

Concept of Space and Time in *The Shadow Lines*

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Abstract:

Amitav Ghosh in his novels seems to be in search of (cultural) spaces in the dark smeared lines across cultures or is he trying to find out space between cultures? Is this darkness of the lines across cultures caused by the black or the excess of white light which makes our vision blurred? Or is he trying to find out a blend of black and white, a mixture or a blend of the two-grey- a mixture that Indians/ subalterns/ postcolonial/ orientalist are composed of. Is this shadowed dark line caused by the 'struggle with silence' (TSL24) inside him? Ghosh delves deep into the silent recesses of human mind. He does not challenge silence but encounters it with courage. The paper discusses the impact and treatment of 'time' and 'space' in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*. (137 words)

Key words: Postcolonial, Culture, Time, Space, Cross-cultural trends, and Border.

Introduction

Born in Calcutta in 1956, Ghosh is considered an important writer in India. His narratives are often cosmopolitan in view. His family originates from East Bengal and migrated to Calcutta before partition in 1947. Much of Amitav Ghosh's personal investment in his novels derive, it seems, from his awareness of being an 'oriental'. His growing up and education, in Calcutta and Delhi in India and in US later, has been western yet that cultural deep rootedness persisted. His views are cosmopolitan which make him struggle to find some space to balance his cosmopolitanism with the cultural legacy. Amitav Ghosh's fiction represents Indian concept of universalization of 'vasudhaiv Kutambhikam' of a cosmic whole. Ghosh's 'vasudhaiv kutambhikabhakam' is described by Ranjita Basu as, 'a broader, more human context that transcends the boundaries between Indian and foreign...It is curious to note that no false note is struck in Ghosh's delineation of Egyptian or Arabic characters and this is because their emotions and passions are related to universal humanity rather than their racial identity.' (1994, 152-153). His fiction or narration is not located in a particular place to another, one culture to another, making us relies that the whole earth represents universality of (Hu) mankind. His fiction might start at place and seem to be disjoint due to multiple narrations of his characters and the multiplicity of time and place but the narration culminates as a complete whole. It comes back to the place where it started from. The 'journeys' in the novel becomes the journey for searching self. *The Shadow lines* (1989) is about the journey of a family to an old 'address' that has been left behind but also a new 'address' created in the present. Through the shadowy lines that

separate and connect, the novelist beautifully portrays the life of an individual, a family, a society and a nation. The shadow blurs the lines between memory and reality, personal and general, emotion and practicality, communal and religious, violence and normalcy, India and Bangladesh, India and England, partition and migration, past and present. Here is an attempt to outline a contemporary view on the hierarchy of spatial and temporal structures with special reference to *The Shadow Lines* (1988, from now on TSL).

Personal space and public space

The narrative describes two families—one English, one Indian—and how their lives are joined together by time and place. It is the story of Trideb and the narrator. It is about the special relationship they share and how they include each other in their own personal space. So much so that the narrator could remember everything about the time and place they had been together even after Trideb is killed in a communal riot. It's the novel of memories. They are connected through the space of memory and imagination. Trideb, otherwise is an introvert, takes the narrator well within his personal space. He has narrator by his side even when he goes out with May Price (with whose family they shared a close relationship, who had begun a long correspondence with Trideb in 1959). The narrator and the protagonist, Trideb, share a great bond. However, Tha'mma, narrator's grandmother dislikes Trideb. In her opinion Trideb is pursuing doctorate but he has not used his education to get a job and is not 'ruling the country' according to the grandmother. Tha'mma behaves or tries to behave properly with Trideb when in public but she never hides her personal dislike from the narrator. She even cooks for him when Trideb visited their house. She lets Trideb 'in' in their (Tha'mma and narrator's) public space but warns the narrator to stay away from him and stay away from his personal zone (space). However, Trideb, has certain qualities that make him the protagonist of TSL. He has used his education for personal liberation. He has made his own choices and is happy the way he is. Narrator finds himself 'impressed by familial pressures of which Trideb is liberated.' (Lauren Zantotti). The narrator, hero worships Trideb and secretly wants to be like him, even after the Tha'mma's insistence and dislike. 'She would often try to persuade me that she pitied me. Poor Trideb, she would say. There's nothing in the world he could've done with his connections—he could have lived like a lord and run the country. And look at him—oh poor Trideb—living in that crumbling house, doing nothing. (TSL07). Grandmother associates Trideb with people of lower social status because he moves at public spaces that are not respectable according to Tha'mma. 'She (Tha'mma) had deep horror of the young men who spent their time at the street-corner staring' (TSL07). Therefore she wants to keep Trideb out of her personal space.

