**The Shadow Lines By- Amitav Ghose**

1. In which city does Jethamoshai live?

Ans**.** Dhaka.

1. ‘The Shadow Lines’ by Amitav Ghose explores the political and economic growth of India through the lives of the two families?

Ans. The Dutta- Chaudhuryand the Price family.

1. **How old was Tridib when he went to England with his parents?**

**Ans. Eight years old.**

1. **‘The Shadow Lines’ is devided into two sections, what are they?**

**Ans. ‘Going Away’ and ‘Coming Home’.**

1. Why did Nick leave his job in Kuwait?

Ans. Nick was fired from his last job in Kuwait for embezzlement.

1. Who is Nick?

Ans. May Prince’s brother.

1. Jatin marries a women affectionately known as ………………..

Ans. Queen Victoria.

1. Who was the narrator in love with?

Ans. Ila

1. The narrator has long-term romantic feelings towards whom?

Ans. Ila.

1. **When did the narrator's father's aunt go to England with her husband and her son?**

**Ans. For medical treatment of Saheb, narrator’s aunt’s husband.**

1. Tha’mma was born in which city?

Ans. Dhaka

1. A recurring nightmare haunts Robi for decades because he witnesses the riot that killed ……….

Ans. Tridrv

1. What was Mrs. Price addicted to?

Ans. Church-sales.

1. Tribid has a years-long mail correspondence with which character?

Ans.May, Mrs. Price's daughter.

1. Who was the man still lived in Tha’mma’s ancestral home?

Ans. Jethamoshai.

1. What is the name of Ila’s doll?

Ans. Magda

1. What is May Price’s profession?

Ans. May is an oboist.

1. Before Tha’mma retired, where did she work?

Ans. As a headmistress in a girls’ school in Calcutta.

1. **In which year Mayadebi went to England with her husband and her son?**

**Ans. In 1939**

1. **Where does Tridev die?**

**Ans In a communal riots in Dhaka.**

1. What is the nickname of Ila’s mother?

Ans. Queen Victoria.

1. In what city was the narrator of ‘The Shadow Lines’ born?

Ans. Calcutta.

1. Who tries to have the narrator expelled form college?

Ans. Tha’mma.

1. What is Nick Price’s profession?

Ans.

1. Whom does Ila marry?

Ans.

1. What did Tha’mma sell in order to be able to donate money to the Indian military?

Ans. Her jewelry.

1. ***Discuss the significance of the title of the novel ‘The Shadow Line’.***

**Ans.** Amitav Ghosh has borrowed the title from Joseph Conrad's novel, “The Shadow Line”. Both the novels are stories about young people with a political backdrop. In Ghosh's novel, the title illustrates the idea of artificial borders being incapable of dividing people's sentiments. Amitav Ghosh in The Shadow Lines challenges the conventional portrayal of the nation as a unique entity. He considers the lines that demarcate nations as “shadowy” and unreal. Shadow lines appear not only between countries, but also between imagination and reality, the past and the present, memory and desire. ‘The Shadow Lines’ by Amitav Ghosh centers around a young boy, the narrator, whose growth in age and maturity is traced slowly through his understanding of the memories that connect him and his family members. Through the book, we watch him move backwards and forwards in time as bits and pieces of stories, both half-remembered and imagined, come together in his mind until he arrives at an intricate, interconnected picture of the world where borders and boundaries mean nothing, mere shadow lines that we draw dividing people and nations.

The title ‘The Shadow Lines’ is the author’s commentary on the artificial nature of cultural, ideological, geographical and psychological borders, which he asks us to disregard in favour of a broader humanism. The titular ‘shadow lines’ can refer to many different things, but I believe the fundamental allusion he makes is to the borders that separate nations from each other.

The title of the novel, The Shadow Lines, refers to the boundary lines that separate people who otherwise are united. The separating lines, the result of political action, have created an artificial division among the people. Amitav Ghosh demonstrates with his drawing of two circles on an atlas how these boundaries are the geographical expressions of nationalism. Particularly in respect of Bengal, Calcutta and Dhaka are the exact reflection of each other and the people are very closely bound to each other. Separating them is like separating the image in a mirror from the original. Or it is like dividing a memory. It is this forced, unnatural division that has resulted in the irony of senseless violence that claims innocent lives.

The title ‘The Shadow Lines’ is evocative of one of the major concerns of the novel: that of the creation of nations with boundaries that are both arbitrary and invented. This issue becomes more pertinent when viewed in the context of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent. That which, on surface, is projected as completely opposed to another is actually a part of it. The author uses the trope of house to explain this. As children, Tha’mma and Mayadebi witness the family dispute between their father and his elder brother (Jethamoshai) that leads to the division of the house.

