories of which the narrative is composed. Such memories are the ‘material’ cause of the work in the same way as wood is the material cause of the table. However the final purpose of the novel is to create an image of personal and social history which is a non-memory goal. Yet to achieve this objective Ghosh has made maximum and effective use of memory in almost all dimensions and forms even if the novel were constituted of imaginary incidents cast in the mnemonic mode of virtual memory it would still be considered as a memory novel.

At the end of the novel Tridib who aspires to become a global citizen a man without a country meets his tragic end at the hands of rioting mob in Dhaka. His vision seems to succumb to the brute forces of reality and it ultimately acquires a mythic rather than a realistic and plausible stature. *The Shadow Lines* interrogates complete themes like political conflict, national identity and cultural discocation through the use of memory, nostalgia, multiple subjectivities and overlapping stories. As for the historical contradictions that must of necessity mark the biography of the nation they are projected through the highly nuanced and multi-layered metaphor of *The Shadow Lines*.

*The Shadow Lines* shows two types of postcolonial understanding. One is that of higher social elites like Mayadebi and Saheb and second is that of characters like Ila, who still live in close contact with the West they do not have roots in the home country and want to be a part of the colonizer’s world. Such characters have no desire even
to thing of the colonized world they are happy imitating the West. Ila’s mother, for instance, like Queen Victoria; the grandmother on the other had shows the other side of post colonial understanding. She is enlightened and self sufficient and ardently proud of being an Indian. She wants India to forge her identify. Though she admires the nationalism and patriotism of the English, She feels it is time of Indians to act and achieve one’s own identify and not waste time in going the West.

*The Shadow Lines* addresses the challenges of geographical fluidity and cultural dislocations with a new consciousness and firm grasp of socio cultural and historical material. The experience of aliens and immigrants in postcolonial setting furnish us with the clue to the novel’s larger project of cultural assimilation, friendship across border and adjustment with the altered face of the world. The theme is first sounded when in a conversation with the narrator in lodon in 1978 May Price shares her growing intimacy with Tridib:

Similing at the memory she told me how his card had reached her just when she was trying to get over an adolescent crush on a schoolboy trombonist who had had no time for her at all and had not been overly delicate about making that clear. (TSL, P.23)

It can be said that the partition of the Indian sub continent was the single most traumatic experience in our recent history. The violence it unleashed by the harmful actions of a few fanatics the vengeance that the ordinary Hindus, Mulsims and Sikhs wreaked on each other worsened our social sense, distoreted our political judgemen ts and deranged our understanding of moral righteousness. The real sorrow of the partition however as portrayed in *The Shadow Lines* under review, was that it brought to an abrupt end of long and communally shared history and cultural heritage The relation between the Hindus and the Muslims were not, of course, always free from syuspicious, distrust or the angry rejection
by one group of the habits and practices of the other; but such moments of active malevolence and communal frenzy were rare and transitory exception to the common bonds of mutual goodwill and warm feelings of close brotherhood.

The Hindus never ceased from paying homages at dargahs; the Muslims continued to participate in Hindu festivals and traders of both the communities continued their usual exchange of goods and services in the bazaars etc. Indeed one can assert with confidence that the dominant concerns of the Hindu and Muslim intellectuals throughout the nineteenth century and till about 1935 were more with creating free spaces for enlightened thought than with confining people within their narrow religious identities? Organization’s which hurtured violent hatred towards each other and incited communal passions did exist, but at the very margins of the solidly and healthily functioning social and cultural order. It is the unthoughtful decision of partition and hollow love of nationalism that let the mischief off and out.

Though Ghosh resembles other postmodernist writers in using the multiple narrative scheme the story telling method and back and forth journey in time, his ease and brilliance in employing these devices makes his novel outstanding the complex narrative technique is not there just for the sake of being but it very well maintain with the mood and temperament of the characters and adds to the beauty of the novel. The narrative technique in Ghosh’s hand becomes a tool of a poet and so everything merges into a whole. Very cliched family chronicle and political autobiography are transformed into an interesting novel. The novel proves the point that Ghosh cannot be easily excelled in respect of the narrative technique.
Though *The Shadow Lines* appears to be more about historical events and violent happenings, partition and border lines dividing the nations in fact it is more about the people who act out their life against these problems acquire a clear understanding and accept the realities of lines but find that in their personal lives lines are blurred and Shadows must be discarded unlike Khushwant Sigh’s *Train to Pakistan*, *The Shadow Lines* examines the impact of borders on the personal lives long after partition and establishes Amitav Ghosh as a major voice after Salman Rushdie in Indian Writing in English.