May Price is located faraway from Calcutta; but distance does not create border here. She still becomes a part of Trideb's personal space. They find a place for themselves in India and Trideb says, 'This is our ruin.' And the narrator is jealous of May and Trideb 'the way he touched her and she kissed the palm of his hand, the way they smiled, as though there were a secret between them that I would never understand' as he considers his (the narrator's) 'unique privilege' to be in the personal space of Trideb and 'understand' him. (TSL188). The narrator is attracted to Ila and wants her to be a part of his personal space. For Ila he was 'always the brother (she) never had' (TSL23). Ila is accepted as wife by Nick Price and she is a part of his personal space but he tries to keep her out of his social (public) space as he does not want to be seen with an Indian.

Touch and untouchability are integral part of Indian culture. Public and personal spaces are well depicted in the concept of untouchability: letting certain people in your personal zone and keeping some at a distance in the public zone. However, TSL reflects that the psychology of the people changes with changing times. Thamma's visit to Jethamoshaji is significant in this regard who is physically present in the East Pakistan. Although Thamma has lost touch with Jethamoshaji and his family for a long time, still she wants to bring him back as she wants him to be with his own people. She reminds herself again and again that it is 'her duty to take him away from his past and thrust him into the future.'(TSL230). Jethamoshaji would not let (muslim) people in his personal space earlier but later with passage of time he lives and eats with them (Khalil's muslim family) and they are a part of his personal space. She is unable to realize his proximity and association with 'Khalil's muslim' family with whom he was living. 'Does Khalil's wife cook for him too' (TSL231) and is amazed to know that if she didn't the old man wouldn't get anything to eat. Another aspect of space or distance or closeness is brought to our notice when Thamma discusses the age old aspect interwoven in Indian society- that of maintaining a physical distance with 'body of people' of (low) caste-un-touchability. Thamma discovers that her uncle 'Jethamoshaji' is living with a muslim family in Dhaka and talks of 'a time when that old man was so orthodox that he wouldn't let a Muslim's shadow pass within ten feet of his food? And look at him now, paying the price of his sins.'(TSL231). Robi makes fun of this and asks Thamma how the distance was measured so accurately.

'Ten feet! Robi explained to May in hushed whisper, marveling at the precision of the measurement. How did he measure? He whispered back at my grandmother. Did he keep a tape in his pocket when he ate?'

'No, no', my grandmother said impatiently. 'In those days many people followed rules like that; they had an instinct'.

'Trigonometry!', Robi cried in a triumphant aside to May. 'They must have known Trigonometry. They probably worked it out like a sum: if the Muslim is standing under a twenty-two foot building, how far is his shadow? You see, we're much cleverer than you: bet your grandfather couldn't tell when a German's shadow was passing within ten feet of his food. 'As I read Robi's comments, I laughed, at first. Then I had to swallow hard at centuries old injustice these words were trying to hint at'. (TSL231). Jethamoshaji was killed and his body was left behind in Dhaka as he wanted. 'I was born here and I would die here' (TSL237). Jethamoshaji and Khalil are killed with Trideb.

Notions of history: reconstructing past

Notions of History or science in Amitav Ghosh's fiction have semiotic implications. Ghosh dissolves the boundaries between fact and fiction. *The Calcutta Chromosome* is a very good example with astonishing range of characters, advanced computer science, religious cults and wonderful mixture of Victorian and contemporary India. TSL deals mainly with three timelines. Ghosh reconstructs the past and talks about 1939-when Trideb, along with his family and Mayadebi (his mother), went to England, 1964- when Trideb went to Dhaka with Thamma and 1981 when the narrator goes to London for his Ph.D. These timelines can't be clearly seen in the

narrative as the story seeps from one into another as in the narrator's subconscious mind. His subconscious mind, however, finds it difficult to distinguish between real and imaginary. Therefore 'the novel does not just move back from a stable present time of narration to whatever event in the past is to be narrated.' (Jon Mee: 2003; the burthen of mystery-imagination and the difference in *The Shadow Lines*: pp.91).

