



# Hybrid Identity of Migrants in Postcolonial Narrative: A Reading of *The Shadow Lines*

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## Abstract

This paper explores hybridity, one of key elements of postcolonialism in Amitav Ghosh's novel, *The Shadow Lines* (1988). In this novel, Ghosh has shown the impacts of colonialism on the culture and society of two Indian cities, Calcutta and Dhaka, as well as its counter impact on the culture and identity of English people. The article aims to explore hybrid identity in the novel using postcolonial approach, particularly application of the concept of hybridity, a postcolonial element. It has used the critical arguments of theorists, basically of Homi K. Bhabha, who expounds his ideas on hybridity in his seminal work, *Location of Culture* (1994). Applying descriptive-qualitative method, the study shows the contemporary world embraces the fact that East and West are inextricably intertwined and hybrid in their culture, language and identity. It also explores migrants identity transforms and their sense of homeness changes as they contact to new environment, basically as a result of their contact as Diaspora in their former colonizer nation. Throughout the novel, it has been explored that the writer explicitly and implicitly expounds cross-culturalism, interdependency and coexistence between the two cultural elements, colonizer and colonized, Britain and India, as well as the two neighboring cities of India-Calcutta and Dhaka.

**Keywords:** hybridity, in-between-space, home, Ghosh, nationalism

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

One of the basic scenarios whereby hybridity can be observed is in the literatures of migration: migrant subjects, Diasporas and Diaspora writers. Diaspora, being a technical term, designates "the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions is a central historical fact of colonization" [3]. The interactions between home and away, self and other, outsiders and insiders, past and present are key features determining culture and identity as a result of movement, and a migrant experiences a profound shifted identity which is the interwoven of past and present, homeland and new land. As mentioned above,

Migration narratives are one of basic concerns of postcolonialism. Postcolonialism can be understood as a mode of perceiving literary texts which has three tasks of interpretation as John McLeod posits:

*Reading texts produced by writers from countries with a history of colonialism, primarily those texts concerned with the workings and legacy of colonialism in either the past of the present.*

*Reading texts produced by those that have migrated from countries with a history of colonialism, or those descended from migrant*

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*families, which deal in the main with Diaspora experience and its many consequences. In the light of theories of colonial discourses, re-reading texts produced during colonialism; both those that directly address the experiences of Empire, and those that seem not to [11].*

Postcolonialism, therefore, has under its ambit, the experiences and identity of migrants from formerly colonized communities, and issues of their in-between cultural identity, belongingness and identity. The postcolonial world is characterized by transnational migration, interdependency and interconnectedness between formerly colonizer-colonized entities, east-west and between the supposed polarities in general. Furthermore, in the postcolonial period, migration is highly and directly associated with the consequence of colonialism as *"immigrants from former colonies make their way to their ex-'metropolis' countries and their large metropolitan centres"* [6]. Migrants who have moved to their former colonizer nations in Europe would inevitably reconstruct their cultural identity and perspectives to themselves and the outside world. Consequently, notion of fixedness of binary opposites like east/west, colonizer/colonized and mother country/host, would be problematic. Rather, the postcolonial discourse would embrace an intermingling between the two entities in what Bhabha calls an "in-between space" which is characterized by instability and fluidity. A migrant's cultural identity is redefined by hybridity for he/she put oneself in a position of "in-between space" which is a conciliator between two cultures. Bhabha, the major proponent of hybridity, argues concerning migrants affected by colonialism that: *"The study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of 'otherness.' Where, once, the transmission of national traditions was the major theme of world literature, perhaps we can now suggest that transnational histories of migrants, the colonized, or political refugees - these border and frontier conditions may be the terrains of world literature"*[4]. Migrant's identity undertakes a considerable transformation and radical changes in varied aspects of life: social relations, belongingness, and homeness. Being in-between the two cultural identities, the former and the new, a migrant experiences a thorough course of transformation in his/her identity. *"The plurality in a migrant's experience creates multiple subject positions that can negotiate contradicting knowledge and draw creativity out of frictions and gaps between various discourses"* [5]. Such forms of negotiation between seemingly "contradicting

positions" and different cultural modes create hybridity which challenges the discourse of purity and subverts the hierarchical category between home/ host, self/ other and migrant/native. Cultural identity has been considered to be static, pure rooted from one's native land and authentic culture. *"Even if an individual has lived in two or three countries, the answer to 'where are you from?' must be the place of birth and ethnic location"*, mentions Bozkurt [5]; however, cultural identity shows rather a course of transformation from its fixed metaphor, for foreign elements would affect the migrant as well as the migrant's background affects the "native's" cultural identity in turn. The migrant's detachment from his homeland or root implies not only space but also identification for *"new places offer new interactions and new identifications, which necessarily affect one's identity"* [5].