Tha’mma as a child in Dhaka house makes stories about the upside down house, the other half of the house occupied by the uncle’s family, and narrates them to the younger sister. In the other half of the house, these stories talk of everything as being upside-down. The artificial constructedness of the ‘otherness’ of the house is very evident and gives to the keen reader a foretaste of a similar exercise in constructing the difference between the two sides of a partitioned nation. What is significant is that the two nations were united at one time but the course of history makes them two and for sustaining their separation this difference has to be invented. It is ironic therefore that Tha’mma who was herself a creator of that artificial difference cannot see through the strategy of the
state. “But if there aren’t any trenches or anything, how are the people to know. The case of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent has been very different because the state has been forced to create a difference where none existed and show the two nations as inherently opposed.

Perhaps this oblivion on Tha’mma’s part is tantamount to a deliberate non-admission of facts that are deeply disturbing. The oblivion of Tha’mma therefore becomes her survival strategy. Nationalism too gets redefined in various ways through experience. Whereas the great historical project of nationalism first undermines community to formulate nation, it then ‘narrates the nation.’ The theorist Bhaba sees this project as comprising of the creation of ‘the narratives … that signify a sense of ‘nationness’: the…pleasures of one’s hearth and the… terror of the space of the other.’ This idea however in the context of the Indian subcontinent gets problematical because the otherness being talked of has to be created rather than merely alluded to. People in the newly formed nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh are prompted through narration ‘language, signifiers, textuality, rhetoric’ to create a difference where none exists. Therefore what the book looks at is the creation of artificial difference between two nations that are inherently one.

A seemingly insignificant incident ridicules the intense feeling of difference that these two countries otherwise harbour and how these differences are reduced to a naught if viewed from a space that is outside the two. So these boundaries that are created due to political reasons seem tangible enough to be called lines but if analysed closely, fade away like shadows. Amitav Ghosh asserts that the borders that separate nations are nothing more than artificial lines created by men. Thus, the ‘shadow lines’ of the title are the borders that divide people, and one of the main emphases of the novel is on the arbitrariness of such cartographic demarcations.

The novel ‘The Shadow Lines’ by Amitav Ghosh centers around a young boy, the narrator, whose growth in age and maturity is traced slowly through his understanding of the memories that connect him and his family members. Through the book, we watch him move backwards and forwards in time as bits and pieces of stories, both half-remembered and imagined, come together in his mind until he arrives at an intricate, interconnected picture of the world where borders and boundaries mean nothing, mere shadow lines that we draw dividing people and nations. The title ‘The Shadow Lines’ is the author’s commentary on the artificial nature of cultural, ideological, geographical and psychological borders, which he asks us to disregard in favour of a broader humanism. The titular ‘shadow lines’ can refer to many different things, but we believe the fundamental allusion he makes is to the borders that separate nations from each other.

1. ***The*story*of* The Shadow Lines *‘is woven around*two families*, the Datta- Chaudhuris of Bengal and the Prices of London, spaning three generations. Give well reasoned answer.***

***Or,***

***This novel* The Shadow Lines *is divided into two sections,*“Going Away” and “Coming Home”. *Critically comment on the plot of the two sections.***

**Ans**. The Shadow Lines is a sweeping history of two families, one Indian and the other English that are deeply shaped by events following the departure of the British from India in 1947. The novel has no chapters or scenes, but is structured in two parts: “Going Away” and “Coming Home.” “Coming Home” begins as the Narrator relates the story of several of his family members and how they came to live in Calcutta. The Narrator makes it clear that he is writing about the past from some undetermined point in the 1970s as he works on a Doctoral degree in London. Oddly, his mother and father are scarcely mentioned in the novel. Part 1, “Going Away,” focuses primarily on his relationship with his grandmother [Tha’mma](https://www.supersummary.com/the-shadow-lines/major-character-analysis/#187022), his tutelage under the care of an intellectual named [Tridib](https://www.supersummary.com/the-shadow-lines/major-character-analysis/#187021), and the daughter of an Indian diplomat, [Ila](https://www.supersummary.com/the-shadow-lines/major-character-analysis/#187023).

While in London in the early 1980s, the unnamed [narrator](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/the-narrator) recounts a series of stories and memories to his cousin [Ila](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/ila) and his uncle [Robi](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/robi). The stories and memories belong to the narrator; his uncle [Tridib](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/tridib); and his grandmother, [Tha'mma](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/tha-mma). The memories begin in the early twentieth century when Tridib's grandfather, [Mr. Justice Chandrashekhar Datta-Chaudhuri](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), befriends [Lionel Tresawsen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters) at séances in London.