As a child the narrator 'believed in the reality of space; I believed that distance separates, that it is a corporeal substance; I believed in the reality of nations and borders; I believed that across the border there exists another reality.' (TSL241). There are references linked to history and geographical space / boundaries (India, Bangladesh, England); India's war with China in 1962; Nazi-Soviet pact (TSL114), trouble (riots) in Calcutta (TSL218), riots in Dhaka (TSL252-254), Hazratbal (TSL248), news paper references to riots (TSL252), cricket test match of 1964 series (TSL219) and many others. Time in TSL can be seen through the division that has been clearly made by the author himself. Ghosh tries to blend fact and fiction trying to capture the society during three time-lines of Indian History.

TSL has two parts- one is called 'going away' and the other is called 'coming home'. 'Going away' begins in 1939 with Mayadevi going away from her own country 'to England with her Husband and her son, Trideb'. (TSL03). And 'coming home' deals with the narrator coming back to his motherland (India). Ghosh tells us about the history of a nation's partition, division of borders and nationalities. The narrator's grandmother was born in Dhaka. After marriage she went there twice. 'And then in 1947, came partition, and Dhaka became the capital of East Pakistan.' (TSL138). The narrator ridicules Tha'mma using multiple connotations saying, 'Tham'ma, Tham'ma! I cried. How could you have 'come' home to Dhaka? You don't know the difference between coming and going!' (TSL168). The notion of identity is linked with nationality. With the division, the identities change, along with the nationality. In TSL narrator says about Tha'mma's (his grandmother) concept of birthplace (Dhaka in East Pakistan) and nationality (Indian), 'at that moment she had not been able to quite understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality.' (TSL168). 'Where's Dhaka?' asked Tha'mma, when she visits again in 1964, for her 'Dhaka was the city that had surrounded their own house' (TSL214).

The borders or these lines of division are not visible and Tha'mma, the grandmother, who 'wanted to know whether she would be able to see the border between India and East Pakistan from the plane.' (TSL167). 'But if there aren't any trenches or anything, how are people to know? I mean, where's the difference then? And if there's no difference both sides will be the same, it'll be just like it used to be before, when we used to catch a train in Dhaka and get off in Calcutta the next day without anybody stopping us. What was it all for then – Partition and all the killing and everything – if there isn't something in between?' (TSL167). The narrator says 'Why did she really think the border was a long black line with green on one side and scarlet on the other, like in the school atlas' (TSL 167). And narrator further laments the division made by human beings, 'the border isn't on frontier: its right inside the Airport.' (TSL167). Tha'mma's uncle, Jethamoshaji, does not want to leave his ancestral home in Dhaka even after partition and says 'I was born here, and I'll die here'. (TSL237). Partition brings along with it communalism, intolerance, and violence. Ghosh's way of dealing with violence creates numbness in the soul. As a young boy the narrator witnesses riots in Calcutta in 1964, 'I opened my mouth to answer

and found I had nothing to say. All I could have told them was of the sound of voices running past the walls of my school, and of a glimpse of a mob in Park Circus. I have never experienced such a sound, but God, how these sentences get under the skin, how easy it is to hear that sound, how the heart beats faster on reading these sentences! There are many other reasons why'. (TSL224). Nick wants to become like his grandfather Lionel Tresawsen, a self-made man who acquired his great wealth from "all around the world —Fiji, Bolivia, the Guinea Coast, Ceylon" (TSL61). In *Capital Marx* observes, "The exchange of commodities...first begins on the boundaries of...communities" (TSL110).

The concept of Place

In a famous soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Hamlet speaks of *the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns*. A place is a particular portion of space, or space in general; a time and place. The immanently meaningful nature of space is closely connected with human being; space that surrounds him, his ability to handle the space surrounding him, the place of contact/ conflict, and the philosophic discourse of the actual aim of his existence. The space is not limited to the structure of settlement space or place but also include the routine spatial practices that are studied in communication like proxemics or movement, but also include mythic, philosophical or scientific study of space as in platonism, derivations of Einsteinian physics. The concept of place may change at different time periods and in face of different uses in social, cultural or political context.

In this conceptual analysis, first, two different concepts of "place" shall be compared and then we will discuss various other aspects as well. Place was defined by the French anthropologist Marc Augé in 1995. Augé uses a notion of place which already contains the sense of "anthropological place" with language and movement in it. Place, he asserts, "can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity" (Augé, 1995: 77). According to Augé, the concept of place is opposed to the concept of a non-place (Pp. 79). This is described as a 'space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity' (Pp. 77- 78) and is thus devoid of emotion and memory. Non-place is the "Space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity" (Auge, 1995: p. 77-8) and is thus devoid of emotion and memory. The non-place, however, is very different from 'nowhere' or 'never'.