The notion of hybridity stands against the privilege of purity and focuses on the experiences of migrants in an in-between position. An important critic S. Hall says, *"You have to be familiar enough with it [the centre] to know how to move in it. But you have to be sufficiently outside it, so you can examine it and critically interrogate it. And it is this double move or, what I think one writer after another have called, the double consciousness of the exile, of the migrant, of the stranger who moves to another place, who has this double way of seeing it, from the inside and the outside"* [8]. The migrant subject is in double-consciousness, aware of the home and the host, overwhelmed in the cultural aspects of the two. In this consciousness, the migrant is able to redefine and re-evaluate his cultural identity as cultural identity is *"not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position, which has no absolute guarantee in an unproblematic transcendent 'law of origin'"* [8]. In such transition and displacement, the migrant reconstructs a new identity for hybridity is *"how newness enters the world"* [4], whereby the migrant subject adopts the aspects of the host culture, and then he/she redefines, reworks and reconfigures it to construct a new cultural identity.

A migrant experiences a hybrid culture for his/her contact with a foreign culture makes him/her in an ambivalent space, both attracted and challenged by the foreign aspect, both entertaining the new "hybrid culture" as well as a nostalgic feeling of missing home, and instead of undertaking an ultimate change from foreign to local, a form of assimilation, the migrant would transform his/her identity by negotiating between self and other, home culture and destination culture, from one cultural identity to another. Bozkut remarks that: *"An individual...will encounter gaps, frictions, and*

contradictions in his/her identity. This disruption is not an abnormality to be overcome, but a constant, integral complexity. This complexity arises from a migrant's hybridity" [5].

### 1.2. Purpose

The very purpose of this study is to explore hybrid identity in migration narratives, a post colonial Indian novel *The Shadow Lines* in focus. By using the application and conception of hybridity in postcolonial discourse, the study attempts to scrutinize the intercultural exchanges and intermixing of host and native cultural identity and to explore how the writer deploys hybridity as a tool of disrupting fixity, reconstructing identity and resisting hierarchy in the post-colonial world. To this purpose, the study basically relies on the theories of M. Bakhtin, Homi Bhabha, Robert Young, and others when the situation requires, in interpreting how the selected novel demonstrates hybridity as the means of reading postcolonial narratives.

### 1.3. Significance

The study is significant for it contributes by taking into concern a topic which has not received attention, particularly by local studies. Though Anglophone Indian literature is prominent and well acclaimed in the world literary milieu, it has not been read and studied, particularly in light of cross-culturalism, interactions and hybridity between the west (British) and the east (India). Most researchers seemed to concern on conflicting attitudes of the Orient and the Occident in general, and the milieu of homeland and host land for migrants in particular. This study offers a fresh insight. This study will have a great relevance particularly to Ethiopian readers, literature students and researchers to understand Anglophone Indian literature by filling the gap: given lesser attention to Indian literature, as compared to others, for example to African novels. Moreover this study may trigger more scholarly studies and discussions on east-west encounters on the one hand, and the reading of the selected novel in other perspectives, on the other hand.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Research Design

This study uses the general model of qualitative research for its analysis. It tries to undertake the reading through the adoption of qualitative research because;

- The very nature of the study (reading and interpretation of novels) is more suitable for the qualitative method of enquiry. In its analysis and interpretation, the study applies a close scrutiny of the narratives in

light with relevant postcolonial theory of hybridity, and

- The requisite for applying an exploratory, interpretive approach.

