

Memory as a Narrative Strategy: Dislocating Linear History in The Shadow Lines

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores how Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines* uses memory not just as a theme, but as a storytelling tool to shake up the way history is usually told. Instead of following a straight timeline like history books do, the novel jumps around in time and space through the memories of its characters—especially the unnamed narrator. These memories are messy, emotional, and personal, mixing facts with imagination and family stories. For example, the narrator learns about big events like the Partition or the Dhaka riots not from official records, but through the fragmented, emotional recollections of people like his grandmother Tha'mma or his uncle Tridib. The book argues that this memory-driven style challenges the idea that history has to be neat, objective, or tied to national borders. Ghosh shows that personal memories—like Tha'mma's longing for her childhood home in Dhaka or Tridib's vivid stories about places he's never visited—can be more truthful about human experiences than polished historical accounts. Even though the narrator sometimes admits he's piecing together events he didn't witness, his "unreliable" storytelling feels honest because it captures how people *really* remember: with gaps, emotions, and imagination. The thesis wraps up by saying this approach makes the novel feel

deeply human, helping readers rethink how stories shape identity, belonging, and the truths we hold onto.

Keywords: *Memory, History, National Identity, Partition. Postcolonialism. Narrative Structure, Borderlessness, Diaspora, Trauma, Hybridity.*

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most important writers in Indian English literature. His novel *The Shadow Lines* is well-known for its deep themes and unique storytelling style. The novel moves between different times and places like Calcutta, Dhaka, and London. But what makes it special is how Ghosh tells the story using memory instead of following a straight, historical timeline.

In most history books, events are presented in a clear and linear order—first this happened, then that. But in *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh breaks this pattern. He lets characters remember things in their own way. Their memories are personal, emotional, and sometimes unclear. Through this, Ghosh shows that memory can be a powerful way to tell history, especially the parts that are left out of official records.

This kind of writing helps readers think about history in a new way. It shows how personal stories and feelings can be more meaningful than facts written in textbooks. The use of memory also makes us question the idea of borders, identity, and what a nation really means. That is why this study focuses on how memory works as a narrative strategy in the novel.

1.2 Problem Statement

Many researchers have already studied themes like nationalism and identity in *The Shadow Lines*. But few have focused on how memory is used as a tool to tell the story in a different way. Most studies treat memory as a theme, not as a narrative technique.

This creates a gap in the research. There is a need to understand how Ghosh uses memory not just to talk about the past, but to **shape** how the story is told. His use of

memory challenges the idea that history must always follow a straight line. Instead, it suggests that memory—although personal and emotional—can also be a valid way to understand history.

Therefore, this thesis aims to fill that gap by analyzing memory as a narrative strategy that breaks the traditional structure of historical storytelling. It will also explore how this method allows the novel to question fixed national identities and the meaning of borders.

1.3 Research Questions

Main Research Question

1. How does *The Shadow Lines* use memory as a narrative strategy to challenge linear historical storytelling?
2. Sub-Research Question
3. In what ways does the novel present memory as an alternative to official or national history?
4. What role does unreliable narration play in constructing emotional truth in *The Shadow Lines*?
5. How does fragmented time and space in the novel reflect the structure of memory?
6. How does memory help to challenge the idea of fixed identities and borders in the novel?

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The main goal of this study is to explore how memory is used as a storytelling method in *The Shadow Lines*. Instead of following a traditional or historical structure, the novel tells its story through the memories of its characters. This creates a new way of understanding the past.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine how Amitav Ghosh uses memory as a narrative tool in the novel.
2. To show how memory challenges the idea of history being fixed and linear.
3. To understand how memory questions the ideas of borders, identity, and nationhood.

1.5 Hypothesis

This study is based on the idea that *The Shadow Lines* does not present history in a straight, official way. Instead, it uses personal memory to tell the story. The novel shows that memory, even though it is emotional and sometimes unclear, can be a powerful way to share historical truth.

Null Hypothesis (H₀): Memory in *The Shadow Lines* is only a theme and does not affect the way the story is told.

Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): Memory in *The Shadow Lines* is used as a narrative strategy that dislocates linear history and challenges fixed historical and national identities.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is focused on Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Shadow Lines*, especially on how memory is used as a storytelling technique. The study pays close attention to how memory shapes the structure of the novel and how it helps challenge traditional, straight-line (linear) history. The main concern of the study is not what events happened in the past, but how those events are remembered and told by the characters. It explores how this form of remembering becomes a powerful way of rewriting history from a personal point of view.

The research will only deal with the literary elements of the novel, such as plot structure, narration, character memory, and time shifts. It will not include a historical or political analysis of the events like the Partition or the 1964 Dhaka riots in terms of factual detail. Instead, it will look at how those events are presented through

memory. The study will also briefly refer to literary theories and memory studies that help explain this narrative style.

While other important themes like nationalism, identity, migration, and colonialism do appear in the novel, they are only discussed when they are directly related to memory and the way the story is told. The study remains centered on the role of memory as a narrative strategy, and how it breaks the boundaries of traditional history, geography, and identity.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Like all academic research, this study has its limitations. First, it is limited to only one novel, *The Shadow Lines*, and does not include a comparative analysis with other works by Amitav Ghosh or other postcolonial writers. This means that the conclusions are based only on this one text and cannot be generalized too widely.

Second, the study is based on qualitative literary analysis and does not include interviews, surveys, or field research. It uses only secondary sources like articles, books, and essays written by other scholars, along with a close reading of the novel itself.

Third, this is a student-level undergraduate thesis, so it cannot go too deep into complex theoretical debates or large-scale academic discussions. The study mostly focuses on introducing and applying key ideas in a basic way, without going into advanced philosophical or historical discussions.

Lastly, while the novel touches on many big topics such as Partition trauma, postcolonial identity, gender roles, and political violence, this study does not explore all of them.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is important because it helps the researcher understand what has already been studied about a topic and what is still missing. It also helps to avoid repeating the same ideas and provides a strong foundation for the research. For this

thesis, the literature review focuses on two areas: first, the critical studies done on *The Shadow Lines*; and second, the role of memory in literature and narrative structure.

Many scholars have written about *The Shadow Lines*, especially about its themes of nationalism, identity, and Partition. However, very few have looked at how memory is used as a narrative tool to tell the story in a non-linear way. This review brings together studies that help explain how memory, time, space, and identity are connected in the novel. It also identifies the gap this thesis will try to fill by focusing on memory not just as a theme, but as a storytelling strategy.

2.1 Studies on *The Shadow Lines*

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* has been widely praised for its complex narrative, deep characters, and historical relevance. Many critics have focused on how the novel deals with nationalism, Partition trauma, and postcolonial identity. For example, Suvir Kaul (2001) explores how the novel deals with the violent consequences of Partition and the failure of national borders to bring true freedom. He highlights how Ghosh challenges the idea of a stable national identity through the personal experiences of the characters.

