

The SHADOW LINES

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AMITAV GHOSH



BIOGRAPHY

- Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta on 11 July 1956. His father Shailendra Chandra Ghosh was first a Lieutenant-Colonel in the army and, later a diplomat.
- He grew up in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), Sri Lanka, Iran and India. He is an Indian-Bengali author known for his work in English language.
- He was educated at the Doon School (Where he was a younger contemporary of Vikram Seth), St. Stephen's College, Delhi, Delhi University and Oxford University, where he was awarded a PhD in social anthropology.
- He is one of the elite group of Indian writers writing in English, who attended exclusive schools, almost British, In the post-Raj period and are more comfortable with English language than with any other Indian language.

- Amitav Ghosh joined the Delhi School of Economics as a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology. After sometime he got scholarship for his D. Phil. In social anthropology at Oxford University.
- It is this anthropological study which took him to Alexandria University and thereafter to the villages of Egypt. In an interview with Sheela Reddy regarding his first book written in a servant's quarter Ghosh says:
- It was tiny maybe 10 feet by 10 feet, on the top floor of a house in Defence Colony, burning hot.
- I had a job in DU as a research assistant at Rs 600 a month, He further says: " I went into the Indian Express straight after college because I wanted to start writing at once and I thought this was the only literary life I could have. But I left because I realised that I wouldn't be able to write my novel.

In 1999, Ghosh joined the faculty at Queens College in the 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.

He was awarded Padamashri by the Government of India in 2007.,

Award-

The Arthur C. Clark Award, 1996, (The Calcutta Chromosome).

Best American Essays, 1995, ('The Ghosts of Mrs Gandhi').

The Annual Award of the Sahitya Akademi (Indian Academy of Literature), 1990, (The Shadow Lines).

News and Events -

27 October, 2019

CHICAGO, IL

12:30 PM CT

CHICAGO HUMANITIES FESTIVAL

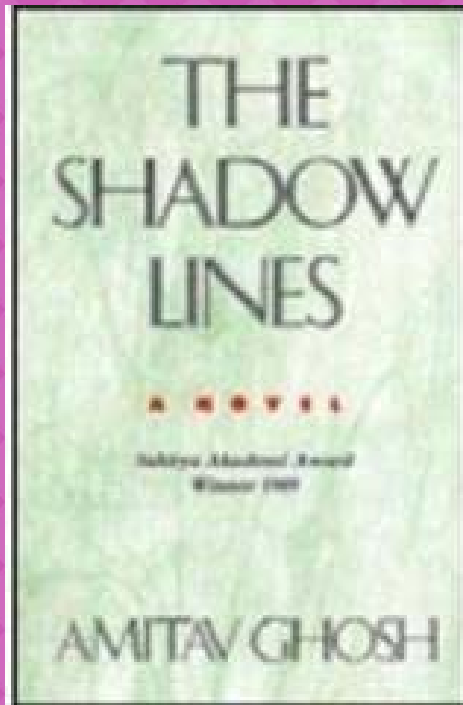
Northwestern University

John J. Louis Room

Norris University Center

Evanston, IL





THE SHADOW LINES

- Author - Amitav Ghosh
- Country - India
- Language - English
- Genre - Fiction
- Publisher - Ravi Dayal Publishers Publication
- Date - 1988
- Media type - Print (Hardback)

The Shadow Lines Characters

The Narrator- The narrator was born in Calcutta, India in 1953, where he lives with his parents and his grandmother, Tha'mma

Tridib

Tridib is the narrator's uncle. He's about twenty years older and is a very skilled storyteller. He often tells the narrator stories about the year he lived in London with the Prices.

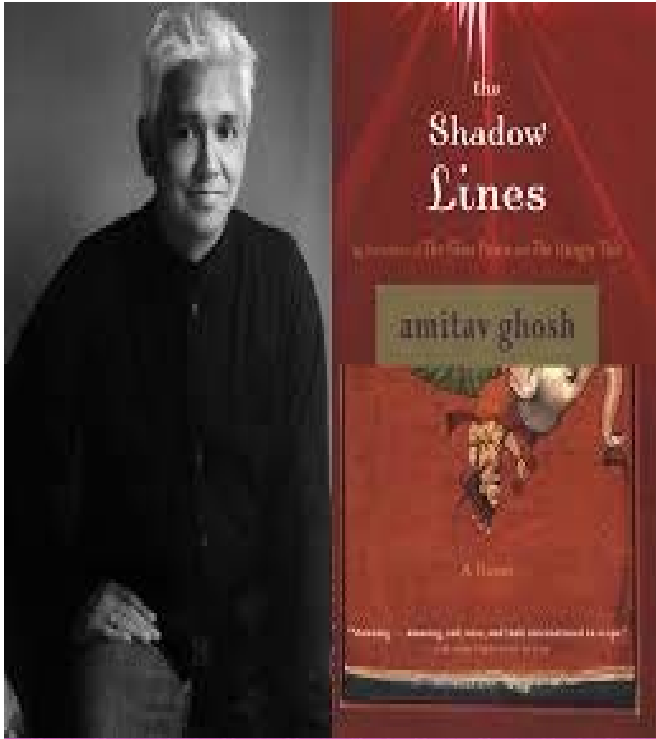
Ila is the narrator's cousin. They're the same age, and their families joke that they could be twins, but they're very different. Ila's family is very wealthy and she lives in a number of foreign cities throughout her childhood,