Therefore, the study is conducted according to the assumptions and procedures of qualitative research together with the general principles and approaches of postcolonial theory. The study thus interprets hybrid identity, using the novel *The Shadow Lines* by Amitav Ghosh, particularly by applying underpinnings of hybridity from Homi K. Bhabha's, and of other prominent theorists like M Bakhtin and Robert Young. Bhabha's critical approach which he expounds in *Location of Culture (1994)* is the basic undercurrent for this research. Relevant excerpts from primary material (the novel) are selected based on their contribution to postcolonial hybridity, and then are read and interpreted accordingly. In doing so, various aspects of contacts which portray hybridity will be emphasized, like images, values, practices, and characters. Drawing on ideas of the above critics, this study focuses on how the totalizing and fixation of boundaries between the colonizer and the colonized, native and migrant are disrupted as a result of colonial and post-colonial contacts between the two cultural worlds, India and English. Therefore, it is a content analysis by which details of hybrid events and characters regarding cultural identity are gathered and described.

### 2.2. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The study uses major postcolonial concepts so as to guide the researcher in comprehending hybridity and its features. Various positions of postcolonial theory guide this study, basically H.K. Bhabha's ideas of hybridity, third space and ambivalence. Though Bhabha remains the basic research guide to analyze and interpret the novel, position of other theoreticians like M.K. Bakhtin and R. Young are relevant and used in the study

## 3. Hybrid Identity in *the shadow lines*

This book has won different awards, like Sahitya Akademi Award, and spawned fame and accolade to Amitav Ghosh, Indian novelist. The novel collects and tells events from historical incidents like Swadeshi Movement in India, events of World War II, India's partition in 1947, and religious riots in Dhaka, Hindu and Calcutta. It spans three generations throughout Dhaka, Calcutta and London. Dealing adeptly the element of postcolonial hybridity, the writer presents characters from various backgrounds of nationalities, religions and language to explore identity, ideology, and their perspectives toward the world and its boundaries. This article aims to study migrants' hybrid identity in the postcolonial

approach. Hybridity is one of the key elements of postcolonial texts, and is aptly accounted in this novel. Hybridity, literarily refers to mixedness, denotes the state of fusion, interdependency and interconnection. And in literary texts, it particularly focuses on the states and effects of mixture on identity, language and culture.

The novel depicts the ideas and opinions of different people with different background, and how their standpoints and perspectives keep changing in the course of time. It presents the life of a middle class Indian family and an English family who keep interdependent and intermixed through generations, boldly three generations in the novel. The story is built from the focal point of the unnamed narrator, who collects and recollects incidents and memories, "*it's a non linear tale told as if putting together the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle in the memory of the narrator*" [12]. Accordingly, the narrative takes us to how the post-independent India looks like, its relationship with former colonizer and the relationship between people after partition. Discussing various incidents and events, as well as the thoughts and opinions of characters, the novel presents the very notions of national and cultural identities, and the notion of homeness. In the post-colonial period, the idea of nationalism and national identity has become one of the contentious issues and concern of writers and critics. The term which refers to "*the notion of a common heritage of a people that stretches over a long past and shared ethnic and/or religious roots*" [9] has been so significant in post-colonial literature where the quest of identity is crucial as nations raise the issue of identity as they attempted and struggled to get freedom and independence against the yoke of oppression and colonialism. The term has indeed been enigmatic despite its common usage. Different theorists from different disciplines like post-colonialism and post modernism tend to argue that national identities and nationalism defied boundaries because we are living in a world of fluidity, where by the world has already become footloose and fluid. And these issues of nationalism and national identities, and the notion of defying boundary has become a recurring theme in contemporary literature.

Nationalism and its very conception stand for an ideology, culture, social structure that emphasizes on a certain nation. Hutchinson remarks: "*Nationalism was, first of all a doctrine of popular sovereignty. The people must be liberated - that is free from any external constraints; they must determine their own destiny and be masters in their house; they must control their own resources; they must obey only their inner voice... The people must be united; they must dissolve all internal divisions; they must be gathered together in a single historic territory, a homeland; and they must have legal*

*equality and share a single public culture*" [9]. Regardless of significant debate on the origin of nations as sovereign entity, theorists and historians argue that it is a modern phenomenon recently originated in Europe. According to P. Kumar's study on nationalism, though the where and when of its precise origin is dubious, "*its development is closely related to that of the modern state and the push for the popular sovereignty that came to a head with the French revolution in the late 18th century*" [10]. Ever since that time, the notion of nation and nationalism has become one of the determining features of contemporary history, politics and identity issue, and it can also be considered as the root cause of the two World Wars as well as other riots and conflicts.