Jasbir Jain (2003) also discusses the theme of nationalism in *The Shadow Lines*, noting that the novel questions the meaning of freedom and the idea of belonging. Jain points out that the character of Tha'mma represents a generation that believed in the power of the nation, but her beliefs are later broken by the reality of violence and separation.

Priya Kumar (2000), in her work on the novel, talks about how memory shapes both identity and history. She argues that the narrator's memories are more powerful than official history books because they include emotions, confusion, and personal pain. However, her study still treats memory mostly as a theme—not as a structural or narrative device.

Elleke Boehmer (2005) places the novel within the larger context of postcolonial literature. She mentions how Ghosh moves away from grand historical narratives and

instead focuses on everyday, personal experiences. This shift helps create a new kind of history—one that is emotional and fragmented, like memory itself.

All these studies are useful and relevant, but they mostly look at what memory represents in the novel, not how it shapes the way the story is told. They tend to focus on identity, Partition, and nationalism as main themes, often overlooking the narrative style of the novel. This is the gap that this thesis tries to address.

2.2 Memory and Narrative in Literature

Memory plays a powerful role in literature, especially in postmodern and postcolonial novels. It allows authors to break away from the traditional linear structure of storytelling and instead use a fragmented, emotional, and personal way of narrating events. In many novels, memory becomes a key method to deal with the trauma of history, colonization, war, and loss.

Paul Ricoeur (2004), in his book *Memory, History, Forgetting*, explains that memory is not always reliable, but it still holds truth in its emotional depth. He believes that remembering is a way of reconstructing the past—not repeating it exactly, but giving it meaning through personal experience.

Pierre Nora (1989) also argues that memory lives in places, objects, and emotions—what he calls *lieux de mémoire* or “sites of memory.” These memories are not part of formal history, but they are meaningful and often more powerful for people who experience them.

Linda Hutcheon (1988) introduced the concept of historiographic metafiction, where novels mix fact and fiction, history and imagination. These novels challenge the idea that history is objective or fixed. Instead, they show that how we remember the past is just as important as what happened. Memory, then, becomes a storytelling tool to resist the official version of history.

In this way, authors like Ghosh use memory to change the structure of the story. Instead of beginning–middle–end, the story moves through time in the way people remember things—jumping back and forth, repeating, or even forgetting some parts.

This style brings readers closer to the emotional truth of the characters and makes the story feel more real and personal.

2.3 Historiographic Metafiction and Postcolonial Literature

Historiographic metafiction is a literary style that questions how history is told. It mixes real historical events with fictional characters and shows that history is not always clear or complete. This style is especially popular in postcolonial literature, where writers often want to challenge the colonial version of history.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is a strong example of this kind of writing. It does not follow a straight timeline, and it does not give one clear answer about what really happened. Instead, it presents many personal memories, each with its own viewpoint. This is a key part of historiographic metafiction.

Homi K. Bhabha (1994) talks about the idea of "nation as narration," meaning that nations are created through stories, not just borders. In this way, Ghosh's novel shows that national identity is shaped by memory and imagination, not just history books. The characters in *The Shadow Lines* do not always agree on what happened, and this disagreement shows that history is complex and personal.

Postcolonial literature often tries to give voice to people whose stories were not told in official histories. Ghosh does this by focusing on characters like Tridib and the narrator, who use memory to understand the past in their own way. By doing so, the novel questions the ideas of fixed borders, one-sided histories, and clear national identities.

2.4 Critical Gaps and Research Justification

Although many critics have studied *The Shadow Lines*, most of them focus on its political themes like nationalism, Partition, and identity. Some have mentioned the use of memory, but they often treat it as just a theme—not as a narrative strategy that shapes the entire novel.

There is very little discussion on how Ghosh uses memory to break the traditional storytelling style and create a more emotional and fragmented way of telling history.

This is the gap that this study aims to fill. By focusing on memory as a tool for narration, not just a subject, this thesis offers a new way to read and understand the novel.

This research will help show how memory can challenge official versions of history, question the meaning of borders, and give a voice to personal and emotional truths. It also adds to the larger discussion about how literature can create new ways of understanding the past—especially in postcolonial societies where the history is often painful, complex, and incomplete.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Every research study needs a strong base of theory to support its ideas and guide its direction. A theoretical and conceptual framework helps the researcher stay on track and gives useful tools to understand the topic more deeply. In this research, the main focus is to explore how memory is used as a storytelling method in *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh. To explore this properly, the study uses a few important literary and philosophical theories. These theories help explain how memory works in literature, especially when it comes to history, identity, and how stories are told.

Many people think of memory as something simple—just remembering what happened in the past. But modern scholars and thinkers say that memory is more than just facts. Memory is emotional, personal, and sometimes even mixed with imagination. This makes memory different from official history, which tries to be accurate and based only on facts. In postcolonial literature, writers often use memory to challenge or question official versions of history. They give voice to stories that are missing in history books—stories that are deeply personal, emotional, and sometimes full of pain. This is especially important in countries that have experienced colonization, war, or Partition, like India.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* is one such novel. It tells the story through the memories of its characters—mainly the unnamed narrator. These memories don't follow a straight, logical order of time. Instead, they move back and forth between

places like Calcutta, Dhaka, and London, and between different time periods, from the 1930s to the 1980s. Because of this, memory in the novel is not just a topic or theme—it becomes the main way the story is told. It replaces the usual historical timeline with a more emotional, personal, and scattered view of the past.

To understand how Ghosh uses memory in this way, this chapter will look at ideas from three important thinkers: Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Nora, and Linda Hutcheon. Their theories help us understand how memory is linked with identity, storytelling, and rewriting history.

Paul Ricoeur talks about how memory and storytelling are connected. He believes that memory is not an exact copy of the past. Instead, we shape and tell stories about the past in ways that make sense to us now, in the present.

Pierre Nora gives us the idea of *lieux de mémoire*, which means “places of memory.” He says people remember not only through facts but also through feelings, objects, locations, and shared stories.

Linda Hutcheon gives the idea of historiographic metafiction. She explains how postmodern novels mix historical facts with imagination. This blending makes readers question what is real, what is imagined, and what we think of as “truth” in history.

3.1 Paul Ricoeur: Memory, Narrative, and Forgetting

Paul Ricoeur is a French philosopher who wrote deeply about memory, storytelling, and history. His book *Memory, History, Forgetting* (2004) is one of the most important works on this topic. In it, Ricoeur explains that memory is not just about collecting facts from the past. Instead, memory is something we narrate—we tell stories about the past that help us make sense of who we are in the present.