The places described in TSL are many. Ghosh says a place must be 'a part of history' (TSL115). Trideb had lived in 'Their old family house in Ballygunge Place with his aging grandmother' in Calcutta (TSL 06), England (TSL04, 11), Banaras (TSL08), America (TSL08), London (TSL15), Delhi (TSL20) are places that have a history; they are relational and are associated with identity. The places have identity because these places have a present, a past and a future. The place itself becomes a character in the narrative. In fact, we understand the place, its people and its culture (be it India, England, or Bangladesh) along with the emotional turbulence faced by the characters. Place adds to the individual's identity. Trideb is the centre of the whole story. Trideb's identity is reflected by the places he has visited. He has a part of all the places he has been to in him. He has the power of imagination of places. He lives in a world that he is happy within. He even leaves a part of him in all the places he visits. TSL is about Trideb and his life

he has spent in Calcutta, London, Dhaka and elsewhere. Trideb has travelled much but even when he could have used his contacts and would have been 'ruling' the world, he chooses to settle in Calcutta where his roots are. He stays in Calcutta by choice unlike Tha'mma who was forced by destiny to stay in Calcutta after her husband died and struggle. Strangely enough Ila lives in London by choice and struggles with her destiny.

The narrative starts with eight year old Trideb moving to England with his family and ends where the narrator gets a glimpse of the 'final redemptive mystery' of his (Trideb's) death. Narrator also goes to London later in 1979 but he knows London very well before he reaches there. The narrator knows more of London as he has seen it through his mental eye. Juxtaposing the narrator with Ila we find that Ila has seen little even though she has travelled the whole world because she lives in her own world. Calcutta as a place has been given due representation and the early life spent by the narrator with his family and his mentor, Trideb, has been explained beautifully. London seems to be alive because of its connections to Trideb and Ila. The narrator lives in London for almost a year. The city shows the cosmopolitanism brightly but the shadowy lines of discrimination and violence in relationships are highlighted. Through Dhaka we hear the childhood memories of narrator's grandmother, the sad story of partition of a country and tragedy of killing of Trideb within minutes as an act of violence riots in one of its streets. Ghosh somehow succeeds in making the reader realize complete irrationality behind the acts of violence and communal riots whether it is in Calcutta, London or Dhaka.

The concept of non-place

Non-place according to Auge is a place opposite of place i.e a 'Space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity'. (Auge, 1995: p. 77-8) and is thus devoid of emotion and memory. Non-places have no present, past or future. They are always the same. Non-places in TSL can be discussed in detail. In fact Ghosh seems to have made a conscious effort in describing the non-places. The narrator describes 'roadside stalls all over south Calcutta' (TSL05) or the 'street corners around Gole park (TSL07, 08, 10, 11, 12) where we lived'. These 'addas' or 'the roadside stalls' can be found all over the world and can be called by different names but are all the same. These places are very 'neutral' and 'impersonal' 'the sort of places where people come, talk and go away without expecting to know any further'(Anjali Gara, 2003:119). These places are devoid of any history, they are not relational and they cannot be connected with identity. Trideb was most comfortable in such places. 'She (Tha'mma) had a deep horror of the young men who spent their time at the street-corner addas and tea stalls around there. All fail-cases, she would sniff; think of their poor mothers, flung out on dung-heaps, starving...Seeing Trideb there a few times was enough to persuade her to think that he spent all his time at those addas, gossiping: it seemed to fit with the rest of him. But the truth was that Trideb came there rarely, not more than once or twice a month.' (TSL07).

When the narrator and Ila were moving around the city narrator notes Ila's attitude to 'non-place' like the underground or the escalator, 'To her the Underground was merely a means of shifting venue: it would irritate her to see how excited I got when stepped on to the escalators; she would watch as I turned to look at the advertisements flashing past us on the walls, gulped in the

netherworld smell of electricity... she would tug at my elbows and hiss: hurry, hurry, you can't stop here you will hold people up. And if I still lingered she would snap at me impatiently: For god's sake stop carrying on like a third world tapioca farmer-it's just the bloody underground.(TSL23). Ila's character is very interesting and significant in pointing out the difference between place and non-place because she treats even the places as non-places. 'And I would say to her : you wouldn't understand: to you Cairo was a place to piss in I could not persuade her that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination;' (TSL 23). She felt all places are the same because they look alike like airport lounges. The narrator says 'I thought she was joking first...that times and places are the same because they look alike, like airport lounges.'(TSL114). Trideb often said of her that 'the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all'. (TSL23).