In imagined communities, Anderson attempts to define nation as "imagined political community". He proposes that "*it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion*" [2]. This assumption of "imagined community" leads to the consciousness of the nation as constructed in the dichotomy of self and other. *The Shadow Lines* reconsiders and reconstructs the notion of nation beyond the self-other dichotomy, and questions the demarcation that separates nations and communities. The essentialist construction of nation and nationalism, as critiqued in the novel, results with communal violence and conflict, and it ultimately unsettles human bond and harmony. Ghosh has different socio-historical incidents which are the backdrops for his novels, including *The Shadow Lines*. For example, he tends to say, in his essay *The Ghosts of Mr Gandhi*, that the separatist movement has resulted various chilly riots, destruction of cities and temples and the assassination of Mrs Indra Gandhi, the PM. He recalls it: "*When I went back to my desk in the November of 1984, I found myself confronting decisions about writing that I had never faced before. How I was to write about that I had seen without reducing it to mere spectacle? My next novel was bound to be influenced by my experiences but I could see no way of writing directly about those events without re-creating them as a panorama of violence*" [7]. He then tells us that *The Shadow Lines* has its background and context on this scenario, the riot and violence in Calcutta and civil unrest in Pakistan. "*Within a few months, I started my novel, which I eventually called, 'The Shadow Lines' - a book that led me backward in time, to earlier memories of riots, ones witnessed in childhood. It became a book not about any one event but about the meaning of such events and their effects on the individuals who live through them*" [7].

The independent nation-states today cannot be understood and described with the notion of purity and originality, but they have been transformed in time and space and commingled in culture, religion and language where by the idea of demarcation of nationality would fail to consider.. *The Shadow Lines* deals with the connection of British and Indian families through roughly three generations. The novel juxtaposes the two different but mutually intertwined families to question the notion of national boundary. It depicts the crossing of borders across nationalism and culture, and subverts the simplified narrative of national identity. We read the unnamed narrator encountering different, sometimes contradictory versions of national identity in the narrative, through his contact with Tha'mma (his grandma), Tridib (uncle), and Ila (cousin). His approach to the issue of nationalism and national identity has been complex, unsettled and changing as a result of his interaction with the above major characters as well as his experience to the metropolitan, London, for education.

*The Shadow Lines* begins with Diaspora formation saying "In 1939, thirteen years before I was born, my father's aunt, Mayadebi, went to England with her husband and her son, Tridib" [1] which significantly pinpoints the content of the first section of the novel- "going away". The major character Tridib is the chronicler and self story-teller as well as story-teller to the narrator whose perspectives are highly influenced by Tridib. On the events and reflections of Tridib, the unnamed narrator attempts to reconstruct the history of his family and symbolically his nation as well. In the narrative, we read Tridib has instilled an obsession of the past incidents and happenings in the narrator's mind. Tridib brings the past memory as lively and real as the present, he comingles past-present scenarios of the family and the nation by extension. The narrator tells about Tridib: "There really were people like Tridib, who could experience the world as concretely in their ...more so if anything, since to them those experiences were permanently available in their memories" [1]. From the very beginning, Tridib was considered as unreliable teller because he used to tell different people different story, sometimes contrasting, stories about him. "Nobody was ever quite sure where they stood with Tridib: there was a casual self-mockery about many of the things he said which left his listeners uncertain about whether they ought to take what he said at face value or believe its opposite" [1]. People were uncertain of him, unable to decide which of the versions about him or the story he told is to believe. In this, Ghosh has created the room to destabilize and reconstruct anew what has been told and believed. This instability, ever-changing knowledge and fluidity of things, as shown

from Tridib's, the narrator's and other characters' perspectives help to bring forth different story, polar opposites, the notion of self-other to co-exist, to comingle. For instance, the narrator remembers what Ila, his close relative, told him about her beautiful doll, who symbolizes her lover Nick Price, child of the English family who were closely related to her Indian family through three generations. The narrator shares this story to his grandma, Tha'mma, with the intention to hear her reflection. The result of the incident is a collective story, sometimes contradicting, of what he recalls, what Ila said and what Tha'mma reacted on the Toy that abandoned Ila in the street. This importantly and metaphorically tells the mode of reconstructing and rewriting ones nation and nationalism. What the narrator constructs, as instilled by Tridib, is the history of an English family in the post-colonial period. The novel takes Indian characters like Tridib into the context of England; the narrative has been taken into England out of India as well as Pakistan. The narrator has a compassionate tone to India as well as England where the narrator depicts it with a compassionate tone, not as a colonizer-other. In such a way, Ghosh has used the English family to subvert dominant views. The colonial links between the English and Indian family promoted the link and interdependency between the two cultures. The author do not consider the English family, metaphorically the nation, as other, colonizer and aggressive imperial power, but consider it in compassionate and friendly manner. In the novel, Ghosh has incorporated English national identity and history into Indian, though his intention is not to deny the multiple burdens and impacts in the colonial period.