According to Ricoeur, memory is always subjective. It depends on the person remembering, and it is influenced by their emotions, imagination, and present understanding. People do not remember everything in perfect detail. Often, they

forget things or mix events together. But this does not make memory less meaningful. In fact, Ricoeur argues that memory becomes powerful when it is turned into a narrative—a story that helps people understand themselves and their place in the world.

Another important idea from Ricoeur is that memory includes forgetting. Sometimes, people forget things on purpose or by accident. These gaps in memory can be just as important as the parts we remember. Silence, confusion, or missing information in a story can reveal pain, trauma, or emotional truth. Ricoeur shows that forgetting is not the opposite of memory—it is part of how memory works.

In literature, this means that characters do not just remember past events—they tell stories about them. These stories may be incomplete, emotional, or even imagined, but they are still meaningful. Ricoeur believes that this kind of memory is more than just a record of the past—it becomes a way to create identity, belonging, and personal truth.

In *The Shadow Lines*, this theory fits perfectly. The narrator does not tell the story in a straight line. Instead, he shares memories from different times and places, often returning to the same events from different angles. He remembers what Tridib told him, what Ila experienced, and what he imagines about the past. Sometimes he is not sure what is true and what is imagined. But all of these memories together form the story of the novel.

For example, the narrator learns about Tridib's death not from official history or newspapers, but through the memories of family members—and even through his own imagination. These memories are emotional and personal, not historical facts. Still, they help the narrator understand his own identity, his family, and the meaning of borders and violence.

Ricoeur's theory helps us understand why Ghosh tells the story this way. He does not give us a fixed timeline or clear facts. Instead, he shows us how memory works in real life: full of emotions, gaps, and storytelling. The characters in *The Shadow Lines* remember the past in a way that helps them make sense of their own lives. Their memories are not always accurate, but they are deeply human.

In this way, memory becomes a narrative strategy in the novel. It is not just a background theme—it is the main method through which the story is told. Using Ricoeur’s ideas, we can see that Ghosh is not simply writing about the past. He is showing how the past is remembered, imagined, and retold—and how that process shapes the present.

3.2 Pierre Nora: Sites of Memory (Lieux de Mémoire)

Pierre Nora is a French historian and theorist who developed an important concept in memory studies called “lieux de mémoire”, which means “sites of memory.” In his well-known essay *Between Memory and History* (1989), Nora explains that modern societies have started to lose living, natural memory—the kind passed down through oral storytelling, community, and shared tradition. As a result, people now try to preserve memory in specific places, objects, symbols, or rituals that carry emotional and cultural meaning. These are what he calls sites of memory.

A site of memory can be anything that helps people remember something important. It can be a monument, a photograph, a building, a city, a book, or even a feeling. What makes something a site of memory is not just what it is, but what it represents emotionally. These sites help people and communities hold on to their identity, especially in times of change or loss.

Nora makes a key difference between history and memory. History is written, official, and often disconnected from personal experience. Memory, on the other hand, is emotional, subjective, and alive. It can change over time, and it belongs to people who lived through something or heard it from others. Nora argues that memory is what we keep in our hearts, while history is what we write in books.

This idea is very useful for understanding *The Shadow Lines*. In the novel, memory is connected to places, especially the cities of Calcutta, Dhaka, and London. These cities are not just settings—they become emotional landscapes filled with memories of love, fear, violence, and belonging. For example, Dhaka is not just a city on a map. For Tha’mma, it is her childhood home; for the narrator, it becomes a place of mystery and tragedy. These memories are deeply personal and cannot be found in history books.

Another example is Tridib's storytelling. Even though the narrator has never been to many of the places Tridib describes, those stories become part of his memory. London, for him, is not just a foreign city—it is a place filled with Tridib's imagination and emotional connection. In this way, memory travels across time and space and turns distant places into personal, meaningful locations.

Nora's idea of *lieux de mémoire* helps us see that memory in *The Shadow Lines* is not only about remembering events. It is about how people hold on to meaning through places, relationships, and storytelling. Even when history forgets or ignores certain experiences—like the Partition or the 1964 riots—memory keeps them alive in people's minds and emotions.

In Ghosh's novel, memory also fills the silences in history. Official accounts may not talk about personal losses or emotional truths, but the characters' memories do. These memories are passed through families and conversations, and they create a version of the past that is more human and emotionally real.

So, just like Nora suggests, memory in *The Shadow Lines* is preserved not through historical writing, but through emotional sites—cities, homes, stories, and personal relationships. These become powerful tools for resisting the emptiness of official history and for understanding who we are.

3.3 Linda Hutcheon: Historiographic Metafiction

Linda Hutcheon is a Canadian literary theorist who introduced the concept of historiographic metafiction in her influential book *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). This term describes a special kind of fiction that blends real historical events with imagined stories, often in a way that questions the truth of history itself.

In postmodern literature, authors often use this style to challenge the authority of official history. They show that history, just like fiction, is shaped by the people who tell it. It is influenced by memory, perspective, bias, and even imagination. Hutcheon argues that there is no neutral history—every version of the past is a kind of storytelling.

This idea is very helpful when reading *The Shadow Lines*. Amitav Ghosh does not present history in a straightforward or traditional way. Instead, he tells the story through the memories of an unnamed narrator, who is often unsure of what really happened. The events in the novel—such as the Partition of India, the Dhaka riots of 1964, and Tridib’s death—are not described with fixed facts. They are remembered differently by different characters and are filled with emotion, confusion, and imagination.

The narrator even admits that he reconstructs many scenes in his mind based on what others have told him. He imagines the events leading to Tridib’s death, even though he wasn’t there. This mixing of fact and imagination is a perfect example of historiographic metafiction. The novel becomes a story about how we remember the past, rather than just a story about what happened.

Ghosh also includes real historical events, but he does not explain them like a history textbook. Instead, he shows how these events affect people on a personal level—how they are remembered in families, how they cause trauma, and how they shape identity. This emotional and personal way of telling history fits well with Hutcheon’s idea that fiction can question the truth claims of history.

Another metafictional element in *The Shadow Lines* is that the narrator sometimes reflects on the process of storytelling itself. He wonders about memory, imagination, and whether he has the right to tell certain stories. This self-awareness is a key part of historiographic metafiction—it reminds the reader that even this novel is just one version of the past.

By using Hutcheon’s theory, we can see that *The Shadow Lines* does not try to give us a final answer about history. Instead, it invites us to think critically about how stories are told, who tells them, and what gets remembered or forgotten.