Strangely enough Trideb, the protagonist, expressed his desire to meet his girlfriend May Price as a stranger in a non-place. Trideb wanted to meet May Price 'as a stranger in a ruin.' 'He wanted to them to meet far from their friends and relatives- in a place without a past, without a history, free, really free, two people coming together with the utter freedom of strangers' (TSL159). 'They would find a place like that somewhere; he was and expert on ruins.' (TSL159). And when they find one in India Trideb says 'This is our ruin' (TSL188). Trideb's favorite story is the last story he told the narrator is 'in fact the best (story) in the world' (TSL201). It 'was on the day before they left for Dhaka' is very significant. (TSL206). It unfolds Tided's (Ghosh's) Utopia- an imagined perfect place (or non-place). He hates manmade boundaries. His idea of 'perfect place' is the place without 'borders and countries' open for all. Trideb, the protagonist says, 'It happened everywhere, wherever you wish it. It was an old story, the best story in Europe, ...told when Europe was a better place, a place without borders and countries-it was a German story when told in Germany, Nordic in the north, French in France, Welsh in Wales, Cornish in Cornwall: it was the story of a hero called Tristan, a very sad story about a man without a country, who fell in love with a women across the seas' (TSL205-6) 'which is re-created in his own encounter with May' (Anjali Gera, 2003:119). Ghosh's desire for complete freedom is visible here. Through his characters in TSL he wants to remove all the boundaries 'shadow lines' created by men and wants to create an open space or 'perfect place' without boundaries. He suggests the importance of time and place should exist to facilitate human beings instead of making them hostage.

Local space and global space: cross cultural nuances

And fifteen years after his death, Trideb watched over me, as I tried to learn the meaning of distance' (TSL255). In TSL, Trideb wanted freedom of strangers and Ila wanted to be free from culture. Local space and global space are dealt beautifully in the narrative. It can be communalism here and racism there. Ghosh succeeds in underlining that it is difficult to make a home away from home. However, travelling and exploring boundaries is Ghosh's sole motto. The old man (Jethamoshaji) mutters 'once you start moving you never stop' and 'I don't believe in India-shindia' or 'but suppose you get there and they decide to draw another line somewhere?' (TSL237). Tha'mma 'hates nostalgia' and considers it 'a waste of time' but finds it her 'duty to take her uncle away from his past and thrust him into the future'. (TSL230). The idea of home binds its characters. Tha'mma 'liked things neat and in place'(TSL168) but she is unable to

understand 'how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality' (TSL168). It might be 'the birthplace' as Dhaka is for Tha'mma or the best room in the house in Calcutta where she lived 'enveloping, placental presence' which was 'withdrawing and concentrating itself within the four walls of her room' after her sickness'. (TSL: 133). 'It might be England for Ila where 'she belongs' (TSL98). Juxtaposing the two characters, Tha'mma and Ila, we find that Tha'mma hates to be 'nostalgic' (TSL230) and Ila seems to have always lived in the present alone (chronotope representing the modern generation). Thamma has fierce ethical grounding and being a schoolteacher she never compromises in life. She chooses to live alone after her husband's death and raises her children alone. But she is unable to come out of the limitations of her own principles. Whereas Ila has 'chosen to live in London' to be 'free of your bloody culture and free of all of you.' (TSL98). But Tha'mma believed that 'Ila shouldn't be there (in England)' as 'she doesn't belong there' and that freedom can't be 'bought for the price of an air ticket. ...She (Ila) wants to be left alone to do what she pleases.' (TSL98). Ila's freedom 'from the backward world' is strange as she has again lost her personal (space) freedom after her marriage to Nick Price. In an attempt to get freedom from her 'backward world' she has been trapped by her own idea of freedom. In a way Ila is similar to Tha'mma who has never grows and never accepts anything new.

Tha'mma is conscious of her nationalism and has less exposure therefore she ceases to grow. Ila has travelled a lot but has her own set of beliefs and she ceases to absorb anything new. 'For Ila,' says he, 'the current was the real: it was as though she lived in a present which was like an airlock in a canal, shut away from the tidewaters of the past and the future by steel floodgates'. (TSL33). Ironically the political activists with whom Ila shares her house in London regard her as 'a kind of guest, a decoration almost' and talk of her as 'our own upper-class Asian Marxist.' (ALS107) Ila walks 'alone because Nick Price was ashamed to be seen by his friends, walking home with an Indian' (TSL84). Both (Ila and Tha'mma) have closed personalities. And finally we realize that they land up defeated. Tha'mma's nephew (Trideb) is killed and Ila 'has assimilated herself into an arguable system of thought based on binary oppositions concerning time and place'. (TSL84).