Tha'mma

Tha'mma is the narrator's grandmother. As a young woman in British India, she desperately wanted to be a part of the terrorist groups that fought for India's independence from Britain.

May Price

is Mrs. Price's daughter. She's an infant when Tridib and his family are in London in 1939, and she's at least ten years older than her younger brother, Nick. May is an oboist and plays in an orchestra professionally throughout her adult life



Summary:-

The Shadow line(1988) is set in Calcutta of the 1960's and moved with an easy felicity through Calcutta, Dhaka and London.

It describes the history of an Indian family living in Calcutta, but with roots in Dhaka on the Pakistan side of the border.

Its narrator is unnamed, his hero Tridib and the narrator's grandmother provide the basic framework on which the novel moved forward.

The time span of the novel extends from 1939 to 1979 with 1964 being a very important year for the characters. Our memory links the past to the present and many of the characters live more in the past than in the present.

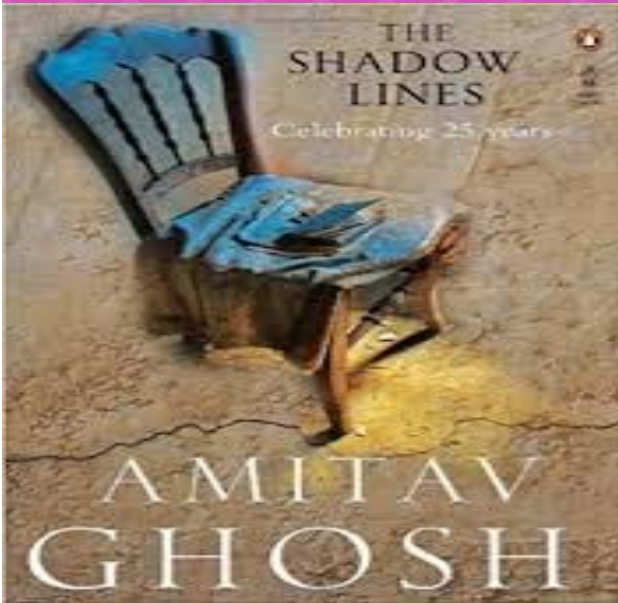
This novel takes us into the consciousness of several character, particularly the narrator's grandmother, Ila's parents and May Price, another character in the novel

Summary:-

Each character has got his own quirks and idiosyncrasies; each character is caught between shadow lines in the wasteland of prejudice, dogma and a narrow nationalism.

This novel ends with the mystery OF Tridib's voluntary death which becomes a death symbolic of his sacrifice for humanity.

Time past merges fluidly with time present. At the very start of the novel we have the narrator, a young boy, gazing with respect and admiration as Tridib 'makes-up' a story for his group of friends at his adda (haunt) at Gole Park- with a view to impress them about his English connections.



This is followed by a long digression about the narrator's own visit to England and his meeting with May Price after Tridib's death.

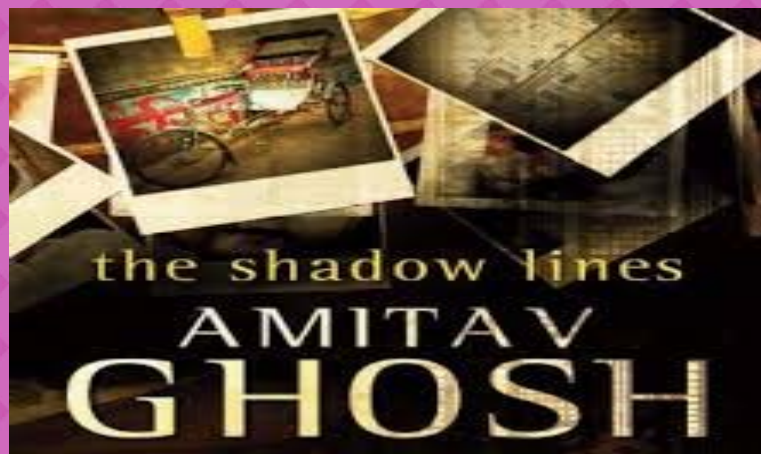
SUMMARY;-

The pendulum swings to the present again at this stage: we are back to the narrator's childhood with his cousin Ila and her mother, nick named Queen Victoria.