3.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study

This part of the study brings together the main ideas of three important scholars—**Paul Ricoeur**, **Pierre Nora**, and **Linda Hutcheon**—to build a framework for understanding how memory is used in *The Shadow Lines*. These theorists come from

different fields like philosophy, history, and literary theory. So, this research takes an **interdisciplinary approach**, using tools from various areas to understand how memory changes the way stories are told and how it questions traditional history.

From **Paul Ricoeur**, the research uses the idea that memory is not an exact copy of the past. Instead, it is something people shape into stories. What we remember is often mixed with emotions, imagination, and what others told us. Sometimes we forget things or fill in the blanks without even realizing it. Ricoeur explains that memory is strongly linked to how we see ourselves, how we understand time, and what we believe is true. In *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator remembers events in a very personal way. These memories don't follow a clear, straight timeline like history books do. Instead, the novel moves forward through emotional and scattered memories, showing how people actually experience the past.

From **Pierre Nora**, the research uses the idea of “*sites of memory*” (or *lieux de mémoire* in French). Nora says that people don't only remember history through books or documents. We also remember through emotions, places, objects, and stories passed down in families. These kinds of memories are sometimes even more powerful than official history. In *The Shadow Lines*, cities like **Dhaka**, **Calcutta**, and **London** are not just places on a map—they are full of feelings, memories, and meaning. They become emotional landmarks that hold stories from the past, especially about things like the Partition or riots. Nora's theory helps explain how Ghosh shows memory as a way to preserve personal and forgotten experiences.

From **Linda Hutcheon**, the study uses the idea of **historiographic metafiction**, a theory from postmodern literature. This theory explains how some novels mix real historical facts with fiction to challenge the truthfulness of history. These stories often have unreliable narrators, jumpy timelines, and openly show that they are constructed stories. *The Shadow Lines* fits this idea. Even though it mentions real events, those events are told through the narrator's memories, feelings, and imagination. There is no one true version of history in the novel—only different perspectives. Hutcheon's theory helps us understand how Ghosh questions national borders, political stories, and the idea of historical truth through storytelling.

Together, these theories create a strong, interdisciplinary base for this study. They help show how memory works not just in literature, but also in how we understand history, identity, and culture.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methods used in this research. Since the study is based on a novel and literary ideas, it does not include any numbers, experiments, or fieldwork like surveys. Instead, it uses a **qualitative literary approach** to study how memory works as a storytelling method in *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh.

The main goal of this research is to understand how the writer uses **memory** to challenge traditional, straight-line history. To do this, the novel is carefully read and analyzed, focusing on the characters' memories, how time moves in the story, and the structure and language used by the author. This process is known as **close reading**.

Along with close reading, this study uses ideas and theories from different fields of knowledge. That's why it also follows an **interdisciplinary approach**. It connects literary studies with other subjects like **memory studies, postcolonial theory, and narrative theory**. These ideas help to explore how memory affects identity, history, and borders in the novel. In this way, the research brings together multiple perspectives to better understand the deeper themes of the book.

The novel was chosen because it is rich in themes of memory, identity, and historical conflict, making it a perfect text for this kind of research. The study mainly uses **textual analysis** as its method. The **primary source** is the novel itself, and the **secondary sources** include academic books, journal articles, and online research papers related to the theories mentioned.

The research process involves reading the novel closely, highlighting key parts, taking notes, and comparing those parts with different theories. Theoretical frameworks from scholars help to understand the meaning behind the characters'

memories and the unusual way time moves in the novel. These frameworks are also used to support the main argument of the thesis.

By using this method and combining ideas from different fields, the research becomes more organized, insightful, and academically strong. It helps keep the study focused and provides a clear path for analyzing the novel in a meaningful way.

4.1 Research Approach

This research follows a qualitative, interpretive, and interdisciplinary approach, which is suitable for literary analysis. Since this study is based on reading and analyzing a novel, it does not involve numbers, surveys, or lab experiments. Instead, it focuses on understanding deep meanings within the text by using ideas from different fields such as literary theory, history, philosophy, cultural studies, and memory studies.

The qualitative method helps the researcher explore how abstract ideas like memory, identity, time, and history are shown in the novel. A major focus is on how Amitav Ghosh uses memory as a storytelling tool in *The Shadow Lines*. The timeline in this novel is not linear—it jumps between past and present, imagination and reality, personal and political. So, this research requires a method that allows flexibility, depth, and interpretation.

The main research tool is close reading, which means reading the novel very carefully to notice details in language, symbols, structure, and the memories of different characters. These observations are then connected with theories from different scholars. For example:

Paul Ricoeur's ideas on memory and narrative time, Pierre Nora's concept of memory and history,

Linda Hutcheon's theory of historiographic metafiction and postcolonial perspectives from scholars like Homi Bhabha and Edward Said.

These theories are not only from literature but also from philosophy, psychology, cultural studies, and history, making the research interdisciplinary. This helps to

explore how memory in the novel is not just a theme, but a structural device that challenges traditional, political history.

This chapter also explains why *The Shadow Lines* was chosen. The novel deals with historical events like the Partition and the Swadeshi Movement, but tells them through personal memory, making it a strong example for studying memory as narrative technique. Both primary sources (the novel itself and secondary sources (books, journals, scholarly essays) are used to support the analysis.

In short, the research combines literary close reading with interdisciplinary theories, to show how memory in the novel disrupts the usual way history is told. This organized approach brings clarity and academic depth to the study, while keeping the human experience of memory at the center.

4.2 Sample Design

In literary research, a “sample” usually means the text or texts chosen for close analysis. In this study, the selected sample is Amitav Ghosh’s novel *The Shadow Lines*. This novel has been chosen as the primary text because it directly relates to the topic of this research: memory as a narrative strategy. The novel offers rich examples of how memory is used to tell stories, reflect on the past, and challenge national history.

The sample is selected through purposive sampling, a method often used in qualitative research. In this method, the researcher chooses a text because it fits the purpose and goals of the study. In this case, *The Shadow Lines* was selected because it reflects the main issues being explored—such as memory, history, identity, and border.

4.2.1 Sample Criteria

The novel *The Shadow Lines* is selected based on the following criteria:

- **Thematic relevance:** The novel deals deeply with memory, time, and the experience of history, which are central to the research topic.

- Narrative style: The novel does not follow a traditional, linear timeline. Instead, it tells the story through fragmented and emotional memories of different characters.
- Postcolonial significance: The novel fits within postcolonial literature, especially in how it questions borders, nations, and the effects of Partition.
- Critical reception: The novel has received wide academic attention, making it suitable for scholarly research.
- Author's reputation: Amitav Ghosh is a well-known author whose work is often studied for its complex narrative structures and deep historical context.

These criteria ensure that the chosen sample is suitable for a literary study focused on memory, narrative, and alternative historiography.