Space 'haunting' in memory: internal experiences of perception

Trideb says 'Everyone lives in a story... because stories are all there are to live in, it was just a question of which one you chose...' (TSL201). Ghosh's narrative travels across time traversing the unreliable planes of memory. Bits and pieces of both half remembered and imagined come together in his mind and with these bits and pieces of fleeting memories Ghosh blends fact and fiction to produce this novel. The imagined 'space' or 'place' haunts in the memory. The 'space' in the memory is shared by characters. Like Tha'mma and her sister Mayadebi share the memories of their childhood in Dhaka, or Ila and the narrator have memories of the time they spent in Calcutta or even May has memories of Trideb in Calcutta and Dhaka. The narrator says, 'people like my grandmother, who have no home but in memory, learn to be very skilled in the art of recollection' (TSL214). Ila says to the narrator, 'It's you who were peculiar, sitting in that poky little flat in Calcutta, dreaming about faraway places. I probably did you no end of good; at least you learnt that those cities you saw on maps were real places, not like those fairylands Trideb made up for you' (TSL26)

The narrator has imagined Nick Price all his life as his alter ego somebody really smart with ‘yellow hair falling on his eyes’ and finds him ‘tall and broad’ just as he ‘had imagined him’(TSL60). He is surprised at his own imagined figure of Nick and says ‘when he and Robi met halfway and shook hands, I saw that I was wrong, that my eyes had been deceived by the long, straight lines of the platform: I saw that most of his breath lay in the thickness of his overcoat and his head reached no higher up Robi’s shoulder than did mine.’(TSL60). And later agrees with May’s description of Nick having ‘straw colored hair.’

The narrator wants to be like Trideb who gave him ‘words to travel in’ and ‘eyes to see them with’ (TSL30). Trideb, the son of a diplomat, is well travelled but finally decides to live in Calcutta in ‘Their old family house in Ballygunge Place with his aging grandmother’ (TSL 06). Tha’mma disapproved of him and said he did nothing. The narrator however says, ‘Trideb did not really do ‘nothing’. In fact, he was working on a Ph.D. in Archaeology-something to do with the Sena dynasty of Bengal’ (TSL07). It is using ‘imagination with precision’ that works for the narrator and he is able to transcend boundaries. ‘Trideb had once shown me pictures of that room’ (TSL65), there is something strikingly different about the photographs of that time’ (TSL66). The narrator however worships Trideb and wants to be like him. He follows him and meets him whenever he could even after his grandmother’s insistence against it. He likes Trideb. He says, ‘But of course, among other things Trideb was an archaeologist, he was not interested in fairylands: the one thing he wanted to teach me, he used to say, was to use my imagination with precision.’(TSL26). Trideb believed the ‘place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one's imagination" (TSL21) of equal importance is that he has also known.

Inventing space in imagination

The narrator is overwhelmed when he is with Ila and as he ‘looked around the cellar’ he notices the ‘scattered objects lose their definition in the harsh, flat light of the naked bulb and he sees ‘remembered forms’- the ghosts or shadow lines of memory and imagination (past and present) all together. He says, ‘They were all around me, we were together at last, not ghosts at all: the ghostliness was merely the absence of time and distance- for that is all that a ghost is, a presence displaced in time’ (TSL200).

The narrator feels that ‘a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one’s imagination’. The narrator has learnt the skill of ‘using imagination with precision’. (TSL26) ‘Trideb had given’ him ‘worlds to travel in and he had given (him) eyes to see them with’(TSL22). He enjoys imagining various spaces/ places. As a young school boy the narrator has imagined London so vividly that he could recognize places by mere mention of their names when he visited London years later. Through this power of imagination he travels in real and imaginary places in ‘fading photographs’(TSL114), reading maps in ‘his tattered old Baltholomew’s Atlas’(TSL22), the old newspapers, ‘faint recollections’(TSL21) of childhood memories and games. Both Trideb and the narrator were travelers in the real sense of the world. They saw the world with no boundaries and wanted to travel across cultures. Trideb told the narrator that one could never know anything except through real desire or longing for everything that ‘that carried one beyond the limits of one’s mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one’s image in the mirror’.(TSL32).