We may clearly see that Ghosh has surmounted the rigid barriers of time, place and action, and he has updated the earlier Indian fiction wherein one has to observe the rigidity of time, place and action, an essential constituent of a novel.

This novel has received the Sahitya Akademi Award way back in 1989. Communal hatred and the mechanics of riots is another important dimension of The Shadow line, Panic, rumour, fear and hatred are universal components of riots.

The two parts of the book are named (a) Going Away and (b) Coming Home. These names are very significant. In fact, coming and going, arriving and leaving, meeting and parting-all metaphors of movement are very important with Amitav Ghosh.



Summary -His vision seems to hover around these two polarities- coming and going.

In fact, the novel brings out fickle-minded people who unleashed violence in both the countries as a fallout of the theft of the prophet's hair.

In this violence Tridib becomes a victim, when he is on an innocent visit to Dhaka along with Tha'mma and May .

Girish Karnad writes about this visit:

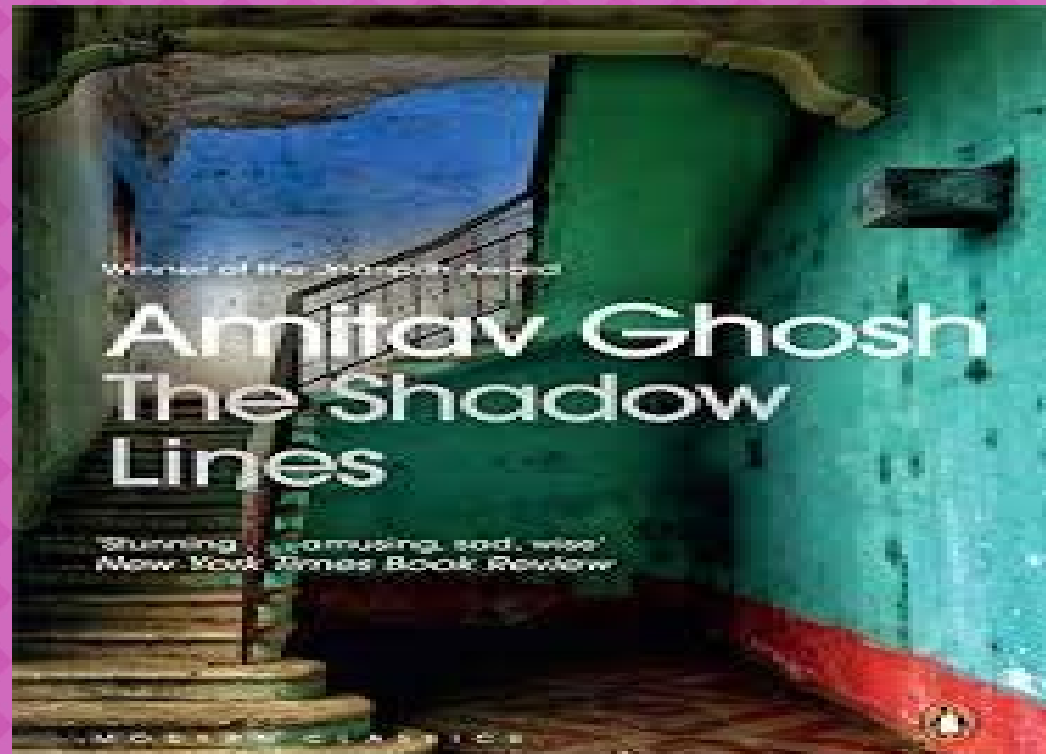
"Past and future meet across religious, political and cultural barriers in a confusion of emotions, ideals, intentions and acts, leading to a shattering climax. Political independence is analyzed and scrutinized in new perspectives.

Through the minds of the characters, their painful and nostalgic recalling and recollections, we get a picture of the period.

This novel points out the meaning of political freedom in the modern world and the force of nationalism.

SUMMARY;-

- We draw the Shadow Line between people and nations. It is both an absurd illusion and a source of terrifying violence.
- If more novels like this one make their appearance, the nineteen nineties could well hold out the promise of another dawn for Indian literature in English.



THEME

- An important theme of the novel *The Shadow Lines* is the concept of nationalism that is gaining ground in today's world.
- The author has held the extreme form of nationalism responsible for many a problem these days.
- *Love of the country*, passion inspired nationalism and intoxication of patriotism cannot but lead to jingoism.
- Thus nationalism which had and which has great uses can become the greatest obstacle to world unity and world peace.
- This tribal instinct has been magnified beyond all measures resulting in *political and economic* megalomania.
- And the novel in its enthusiasm to prove the point has gone a little too far to proclaim that nationalism is a defunct force.

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Thank you