4.2.2 Sample Profile

- Title: The Shadow Lines
- Author: Amitav Ghosh
- Genre: Historical/Postcolonial Fiction
- First Published: 1988 by Ravi Dayal Publisher (India)
- Setting: Kolkata (Calcutta), Dhaka, and London, covering time periods from the 1930s to the 1980s
- Main Characters: The unnamed narrator, Tridib, Tha'mma, Ila, Robi, and others
- Themes: Memory, history, nationalism, Partition, borders, identity, imagination
- Narrative Style: Non-linear, fragmented, memory-driven storytelling
- Relevance: The novel uses memory not just as a theme, but as the main narrative technique, making it perfect for this research.

4.3 Data Sources

This study uses two main types of data: primary data and secondary data. In literary research, data does not mean numerical or survey-based information. Instead, it

refers to texts—including novels, critical essays, theoretical books, and academic articles that help explore and support the research topic.

4.3.1 Primary Data

The primary source for this research is the novel *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh. All analysis in this study is directly based on the events, characters, structure, and language of this text. The novel is read multiple times to identify important scenes and passages where memory influences how the story is told.

This data includes:

- Direct quotations from the novel
- Descriptions of characters' memories
- Analysis of narrative structure and time shifts
- Moments where memory replaces or challenges official history

These elements are treated as data for close reading and critical interpretation, helping the researcher show how memory functions as a narrative strategy in the novel.

4.3.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data includes published scholarly works that discuss memory theory, postcolonial literature, historiography, and *The Shadow Lines* itself. These sources help build a theoretical background and support the interpretation of the novel.

The secondary sources used in this study include:

- Theoretical texts by scholars such as Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Nora, and Linda Hutcheon
- Literary criticism and journal articles on *The Shadow Lines* by critics like Priya Kumar, Suvir Kaul, and Elleke Boehmer
- Books and essays on postcolonial theory, memory studies, and narrative form

All secondary materials are selected for their academic value and relevance to the topic. They help explain how memory can be used not just as a subject, but as a tool to shape storytelling.

4.4 Data Collection Procedure

In this study, data collection means reading, identifying, and gathering relevant content from both the primary and secondary sources. Since this is a literary research project, there is no fieldwork, interviews, or surveys involved.

The procedure includes the following steps:

1. Close Reading of the Primary Text

- Reading *The Shadow Lines* carefully and repeatedly to understand how the story is told through memory.
- Highlighting key passages that show non-linear storytelling, character recollections, and emotional narratives.
- Taking notes on how time, space, and personal history are connected through memory.

2. Review of Theoretical and Critical Literature

- Searching academic databases (like JSTOR, Google Scholar, and institutional libraries) for relevant books, journal articles, and critical essays.
- Reading theory-based texts that explain memory, post colonialism, and narrative form.
- Selecting the most relevant and recent sources to support the analysis.

3. Thematic and Narrative Categorization

Organizing the notes and findings into thematic groups such as:

Memory vs. History

Fragmentation of Time and Space.

Personal vs. National Identity

Matching the themes with literary theories to explain how memory works as a narrative tool.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Memory as a Narrative Strategy: Challenging Linear Historical Storytelling

In most historical novels, events are told in a straight line—from past to present in a logical order. However, *The Shadow Lines* does not follow this style. Instead, the story moves back and forth through time, depending on how the characters remember events. This technique breaks the traditional structure of history and shows that memory is not just about remembering the past—it is also about how people experience and retell the past in personal ways.

The novel's unnamed narrator does not give us a clear or complete timeline of events. Instead, he shares memories that come to him through his imagination, family stories, and emotional experiences. For example, his memories of Tridib are full of admiration and imagination, not historical accuracy. Tridib's stories mix truth and fiction, and the narrator retells them as if they are his own memories. This shows that memory in the novel is not a fixed record of the past, but a living, flexible narrative.

The structure of the novel itself supports this idea. The events that take place in the 1930s, 1940s, 1960s, and 1980s are not presented in a line. Instead, they are mixed together as the narrator recalls them. The 1964 Dhaka riot, the death of Tridib, and other important moments are told not in the order they happened, but in the order the narrator remembers or understands them. This non-linear storytelling reflects how memory actually works in real life—people do not remember everything in order, and they often connect past events with present feelings.

Paul Ricoeur's theory of memory and storytelling helps us understand this method. Ricoeur explains that memory is not always about repeating facts but about giving meaning to past experiences through narrative. In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh uses this idea by making memory the

Central way the story is told. This narrative strategy allows the reader to feel the emotional weight of the events more than if they were told like a history textbook.

Therefore, memory in this novel is not just a theme—it is the structure of the novel. It replaces a linear, historical way of telling the story with a personal, emotional, and

sometimes unclear version. Through this, Ghosh invites readers to question what history really means and whether it can truly be objective.

5.2 Personal Memory vs. Official History

In *The Shadow Lines*, memory does not only break the order of storytelling—it also challenges the authority of official or national history. Ghosh shows that what people remember personally can be just as important, or even more important, than what is written in history books. He does

this by showing how different characters remember the same events in different ways, and how personal emotions often shape those memories.

One clear example is the character of Tha'mma, the narrator's grandmother. She believes strongly in the idea of nation, borders, and history. She thinks that national identity is something clear and fixed, and that freedom must be protected by clear lines and separation. However, her beliefs are shaken when she travels to Dhaka and sees that her ideas about borders are not working in real life. Her personal experience challenges her own historical understanding.

Another example is the narrator himself. He does not accept the history he learns from school or books. Instead, he learns about the past through stories told by Tridib and other family members. These stories are full of imagination, emotions, and gaps. They are not official, but they feel more meaningful to him. This shows that memory is not only an alternative to history—it can be more powerful because it connects to identity and personal truth.

Tridib is also an important figure here. He tells stories of places he has never visited, but he imagines them so deeply that they feel real. His storytelling blurs the line between fact and memory. The narrator accepts these imagined memories and uses them to understand the world. This suggests that personal memory is a kind of truth—even if it is not officially recorded.

Pierre Nora's idea of "lieux de mémoire" (sites of memory) also supports this. Nora says that memory lives not in books or institutions, but in personal experiences, emotions, and symbols. In *The Shadow Lines*, memory becomes a tool to resist

official narratives that erase individual stories. Ghosh uses memory to give voice to those who are usually left out of history, like Tridib and the narrator.

In conclusion, Ghosh uses personal memory to question national history. He shows that history is not always objective or complete, and that memory—though emotional and subjective—can reveal

truths that history ignores. By doing this, *The Shadow Lines* invites readers to look beyond official versions of the past and listen to the personal, lived experiences that shape who we are.

