



The notion of Cross-cultural relationships in Ghosh's novel The Shadow Lines

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Abstract

The cross-cultural relationship represents a society in which several cultures coexist. It's a mash-up of people of diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, race, religion, etc.). It encourages people of all backgrounds to learn to live and work together, despite their differences. *The Shadow Lines* provide a framework for blending people of different cultures and ethnicities from one country to another. Amitav Ghosh highlights the possibilities of a society that strives toward a multicultural world where everyone has an identity. The character of Tridib is described in the novel as an extremely intellectual individual who is captivated by love that transcends national boundaries. The diversity in the narrative is justified by the fact that Ila has an affinity with Nick Price that transcends their respective cultures, regardless of the reality that they are of different ethnicities. In the post-colonial age, the diverse ethnic or national cultures that exist beyond boundaries are examined more deeply in this study. This article also delves into the phenomenon of intergenerational and interethnic collaboration, which creates a new cultural identity. The characters in *The Shadow Lines* will be analyzed to reveal a global perspective that reflects an unprejudiced observation of a homogenous society.

Keywords: Cosmopolitan, Postcolonial, Identity, Ethnicity, Culture

Introduction

Cross-cultural relationship is defined by the Oxford Learner's Dictionary as “the practice of giving importance to all cultures in a society and it includes people of several, different races, religions, languages and traditions.” (Oxford Dictionary) Bhikhu Parekh also says that, “It is neither a political doctrine nor a philosophical issue but actually a perspective on as way of viewing human life. Increasing cultural diversity focuses on the promotion of rights for different religion and cultural groups. The rights for cultural groups form basis for multiculturalism.” (Parekh 59)

The Shadow Lines, Amitav Ghosh's 1988 novel, opens reader eyes to the potential for establishing a multiethnic society. It exemplifies how a person's experience of diaspora may serve as a guiding light in their

pursuit of a more globally minded lifestyle. Through his interactions with his grandmother Tha'mma, cousin Ila, and uncles Tridib and Robi, the novel's unnamed narrator portrays the varying interpretations of cultural identity. Having been raised in a middle-class household in Calcutta, the narrator now has the polish of a metropolitan lifestyle and a command of two languages. His exposure to his cousins and uncles who live across the ocean, as well as his time spent doing research in London, broadened his perspective on concerns of nationality and culture. His grandmother, a strong, self-reliant, contemporary woman, was a major figure in his upbringing. Tha'mma personifies the ethnic group's shared history and values. Tha'mma has had to adjust to her new home and culture, but she has embraced both. Because her contemporary identity is so different from her original identity, she often struggles to reconcile the two.

The Shadow Lines also opens up reader perceptions to the amalgamation of a number of different civilizations. It is a narrative in which both the west and the east meet, and gradually, the continuity of the family bonds remains the same. Both of these things happen simultaneously. In this region, ultramodern mentality coexists with traditional Indian etiquette, and Bengali culture manifests itself in three distinct ways: in Dhaka, Calcutta, and in other countries. According to Ketaki Datta “Amitav Ghosh makes the East and the West meet on a pedestal of friendship especially through the characters like Tridib, May, the writer himself, Ila Datta-Chaudhuri, Nick Price and Mrs. Price. Here, a sensitive and much hypes issue “Partition of Bengal” is the crux round which friendship, chasm of relationships and communal tension are built up. Truth ‘hidden’ and ‘discovered’ later – all come into the open.” (Datta 63)

Ghosh appears to reflect his own ideas through Tridib, which is set against the backdrop of post-partition violence and the riots that broke out between Hindus and Muslims. Tridib thinks of himself as the kind of guy who does not believe in limits or borders of any kind. He views people from all around the world as contributing to the world's rich cultural diversity. It is a place where people of different cultures, ethnicities, racial backgrounds, and religious beliefs may come together to live as one family. Tridib's father served in the Foreign Service as an officer in the Diplomatic Army. After an interval of two or three years, they would sometimes spend a couple of months in Calcutta. He and Mayadebi were constantly away, either travelling overseas or living in Delhi. The elder of Tridib's two brothers, Jatin and Kaku, who was two years older than Tridib, worked as an economist for the United Nations. “Tridib was two years older than Jatin-kaku. He was usually travelling with his wife and his daughter Ila, who was the same age as me, and going to different places in Africa or Southeast Asia.” (Ghosh 6) As a result, readers are in a position to assert that his family's nomadic history is the source of his sensitivity towards and comprehension of the world's myriad cultural traditions.

Tridib's early exposure to many cultures sparked a fascination for diversity. Through his grandfather, he has links to the western world, “Tridib had been to London, with his parents, many years ago, when he was a boy...there was a family called Price, who lived in West Hampstead, but they weren't relatives - they were very, very old friends of Tridib's family, because Mrs. price's father, Lionel Tresawsen had lived in India when the British were here, and he and Tridib's grandfather, who was a very important man, a judge in the Calcutta High Court, had been friends.”(Ghosh 12)

As Tridib pursues his love for a woman who lives on the other side of the ocean, he acts as a missile for cultural tolerance. As Suvir Kaul points out, “In *The Shadow Lines*, the questing romance of Tridib-Tristan finds in May its object across the seas, but it also finds in her a figure for the deluded idealism, the cultural dislocation or in comprehension, that sets the stage for personal or public tragedy.” (Kaul 276) In his mind, Tridib is a man from a different nation who is enamoured by the affection and love of a woman in his homeland. According to him, a person's cultural identity is not limited by their physical location because borders are merely artificial lines.

Ila Datta Chaudhuri personifies a fusion of cultural identities. Her father, Datta Jatin Chaudhuri, is an economist for the United Nations and is constantly being moved around the world. According to Nivedita Majumdar, she is best described as, “a globetrotting, cosmopolitan activist for politically correct causes.” (Majumder 248) The majority of Ila's formative years are spent in London, despite the fact that she and her parents initially migrate all over the world. Furthermore, she moves to London to continue her education at university. After spending time in both India and Britain, Ila develops a hybrid identity. She is considered strange in both the Indian and British social circles due to her dual heritage. Sunder Rajeshwari Ranjan demonstrates that, “Ila is the post-colonial cosmopolitan of twentieth-century...For Ila too there is no natural ‘home’; she must find or create her own place in the world... lives in London because she wanted to be free , a freedom that is really rootlessness.” (Ranjan 289) It comes to light that Ila is experiencing an identity crisis. As she goes from one location to another, her identity also shifts. Ila's identity is stranded in between since she belongs to neither location. Her unique cultural background distinguishes her from others.

Conclusion

The Shadow Lines demonstrates ethnically diverse imagination. Through his primary characters, Ghosh depicts multicultural society. He has painted an accurate and realistic image of India's diverse cultural mix. Tridib continues to be the forefront of multiculturalism. His imagination and affection across the ocean made him a global village citizen. Through the narrator's vision, Tridib's attachments to his origins kept alive his imagination. The multiculturalism that has developed in the novel resembles a salad bowl in which one can recognize his or her own identity. It is a novel in which familial ties and friendships contribute to a multicultural atmosphere. *The Shadow Lines* seeks to reveal a plethora of cultures or a blending of cultures that reflects the unbiased consideration of a homogenous society.

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