Ila baffles the narrator again and again with the ‘mystery of difference’. (TSL35). The narrator knows that Ila can’t invent a place. Although well travelled, Ila thinks all places are the same. For her a ‘place’ is a place which merely exists. She is unable to connect with the past through memory (with time and place). When the narrator reminds her of their childhood memory she is unable to recollect. Narrator cries, ‘But how could you forget?’(TSL21) She shrugged and says ‘It was a long time ago-the real question is, how do you remember’ (TSL22) The narrator says, ‘I could not persuade her that a place does not merely exist, that it has to be invented in one’s imagination; that her practical, bustling London was no less invented than mine, neither more nor less true, only very far apart. It was not her fault that she could not understand, for as Tridib often said of her, the inventions she lived in moved with her, so that although she had lived in many places, she had never travelled at all’. (TSL23). Ila liked to be with the narrator but she could never understand the narrator as she feels that he stays away from real places merely ‘dreaming about faraway places.’ She laughs at the narrator and says ‘It’s you who were peculiar, sitting in that poky little flat in Calcutta, dreaming about faraway places. I probably did you no end of good; at least you learnt that those cities you saw on maps were real places, not like those fairylands Tridib made up for you.’ (TSL26) Ila lives in the present. The narrator remarks ‘Ila lived so intensely in the present that she would not have believed that there really were people like Tridib, who could experience the world as concretely in their imagination as she did through her senses, more so if anything, since to them these experiences were permanently available in their memories, whereas with her, when she spoke...a string of words that she would remember while they sounded funny and then forget’ them ‘completely’. (TSL33). May says ‘I leave it all on time’ (TSL18). ‘Smiling at the memory, she told me how this card (Trideb’s) had reached her’ (TSL19). ‘Trideb had given me worlds to travel in and he had given me eyes to see them’ (TSL22) ‘While she had been travelling all around the world since she was a child, could never understand those hours in Tridib’s room had meant to me’(TSL22)

The psychological and cross cultural constraints of time:

The commonsense conceptions of time and space have radically modified in the second half of the twentieth century. There is a sense of alienation due to partition, migration, and movement for living. There is a sense of loss of familiar place or culture. People want to forget about past or future and want to live for today. The postmodern chronotopes are linked directly to postmodern space-time. Long pasts have been replaced with the present and future is also not thought about. The philosophy of today’s generation is to live life in the present. The detachment from history (past) and no expectations from the future is a true reflection of the postmodern society. In the postmodern narrative time mostly focuses on the present at the expense of other temporal developments. There can be a number of moments taking place simultaneously in a single narrative. Such multiple narrative moments make it a little tough to be grasped. These narratives however could be replaced by the other and would still be blended completely in the narrative due to the multiplicity of the moments without changing the identity of the characters. Life evolves itself through time. All our actions take place in the space. There are various references to time specifically in TSL. A time of happiness and sadness: ‘I would walk across to the other pavement, take a pencil ...drumming in time with the tune. But there were times when the tune becomes somber: I would find myself shying away from patches of shadow’ (104). Waste of time as in ‘My grandmother didn’t approve of Trideb. He is a loafer and a wastrel...Trideb

wastes his time' (TSL 04). 'For her time was like a toothbrush: it went mouldy if it wasn't used.'(TSL04). 'As for herself, she had been careful to rid our little flat of everything that might encourage us to let our time sink'. (TSL04). 'Our time wasn't given the slightest opportunity to grow mouldy' (TSL04). 'She (grandmother) might have changed her opinion if he had been willing to marry and settle down but every time she suggested it he merely laughed.'(TSL07). And later after retirement there is reference to stinking time as in Tham'ma had to 'spend all the time alone in her room' (131). The narrator says 'Once ...I saw her sitting by the window staring blankly at her cupped hands. I shut the door quickly. I knew what she had in her hands. Time-great livid gout of it; I could smell it stinking' (TSL 131). Another reference is about Trideb whose time never stinks. 'That was why I loved to listen to Trideb: he never seemed to use his time, but his time didn't stink' (TSL04).

Can 'human body' play a role in a spatial representation and the structure of a narration?