5.3 Fragmented Time and Space in Memory Narration

Another key aspect of memory in *The Shadow Lines* is how it affects the experience of time and space in the novel. The story does not move forward in a straight line, and the locations—Calcutta, Dhaka, London—are not described in a fixed geographical way. Instead, time and space are fragmented, shifting as the characters remember events in emotional and personal ways.

The narrator often moves between different times in his life without warning. One moment he is describing something from his childhood in Calcutta, and the next he is remembering something Tridib told him about London in the 1930s. These shifts are not confusing; instead, they reflect how memory works. We don't always remember the past in order—we remember based on how we feel, what we hear, and what connects to us emotionally.

Similarly, the cities in the novel are not shown as just locations on a map. Tridib's stories make London feel alive for the narrator long before he visits it. Dhaka, though once a home for Tha'mma, becomes a place of confusion and loss. Calcutta, where most of the story takes place, becomes a center of memory rather than just a city. These cities are experienced through memory, not just through travel or facts.

This fragmentation of time and space also supports the novel's larger message: borders are imagined, and history is not fixed. The narrator often reflects on how events in one place are connected to those in another, even if they are far apart. For

example, the 1964 Dhaka riot is remembered alongside other moments from the past, showing that emotional impact is more important than location or timeline.

Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction fits here. She explains that novels like *The Shadow Lines* mix history and fiction in a way that questions how we think about time, space, and truth. Ghosh does not want to give us a perfect map or timeline—he wants to show that memory builds its own path, connecting people and places through personal meaning.

In this way, fragmented time and space in the novel reflect how memory shapes both the structure of the story and the meaning behind it. Ghosh invites us to experience the world not by fixed dates or borders, but through emotional and remembered connections.

5.4 Unreliable Narration and Emotional Truth

In *The Shadow Lines*, the story is told by an unnamed narrator whose memories guide the entire narrative. However, his storytelling is not always clear, exact, or factual. This is because his memories are shaped by emotion, imagination, and what he has heard from others—especially Tridib. This makes the narrator unreliable, but not in a negative way. Instead, it shows that emotional truth can be just as important as factual truth in storytelling.

The narrator often retells stories he heard from Tridib or Tha'mma, and he mixes them with his own experiences and feelings. He admits that he never met some of the people he talks about, and yet he describes them in detail. For example, he tells the story of Tridib's death in Dhaka even though he was not there. He remembers it through a mix of imagination and what others told him.

This unreliable narration highlights how memory works in real life. People remember things differently, and sometimes they fill in the gaps with emotions, guesses, or what they wish had happened. This does not make their memories useless—in fact, it can make them more powerful and honest on a personal level.

Tridib himself represents this idea. He tells stories that are full of fantasy and imagination, but for the narrator, they become real. These stories help the narrator

understand the world, even if they are not entirely factual. This shows that storytelling is not just about truth—it's about meaning.

Paul Ricoeur also talks about this in his theory of memory. He explains that even if memory is incomplete or uncertain, it still has value. Emotional truth—the feeling behind a memory—can reveal more than simple facts. In *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator's unreliable storytelling becomes a way to explore this deeper kind of truth.

Therefore, the novel shows that memory does not have to be perfect to be important. By using an unreliable narrator, Ghosh lets readers see how memory and imagination work together to create personal and emotional meaning.

5.5 Memory as Resistance to Nationalism and Borders

One of the most powerful roles of memory in *The Shadow Lines* is its ability to resist the idea of fixed nations, borders, and identities. While many characters in the novel, especially Tha'mma, believe in the importance of political borders and national pride, their personal experiences often show that these ideas do not match reality. Through memory, the novel questions and resists these nationalistic beliefs.

Tha'mma strongly believes in the nation and the need for clear borders. She supports the idea that a country must protect its people by drawing lines between “us” and “them.” But when she visits Dhaka—once her home—she finds that borders have made it harder to connect with people, not easier. Her memory of the city is full of warmth, family, and familiarity. The new border turns that place into something strange and threatening.

The narrator, on the other hand, grows up hearing stories that mix places, people, and cultures. For him, national identity is not simple. Tridib teaches him to see the world beyond maps, through stories and memory. This view challenges the idea that borders define who we are. In fact, the novel suggests that borders are imagined, just like the “shadow lines” in its title.

The narrator also remembers how political violence, like the 1964 riots, affects people on both sides of the border. Memory helps him see that pain, love, and fear

are not limited by national lines. By focusing on personal stories and emotions, the novel resists the idea that national identity must be based on land or politics.

This connects to Homi Bhabha's idea that the nation is a "narration"—a story people tell themselves. Ghosh uses memory to show that other stories exist—ones that are emotional, personal, and full of contradictions. These stories can resist the dominant political narratives that often erase personal truth.

In the end, memory in *The Shadow Lines* becomes a tool of resistance. It allows the characters—and the readers—to question what it means to belong to a nation, and to imagine a world without borders. Through memory, Ghosh gives voice to experiences that do not fit into official histories or national myths.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS

This chapter presents the key findings of the study. It summarizes the most important results from the analysis of *The Shadow Lines* and shows how they answer the research questions. The purpose of this chapter is to bring together the insights gained from reading the novel through the lens of memory theory, narrative structure, and postcolonial criticism.

The research focused on understanding how memory works as a narrative strategy in the novel. It asked how personal memory can challenge official history, how storytelling is shaped by emotion and imagination, and how the novel questions national borders and identities through memory.

The findings are organized according to the main research question and four sub-questions. Each section discusses a specific insight from the analysis, supported by references to the theories of Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Nora, and Linda Hutcheon. These findings show that memory is not just a theme in *The Shadow Lines*, but the main method through which the story is told

In the following sections, each key finding is explained clearly. The findings also show how Amitav Ghosh uses personal memory, fragmented time, emotional

storytelling, and unreliable narration to create a version of history that is human, complex, and deeply connected to identity and loss.

6.1 Memory as a Disruption of Linear History

The first key finding of this study is that *The Shadow Lines* uses memory to break away from linear, historical storytelling. In most traditional history books or historical novels, events are usually presented in a straight line—from beginning to end. They follow dates, cause-and-effect patterns, and focus on political facts. But in *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh tells the story through memories, which do not follow a fixed order. Instead of giving us a clear timeline, he allows the past to appear in pieces, just like how people actually remember things in real life.

This kind of storytelling reflects how memory works for real human beings. We do not remember everything in order, like chapters in a textbook. We remember based on emotion, importance, or what something meant to us. Sometimes we even forget parts, and remember only what we felt. In the novel, the narrator jumps between events from his childhood, his teenage years, and the stories told to him by others like Tridib or Tha'mma. This shows that the novel's structure follows emotional memory, not a historical timeline.