Ghosh has reflected the notion of nationalism in two major perspectives, from Indian-English and Calcutta-Pakistan. From Indian-English view towards nationalism, Ila who has a cosmopolitan education and has been wandering between India and English is good example. She is a metaphor of complex and hybrid national identity for she escapes categorization and self-other dichotomy. Ila has been considered as a traitor, for example by Tha'mma. Tha'mma refutes "Ila has no right to live there (England)... Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood. They know they're a nation because they've drawn their borders with blood" [1]. For her, nation and its building is the result of human sacrifices and that determines one to be the rightful member of and belonging to a particular nation. According to Tha'mma's conviction, the England people have the sole and rightful member of the nation for they inherited it by sacrifice and blood, and this never allows Ila to have that belongingness.

However, Ila calls this accusation “a warmongering fascist ideology” [1]. Despite Tha’mma’s accusation of Ila as traitor, she herself also experienced a state of “beyond categorization” when nationalism comes to question during her journey to Pakistan. In her hometown, Dhaka, she realizes that she is an outsider, and this has worried her. She has complex experience to “understand how her place of birth had come to be so messily at odds with her nationality” [1]; her family members have scattered towards other parts “one of them in Bangalore, one in the middle east, and the other one God knew where” [1]. Muslim refugees from India have taken over their house. Partition has shifted Dhaka into Muslim city so Muslim refugees are insiders, but also outsiders for they are refugees. She has been told of her home and family, she has been surprised when her son, narrator’s father, reminds her of the fact that she herself did come towards Dhaka as refugee, to question the matter of origin and purity. Intolerant of his provocation, she repudiated “We’re not refugees, snapped my grandmother, on cue. We came long before partition” [1]. The grandma’s national consciousness again is questioned when we read she has donated her jewellery on religious basis. She says “I gave it away, she screamed. I gave it to the fund for the war. I had to, don’t you see? For your sake; for your freedom. We have to kill them before they kill us; we have to wipe them out” [1]. What is uncertain here and what nationalist discourse is called into question here is the self and other demarcation is not based on differences that consider nationality. It is on the basis of religion, Hindus against Muslims. And her concern, her contribution, her fund caused the death of Tridib, her own family member, of which she was unaware. It has been seen that Tha’mma suggested the narrator that a nation is built on a strong determination, with fire and fury, and particularly with strong fight and patriotic nationalism. However, Ghosh challenges the nationalist ideology on the basis of essentialist construction, as Tha’mma used to take a strong stand. He is able to problematize the very idea of “Indianness” and reconstruct it in the post-colonial milieu. The post-colonial India has witnessed a large-scale of displacement towards west, and this has problematized we-them dichotomy and categorized discourse of nationality, as the case of Ila. She has experienced and influenced by various metropolises, basically London, and her social roles drastically transformed, compared to Tha’mma for instance. Ila has been mimicking cultures of the west and repudiates the norms and social roles attributed to women in India. For example, the narrator recalls the episode when he, Robi (her uncle) and Ila have been in Grand Hotel, to relax. He recalls it:

*Listen, Ila, Robi said, shaking his head. You shouldn’t have done what you did. You ought to know that; girls don’t behave like that here.*

*What the fuck do you mean? She spat at him. What do you mean ‘girls’? I’ll do what I bloody well want, when I want and where...*

*You can do what you like in England, he said. But here there are certain things you cannot do. That’s our culture; that’s how we live [1].*

In addition, Ghosh has dealt with a “warmongering” attitude as he attempts to critique the essentialist stand of nationalism and national identity is destructive. For example, narrator’s cousin Robi mentions what he has experienced while acting as a government official. He states:

*I know what I’d have to do; I’d have to go out and make speeches to my policemen, saying: You have to be firm, you have to do your duty. You have to kill whole villages if necessary – we have nothing against the people, it’s the terrorists we want to get, but we have to be willing to pay a price for our unity and freedom. And when I went back home, I would find an anonymous note waiting for me, saying: We’re going to get you, nothing personal, we have to kill you for our freedom. It would be like reading my own speech transcribed on a mirror [1].*

It ironically depicts that both the terrorists are “fighting for freedom” and the government too was acting to secure freedom for the nation while the complex issue and the root cause is essentialist nationalist ideology. Such ideology caused eruption of violence both in India and Pakistan, death of thousands including the chronicler Tridib and Robi himself. Such instances have been mentioned in the novel as “a huge banner headline which said: CURFEW IN CALCUTTA, POLICE OPEN FIRE, 10 DEAD, 15 WOUNDED... [1]. particularly, the death of Tridib at the border has paramount implication. Tha’mma has been bewildered and perplexed on the fact he was killed by a mob in post-independent Dhaka across the border. Ghosh has remarked that the Hindu-Muslim violence and riots caused the death of thousands in India, as the case of Tridib, and others with him-the old man and the Rickshaw driver, and it is the consequence of the dichotomy of self-other and the notion of essentialist nationalism. He depicted in those characters the

challenges and scenarios of essentialist attitude in post-colonial world, particularly India. In addition, Ghosh has suggested the violence as a result of religious fundamentalism in India is devastating and chilling. Moreover, he critiques the dichotomy of self-other, we and enemy, for what has been considered other or enemy is not really outsider but insider, part of oneself. The fearful violence and chaos was frustrating innocent children, as the narrative tends to tell. Children were frustrated by the religious riots occurring in India, Calcutta, and they were unable to attend their school lessons freely and in concentration. It was traumatic for them; the narrator says “*We were used to demonstrations... But this was different – a shout followed by another and another, in a jaggedly random succession, and then, suddenly, silence, and just when they seemed to have died away, there they were, one voice, followed by a dozen, and then again a moment of silence*” [1].

Ghosh has problematized the discursive nationalist representation of characters like Tridib and Ila. Tridib, for example disrupts the self-other dichotomy; he transcends borders. The narrator depicts him as “*a longing for everything that was not in oneself, a torment of the flesh, that carried one beyond the limits of one’s mind to other times and other places, and even, if one was lucky, to a place where there was no border between oneself and one’s image in the mirror*” [1]. Bhabha acknowledges this state of going beyond boundary and demarcation in his seminal work, *Location of culture*. He says, “*The ‘beyond’ is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past. . . . Beginnings and endings may be the sustaining myths of the middle years; but in the fin de siècle, we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion*” [4]. Tridib defies the dichotomy of self and other, but represents the “self” within the “other”. In the narrative, we read his human consciousness and his death is depicted as martyrdom like who lived and died against the notion of division. His martyr like death was due to his attempt to rescue May (an English girl), who was in turn attempting to rescue the old man from the attack of the mob. He met May, an English girl, humanly and with affection, his story is “*a very sad story, about a man without a country, who fell in love with a woman-across- the-seas ...*” [1], without any doctrine of division and any mode of essentialist national identity.

#### 4. Conclusion

The novel expounds consequences of colonization and the complex relationship, identity issue and cultural interdependency after decolonization. Therefore, this article scrutinizes the novel through postcolonial approach, particularly using hybridity-

a postcolonial element. The paper substantiates that Ghosh has adeptly employed hybridity, a postcolonial element, so as to show a complex nature of hybridity and belongingness in postcolonial india. The article explores the novel through postcolonial approach and its main features including notion of homeness, identity and nation. The article critiqued the idea of essentialism on the basis of east-west, colonizer-colonized home-away, native-migrant and explores that Ghosh’s novel embraces hybrid identity, interdependency and complex relationship between the entities. It presents a postcolonial reading emphasizing transformability of those entities, culture, and even characters in the novel from backgrounds of Calcutta, Dhaka and London. Various places as well as time spaces have been discussed for they are significant in understanding identity, culture and the world better. Through the notion of hybridity, the novel traverses boundaries of time, space, location and identity. In the novel, it has been significantly pinpointed that displacement of characters, either practically or imaginatively, brings transformation of characters identity and sense of self, or encourages them to get into new environment and to become familiar with it.

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