In recent years the 'body' has been rethought by the philosophers and the scientists. There is no single way of defining the body. Scientists know that body can be 'disassembled and restructured'. Philosophy in modern times stresses that 'corporeality is central to our experience and knowledge of the world' challenging the traditional superiority of mind over body. (Dani Cavallaro, 2001). My next question is can 'human body' play a role in a spatial representation and the structure of a narration? Exploring the part played by the body in society, mythology, culture and philosophy we might discuss TSL in a new light. The tragedy of Trideb's death in the riots of 1964 is central to the story of 'The Shadow Lines.' Trideb represents openness towards space and place (as he dislikes boundaries) and uses his time from the past (memory) to connect with the present. The unnamed narrator finds a sense of triumph, openness and freedom when he is with Trideb. Narrator does not 'know' exactly what happened and to Trideb and how did Trideb die. Trideb's death has created a void in his life. There is a requirement for filling a gap or solving a mystery. Death of trideb, whose body occupies space in some other nation, is significant of freedom. His sudden death leaves a mystery behind it. The narrator wants to be like him and do what Tideb did. He wants to explore space in the same manner Trideb did. Trideb says, 'that one could never know anything except through desire, real desire, which was not the same thing as greed or lust; a pure, painful and primitive desire' which 'carried one beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one's image in the mirror'.(TSL32).The narrator wants to be like Trideb, free from all social pressures but is unable to get out of it. Trideb is his real hero who thinks across cultures rather than beyond them. The narrator travels to England for further studies and meets May Price (Trideb's girlfriend) and her family. The narrator is even attracted to Trideb's girl friend, May Price, and even has physical intimacy with her towards the end of the story consuming the space that was never captured by Trideb. Narrator's sexual encounter with May solves a mystery. In his pursuit to be and act like Trideb he even makes love with Trideb's girlfriend, something that was left undone by Trideb, and gets the 'glimpse' 'of a final redemptive mystery'.(TSL277). The borders of culture are crossed here as May and the narrator unite. It is the union of an Englishwoman with an Indian. It bridges the gap between two individuals, two nations and two cultures. It also signifies the capturing the 'space of human body' (May) that could not be captured by Trideb. The capturing of this 'space in human body' solves 'the final redemptive mystery'. Ghosh deals with human body as space when he ends the novel in this manner. Jon Mee (2003) finds the ending of the novel a little 'uneasy'. Mee

remarks, 'The sexual encounter between Indian narrator and the Englishwoman May becomes a metonym for the possibility of making human connections across the cultural differences with which Ghosh so scrupulously structures the rest of his novel. The encounter seems to keep open the possibility captured in Trideb's aspiration to be carried 'beyond the limits of one's mind to other times and other places, and even, if one is lucky, to a place ...mirror(TSL31).(pp90) Mee further adds, 'The daydreaming to which the narrator is inclined as a boy is not what Trideb means by imagination. Indeed the novel as a whole is much more concerned with exploring the intricacies of 'the mystery of difference' (TSL33) than the more transcendental and romantic-sounding 'mystery' invoked in its final pages implies' (pp91). Trideb with his abundant information on various subjects and his approach to life attracts the narrator and he virtually becomes his hero or mentor.

Conclusion

Ghosh tries to demonstrate that in the postmodern world that is 'increasingly dominated by a narrow range of ideologies, one must affirm that social ethics and a more humane society can be based on grounds other than those framed for the past 200 years by political and psychological forces that have tried to flatten and homogenize the world and reduce the possibility of diverse futures'. (Nandy, 2007). Ghosh blends history with 'fleeting memories, fact and fiction, manipulating space-time, fracturing it, and revealing general cultural interests in short time spans' (borrowing Gruic Grmusa's words, 2009, Vukanovic M B. Grmusa L G. ed.). He further argues that the novelist's attempt to explore the simultaneous rather than the sequential structure of time as a means of organizing narrative exposes human time as just one among a multiplicity of temporal scales, one that can no longer be considered the measure and standard of continuity. Ghosh's definition of border includes intercultural nuances, history of movements, trespassing and travels well accepted in postmodern geography. Ghosh works on 'multiple time scales' displaying temporal discontinuity in the individual and social domains, and underlying the uncertainty regarding any relevant description of past and future. Ghosh shows his mastery in creating a gap and filling a gap. Amitav Ghosh in his novels seems to be in search of (cultural) spaces in the dark smeared lines across cultures or is he trying to find out space between cultures? Is this darkness of the lines across cultures caused by the black or the excess of white light which makes our vision blurred? Or is he trying to find out a blend of black and white, a mixture or a blend of the two-grey- a mixture that Indians/ subalterns/ postcolonial/ orientalist are composed of. Is this shadowed dark line caused by the 'struggle with silence' (TSL24) inside him? Ghosh delves deep into the silent recesses of human mind. He does not challenge silence but encounters it with courage. In TSL as the unknown narrator completes the story silence takes over. The past, present and future fuse together and it is difficult to distinguish them in the smeared lines.

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