This finding directly connects to Paul Ricoeur's theory that memory is not just a recording of the past, but a kind of narrative reconstruction (Ricoeur, 2004). According to Ricoeur, when people remember, they organize those memories into stories to give them meaning. They may fill in gaps, mix truth with imagination, and focus on what matters to them emotionally. That is exactly what the narrator does in *The Shadow Lines*. He builds the story not from facts, but from what he remembers, imagines, and feels.

For example, the story of Tridib's death is not told right away. It comes later, slowly, through different layers of memory. The narrator hears it from others, thinks about it, imagines it, and finally tells it in his own way. This event is extremely important in the novel, but it is not placed in a central or clear timeline. Instead, it is hidden within the flow of memory, showing how grief and trauma affect how we remember.

This finding also shows how Ghosh challenges the idea that history must always be official and orderly. By using personal memory instead of political facts, the novel tells a different kind of history—one that includes pain, emotion, and silence. This is especially important in the context of postcolonial India, where many stories of Partition, riots, and migration were never recorded in official history books. Ghosh gives space to those invisible or forgotten voices, by letting memory guide the story.

Therefore, the first major finding of this study is that memory becomes the structure of the novel itself. It replaces the straight, historical line with a web of emotional and fragmented memories. This allows readers to experience the past in a human way—through feelings, relationships, and reflection—not just through dates and events. Memory is not just used in the novel; it becomes the way the novel is written.

The second key finding of this study is that *The Shadow Lines* uses personal memory to challenge and sometimes replace national or official history. Throughout the novel, we see that history—as written in textbooks or told by the state—is often incomplete, one-sided, or disconnected from how people actually experienced the past. On the other hand, personal memory, even if emotional or fragmented, offers a more human and truthful version of events. Ghosh uses memory to give voice to ordinary people, to highlight experiences that are left out of national records.

For example, Tha'mma, the narrator's grandmother, strongly believes in borders, patriotism, and the idea of nationhood. She sees India and Pakistan as completely separate and believes that independence came at a clear cost. But when she visits Dhaka, her birthplace, after Partition, she is faced with confusion. The city no longer feels familiar. The border she believed in so strongly becomes meaningless in the face of personal memory and emotional connection. This moment shows that real human experience cannot always be explained by political boundaries.

Similarly, the narrator does not trust history books to explain the past. Instead, he depends on the stories and memories told by his family—especially Tridib. These memories are not always factual, but they carry deep meaning. They help him understand the world in a way that school or newspapers cannot. He builds his sense of history through relationships and storytelling, not through dates or facts.

This idea connects closely with Pierre Nora's theory of lieux de mémoire, or "sites of memory." Nora argues that in modern society, we remember the past not just through documents or monuments, but through personal stories, emotions, and symbols (Nora, 1989). These memories live in people's minds, in everyday places, and in family conversations. In *The Shadow Lines*, places like Dhaka, Calcutta, and London are not just physical locations—they are emotional landscapes, full of memory, love, fear, and loss.

This finding shows that personal memory becomes a kind of alternative history in the novel. It tells us things that political or academic history often hides—how violence affects families, how migration separates loved ones, how borders divide memories. By focusing on personal memory, Ghosh shifts the center of the story from the nation to the individual, from the official to the intimate.

The novel also makes us question: Whose history matters? Is it only what governments write down? Or is it the stories that families tell, across generations? Through characters like Tha'mma and Tridib, Ghosh shows that memory—though sometimes uncertain—is still full of truth. These stories become powerful acts of remembrance, especially for people who have experienced loss, displacement, and silence.

So, the second major finding is that personal memory in *The Shadow Lines* is more than nostalgia. It is a way of telling history from the bottom up, from inside people's lives, not just from outside political events. In doing so, Ghosh allows memory to stand in for history, and sometimes even correct it.

The third key finding of this study is that *The Shadow Lines* presents time and space in a fragmented and non-linear way, which reflects how memory actually works in human life. In the novel, the events are not arranged in a straight timeline. Instead, the narrator moves freely between past and present, between one country and another, based on what he remembers or what others have told him. This shows that memory does not follow a map or a calendar—it follows emotion, imagination, and meaning.

In real life, we often remember events not in the order they happened, but based on how they connect to our feelings or current thoughts. Ghosh uses this natural way of remembering to tell the story. The narrator might start with a conversation in the present, then suddenly recall a memory from childhood, then return to something Tridib once said, and later jump to an event in Dhaka. All of these pieces slowly form the full story, but in a way that feels personal and emotional—not logical or official.

This finding shows that Ghosh is not just telling a story—he is showing us how memory feels. Time is not linear; it is broken, revisited, and sometimes blurred. Space is not just physical; it is filled with emotional meaning. For example, even though the narrator has never been to London when Tridib tells him stories, he imagines the place so clearly that it becomes real in his memory. Similarly, Dhaka is both a home and a place of violence, depending on who remembers it and how.

This kind of fragmented time and space also helps the novel question political borders. Countries are shown not as separate by lines, but as connected through people, stories, and memory. The idea of “shadow lines” itself suggests that borders are imaginary, and memory often crosses them. Ghosh reminds us that emotions and relationships are more powerful than geography. Memory connects Dhaka, Calcutta, and London in ways that politics cannot.

This finding is strongly supported by Linda Hutcheon’s theory of historiographic metafiction. Hutcheon explains that postmodern fiction often avoids clear timelines and fixed locations. Instead, it shows how stories shape history and how memory is a part of that process (Hutcheon, 1988). In *The Shadow Lines*, the mixing of past and present, of here and there, is not a mistake—it is the novel’s way of telling the truth about how people experience the world.

The fragmented time and space also connect to trauma and identity. For the narrator and his family, certain memories are painful and do not fit neatly into a timeline. These include the Partition, the Dhaka riots, and Tridib’s death. By telling the story in a non-linear way, Ghosh allows these events to live on as they are remembered, not just as they happened.

So, the third major finding is that memory in *The Shadow Lines* shapes both how the story is told and how we understand space and time. Instead of a world divided by borders and years, we see a world connected by emotions, stories, and the need to remember. Ghosh teaches us that time and space are not fixed—they are shaped by how we live and what we choose to remember.

The fourth key finding of this study is that *The Shadow Lines* uses an unreliable narrator to explore a deeper kind of truth—emotional truth. In traditional storytelling, a reliable narrator is expected to give readers clear facts, accurate details, and a full understanding of what happened. But in this novel, the narrator often admits that he was not present during important events, that he only knows things through stories, and that he uses imagination to fill in the gaps. While this might make him seem unreliable in a factual sense, it also allows the novel to focus on something more important: how people feel, remember, and cope with loss.