Tha'mma was born in 1902 in Dhaka, British India. As a young girl, Tha’mma’s father and her uncle, [Jethamoshai](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/jethamoshai), begin feuding, so they split their huge communal house in half with a wall. The two sides of the family stop speaking to each other, and Tha'mma tells her younger sister, [Mayadebi](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/mayadebi), that Jethamoshai's family lives in "the upside-down house," where they do everything upside down and backwards. After Tha'mma and Mayadebi marry (Mayadebi marries the Shaheb, Justice Datta-Chaudhuri's son), they lose contact with Jethamoshai. Tha'mma follows her husband as he works on the railroad until he dies in 1936. At this point, her son, the narrator's [father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), is still a child. Tha’mma becomes a teacher and refuses to accept help of any sort from her family. Though Tha'mma had been very interested in the terrorist movements against British rule in her youth, when the Partition happens in 1947, it means little to her. However, she never returns to Dhaka since it becomes the capital of the Muslim country East Pakistan.

The Shaheb is a wealthy diplomat, and in 1939, he ends up needing a special medical operation that can't be performed in India. [Mrs. Price](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/mrs-price), Lionel Tresawson's daughter, invites the Shaheb and his family to live with her in London so that he can receive medical attention there. Tridib, who is nine years old, accompanies his father, while his older brother, [Jatin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), stays in school in India. Tridib loves London and is fascinated by [Alan Tresawsen](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), Mrs. Price's brother, and his friends [Dan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), [Mike](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), and [Francesca](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters). In the time leading up to World War II and the early days of the Blitz, Tridib spends his days exploring bombsites and listening to [Snipe](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters), Mrs. Price's husband, tell stories. In 1940, a bomb hits Alan's house on Brick Lane, killing him and Dan. Later that year, Tridib's family returns to India.

Over the next decade, Mayadebi and the Shaheb have a third son, [Robi](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/robi). The narrator's father marries the narrator's [mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/mother), who soon gives birth to a son, the narrator. Jatin marries a woman affectionately known as [Queen Victoria](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/queen-victoria), and the couple has a daughter named Ila, who is the narrator's age. Mrs. Price, whose daughter [May](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/may-price) was an infant when Tridib was in London, has a son named [Nick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters/nick-price). Ila's parents are wealthy, and she spends her childhood traveling around the world for her father's work. The narrator, on the other hand, never gets far outside of Calcutta. Instead, he spends his time listening to Tridib tell stories about London and other faraway lands. Tridib teaches the narrator to use his imagination and explains that the world in one's imagination can be just as real as the outside world. Ila doesn't understand this—she sees too much of the world to understand how one's imagination can be anywhere as good.

For a time, Ila's family lives with the Prices in London. When she's eight, her family visits Calcutta for a festival. The narrator convinces Tha'mma to allow his family to accompany Ila's to their family home in Raibajar. When they meet Ila's family in Gole Park, the narrator's mother is shocked that the narrator, who spent weeks asking after Ila, is too shy to talk to her. The narrator feels as though his mother betrayed him by making it clear that he needs Ila more than Ila will ever need him. Regardless, the family piles into the Shaheb's two cars and drive for hours. When they reach the massive house, Ila leads the narrator into a half-underground storage room, which stores a massive table that Tridib's grandfather shipped back from London. Ila decides that they're going to play a game called Houses, which she plays with Nick in London. She informs the narrator of who Nick is, and the narrator understands that Nick is his competition for Ila's affection. Ila draws a map in the dust of Mrs. Price's house and adds a room for Magda, her doll, who is the baby for the purposes of the game. When everything is set, Ila tells the narrator what "happened" to Magda at school that day: the ugly school bully chased the beautiful blonde Magda home, yelling slurs at her—but Nick Price saved her from being beaten up. When Ila starts to cry, the narrator is angry and doesn't understand why she's crying. Finally, Tridib walks in with the children and listens to the narrator tell Ila's story. He encourages the narrator to not call Ila dumb for crying like the story is real, and he insists that everyone lives in stories.

In 1959, Tridib and May, who is nineteen at the time, begin writing to each other. They exchange photos after a year. In 1963, Tridib sends May a very long letter recalling an experience he had as a boy in London, when he watched two strangers have sex in a bombed cinema. He tells May that he wants to meet her like those strangers did—as strangers in a ruin. May is flustered, but she makes plans to visit Tridib in India. Around the same time, Tha'mma, who is retired and has time on her hands for the first time in her life, receives word that her uncle Jethamoshai, who is in his nineties, still lives in the family home in Dhaka. She believes that it's her duty to bring Jethamoshai home to India. Not long after this comes to light, the Shaheb receives a job posting in Dhaka, and he, Mayadebi, and Robi move there. Finally, Mayadebi invites Tha'mma to visit, and they make plans to try to save their uncle from the growing unrest in the Muslim-majority city. May makes plans to travel to Calcutta and then to Dhaka with Tha'mma. Tridib decides to accompany them to Dhaka.

The narrator joins Tridib and his father to pick May up from the train station. Over the next few days, the narrator accompanies Tridib and May as they drive around and see the sights. He shows her the table in Raibajar, and she tells him that Ila was a victim of bullying, but Nick never saved her. When they visit the Victoria Memorial, May becomes suddenly emotional. Tridib tells her that it's their ruin, which puzzles the narrator. He understands that there's a relationship between May and Tridib that he won't understand. Not long after that, on January 4, 1964, Tridib, May, and Tha'mma leave for Dhaka.

A few days later, the narrator experiences a harrowing bus ride home from school as the driver tries to protect the dozen boys from the angry mobs in the streets. Meanwhile, in Dhaka, the Shaheb warns Mayadebi and Tha'mma that trouble is brewing there, but Tha'mma insists on seeing Jethamoshai anyway. Thirteen-year-old Robi is excited to see "trouble" and goes with them to the old house in Dhaka. There, a Muslim mechanic named [Saifuddin](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters) greets them and explains that a rickshaw driver named [Khalil](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-shadow-lines/characters) cares for Jethamoshai. When Khalil arrives, he leads his guests into the house. Jethamoshai doesn't recognize his nieces, but he tells Tridib that he's waiting for his family to return so that he can take them to court and gain full ownership of the house. The driver races to the door and says that there's trouble, and they have to leave. Khalil agrees to drive Jethamoshai in his rickshaw to Mayadebi's house. When they're in the car, they turn a corner and come face to face with a mob. It surrounds the car and breaks the windshield. When the mob descends on the rickshaw, Tha'mma tells the driver to go, but May gets out to try to save Jethamoshai. Tridib follows her, but Tridib, Jethamoshai, and Khalil are all brutally murdered by the mob. The narrator's parents tell him later that Tridib died in an accident. The following year, Tha'mma gives her beloved gold chain away to fund the war with Pakistan and appears crazy to the narrator. His mother explains that Tha'mma hasn't been the same since "they" killed Tridib.

In college, the narrator continues to both love Ila and find her frustrating, as she never understands why he is so insistent on remembering Tridib's stories or their own childhood antics. Once, during a summer holiday, she convinces the narrator and Robi to go with her to a nightclub. Robi doesn't want to go, but at the club, he forbids Ila from dancing with another man. She screams at them that she lives in London so she can be free of this kind of oppression. The narrator tells this story to Tha'mma on her deathbed, and it makes her extremely angry: she doesn't think Ila's kind of freedom is real. In her anger, Tha'mma writes a letter to the dean of the narrator's school the day before she dies, telling the dean that the narrator visits prostitutes and should therefore be expelled.

After seeing a lecture in Delhi, the narrator realizes that although he never connected the events as a child, the riot he experienced in Calcutta and the riot that killed Tridib in Dhaka was part of the same political uproar. As he studies Tridib's atlas, the narrator discovers that borders are meaningless and actually helped create the climate that brought on the riots in the first place. The narrator goes on to pursue an advanced degree in London. At one point, Ila takes Robi and the narrator to visit Mrs. Price and introduces them to Nick. The narrator shows off the power of Tridib's stories by leading his friends around London and through Mrs. Price's house based off of the mental maps Tridib created for him. Ila, Robi, and the narrator have dinner at an Indian restaurant afterwards, and Robi admits that he has a recurring nightmare about the riot in Dhaka in which he can never keep Tridib from getting out of the car. The narrator also reconnects with May, who plays oboe in an orchestra. They spend Christmas with Mrs. Price, and May suggests that Nick is lying about leaving his job in Kuwait: she believes he embezzled money. There's a blizzard that night, so Ila and the narrator stay at Mrs. Price's house in the cellar. Ila undresses in front of the narrator, not realizing his feelings for her, but she spends the night with Nick.

Back in London a few years later, Ila marries Nick. At their party, the narrator gets very drunk and May offers to take him home and put him to bed. The narrator assaults May but feels horrible about it in the morning. She takes him with her while she collects money for her "worthy causes," and on a break, she talks about her relationship with Tridib. As the narrator prepares to return home a few months later, Ila confides in him that Nick is cheating on her, though she refuses to leave him. The night before the narrator leaves, he has dinner with May. At dinner, May tells the narrator about the riots and asks if he thinks that she killed Tridib. May tells him that she used to think she did, but she knows now that Tridib sacrificed himself and knew he was going to die. She asks the narrator to stay the night and he accepts, glad to finally understand the mystery of Tridib's death.

Thus, Amitav Ghosh in The Shadow Lines challenges the conventional portrayal of the nation as a unique entity. He considers the lines that demarcate nations as “shadowy” and unreal. Shadow lines appear not only between countries, but also between imagination and reality, the past and the present, memory and desire. The story is woven around two families, the Datta- Chaudhuris of Bengal and the Prices of London, spaning three generations. Written against the backdrop of the civil strife in post-Partition East Bengal and riot-hit Calcutta, it probes into private lives and public events.

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