The narrator builds much of the story from the memories of others—especially Tridib, Tha'mma, and Ila—and from his own emotional reactions. When he remembers Tridib's death, for example, he reconstructs it in vivid detail, even though he did not witness it. He creates the scene based on what he has heard and what he emotionally understands. This moment is not “true” in the historical sense, but it feels deeply true in a personal and emotional way.

This supports Paul Ricoeur's idea that memory is always shaped by narrative and imagination (Ricoeur, 2004). Ricoeur explains that when people remember, they create stories to make sense of their experiences. These stories may not always be accurate, but they help people connect to the meaning behind events. In *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator is not trying to give us a history lesson—he is trying to make sense of his own life, his family, and the pain of the past.

The novel shows that emotional truth—the feelings and meaning behind memories—can sometimes be more powerful than factual truth. When people experience trauma, such as Partition or the loss of a loved one, their memories may be broken, confused, or selective. But these memories still matter. They show how people carry the past

with them, how they remember things that changed them deeply, and how they live with the consequences of those events.

This unreliable narration also highlights the limits of objective history. It reminds us that even historical records are shaped by who tells the story, what they include, and what they leave out. By using a narrator who is uncertain and emotional, Ghosh makes room for a more human version of the past—one that values experience and emotion over cold facts.

At the same time, the narrator is honest about his confusion and his gaps in knowledge. This honesty builds trust in a different way. Readers come to see him not as a liar, but as someone trying to understand the world through memory, stories, and imagination. His “unreliability” is actually part of his truth. It reflects how real people remember—through emotion, longing, and pain, not just facts.

So, the fourth major finding is that *The Shadow Lines* uses an unreliable narrator not to confuse the reader, but to highlight how memory is emotional, imperfect, and real. This kind of narration brings the past closer, not through accuracy, but through the honesty of feeling. It allows readers to understand that truth in literature—and in life—is often found not in what happened, but in how it is remembered.

The fifth and final key finding of this study is that *The Shadow Lines* uses memory as a form of resistance against rigid ideas of nationalism, borders, and fixed identities. Throughout the novel, characters are shown struggling with the meaning of borders—borders between countries, between people, and even between memories. Ghosh uses memory to show that these borders are not natural or permanent. Instead, they are created by political decisions, and often cause more pain and confusion than unity.

Tha'mma is a central character who believes strongly in the idea of the nation. She sees borders as something necessary, something that keeps people safe and identities clear. However, her visit to Dhaka challenges this belief. When she crosses the border into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the place where she was born, she realizes that borders cannot erase personal memory or emotional connection. She

feels both foreign and at home, and this experience breaks her belief in simple ideas of nationhood. Her personal memories do not match the political reality around her.

This experience reveals that nationalism is not always based on truth, but often on imagined ideas of who belongs and who doesn't. Memory, on the other hand, carries the real weight of experience—of home, family, love, and loss. In this way, memory challenges the power of nationalism by reminding us of the human cost of borders.

The narrator, too, grows up hearing stories of different places and people. These stories cross political lines. He feels connected to London, Dhaka, and Calcutta, even if he hasn't visited all of them. His identity is not tied to one nation or one map—it is built through memory, imagination, and relationships. This is Ghosh's way of showing that identity is fluid, and that the "shadow lines" dividing countries are not always real in people's hearts and minds.

This finding fits with Pierre Nora's idea that memory lives in people and emotions, not in official records (Nora, 1989). It also supports Linda Hutcheon's argument that fiction can question political and historical truths by telling stories that don't fit into official narratives (Hutcheon, 1988). In *The Shadow Lines*, Ghosh uses memory not just to tell a story, but to question the very idea of the nation-state.

The title of the novel—*The Shadow Lines*—itself suggests that borders are imaginary and fragile. They are drawn by people, but memory often crosses them without permission. By using memory to tell stories that ignore or break through these borders, the novel resists the idea that we must always belong to just one side of a line.

So, the final key finding is that memory in *The Shadow Lines* is not only personal—it is also political. It gives power to those whose voices are missing from official history, and it questions the systems that divide people. Ghosh shows that remembering the past, especially in a personal and emotional way, can be a powerful way to resist the limits of nationalism and the pain of partitioned identities.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the study's findings and answers the research questions. It highlights the main insight that memory in *The Shadow Lines* is used as a narrative strategy to disrupt linear historical storytelling. It also notes the study's contributions, its boundaries, and suggests areas for future research.

7.1 Summary of Key Findings

Main Research Question: How does Amitav Ghosh use memory as a narrative strategy in *The Shadow Lines* to challenge linear historical storytelling?

The novel's non-linear structure—with time and events shifting based on memory—reflects Paul Ricoeur's idea that memory re-presents the past emotionally, not just factually (Ricoeur, 2004).

Through personal memories, characters challenge national or official history. This aligns with Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, where memory resides in individual stories and emotional attachments rather than in formal archives (Nora, 1989).

The fragmentation of time and space mirrors Linda Hutcheon's idea of historiographic metafiction, blending history and fiction to question objective truth (Hutcheon, 1988).

Unreliable narration underscores that emotional truth—though subjective—can be more meaningful than factual accuracy, again reflecting Ricoeur (2004).

Finally, memory acts as a form of resistance against nationalism and fixed borders, showing how individual stories can cross lines drawn by politics.

7.2 Contribution of the Study

This thesis offers a fresh interpretation of *The Shadow Lines* by demonstrating how memory functions not just as a theme, but as the narrative structure. Drawing on memory theory and postcolonial criticism, it fills an existing scholarly gap by

exploring how personal memory shapes storytelling, challenges historical narratives, and questions political borders.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

The analysis is limited to a single novel, potentially limiting broader generalizations.

Only key theoretical texts by Ricoeur, Nora, and Hutcheon were referenced, due to academic and time constraints.

There was no comparative or empirical research; findings are based purely on textual analysis.

7.4 Recommendations for Future Research

1. Comparative studies, e.g., *Midnight's Children* (Rushdie), could reveal memory strategies across South Asian fiction.
2. Applying trauma or space theory could deepen understandings of how memory connects to loss and geography.
3. Research on female memory within the novel could reveal how memory and gender interact in a postcolonial context.
4. Analyzing Ghosh's other works (like *The Glass Palace*) could uncover memory as a narrative device across his career.

7.5 Final Thoughts

In *The Shadow Lines*, memory is not just recollection—it is the means by which the story is told. Through non-linear narratives, personal truths, emotional recollections, and cross-border memories, Amitav Ghosh offers a different kind of history—one that resists boundaries and official narratives. Memory serves as both a tool of storytelling and a form of resistance, prompting readers to reconsider how we understand the past, identity, and the truth

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