



COLONIAL AFTERMATH IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE GLASS PALACE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the postcolonial technique in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace*, one of the best-known works of Indian English literature. This study aims to analyse *The Glass Palace* by systematically examining postcolonial discourse. Through an investigation of Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace*, this paper draws on postcolonial theory to explore the conquests, discontent among displaced and conquered people, and their expatriate monarch in a post-colonial world. This historical novel tells the story of Burma's British colonisation. Ghosh shows the suffering of people in this book on several levels. People who have been colonised feel alienated in their own country and become utterly unaware of their origins.

Keywords: Post Colonialism, Migration, Imperialism, Subaltern, and Displacement.

British colonial writers from India, Africa, and the Caribbean produced post-colonial literature. The fight for independence, emigration, national identity, loyalty, and childhood are

common themes explored by many English-language post-colonial writers. A critical method called postcolonial theory examines literature written in nations that

have been or are still colonies of other countries.

Many practitioners agree that postcolonial theory originated with Edward Said's book *Orientalism*, which became a fragment of the critical toolkit in the 1970s. Additionally, they examine how the literature of the colonial powers perpetuates inferiority complexes about the colonized, which acts as a rationale for colonization. However, postcolonial theory has been hard to define, and some authors have taken a harsh stance against the idea.

Amitav Ghosh is a Bengali author who was born in Kolkata. He wrote a hybrid of history and fiction because he witnessed the country's suffering and culture during the colonial era. In addition to *The Glass Palace*, he has fabricated historical events in most of his made-up books. His most significant recognition in Indian English literature is as a postcolonial writer.

His second book, *The Shadow Lines*, which won the Sahitya Academy Award, also contains postcolonial elements, solidifying his reputation as one of the greatest postcolonial writers alongside authors like Salman Rushdie, Shashi Tharoor, and Vikram Seth. This study researches the novel's postcolonial themes, including hegemony, British imperialism, subaltern identity, mimicry, hybridity, diaspora, exile, and

displacement. Writing with a postcolonial consciousness, Amitav Ghosh is a writer from the Indian diaspora. The study looks at how postcolonial influences have affected the lives of people of different nationalities, ethnicities, and cultures and how much these effects have affected the lives of colonizers, particularly in Burma and India, in the novel.

The Glass Palace by Amitav Ghosh is a fiction book that was published in 2000. It depicts the period from the British attack on Burma in 1885 through the Second World War and up until 1957. It is based on historical accounts of Burma and India. The novel revolves around the Saya John, Rajkumar Raha, and Burmese royal families. It begins with the British invasion of Burma in 1885. Characters such as Beni Prasad Dey and Uma, Rajkumar and Dolly, King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat, Saya John, Arun, and Dinu are all strongly represented by Amitav Ghosh.

The royal family is given temporary sanctuary in Madras. In contrast, in the interim, they are given a permanent home in Ratnagiri, Goa, where they meet other characters like Collector and his wife, Uma. He first established the teak business in Burma before traveling to India in search of Dolly, a royal family attendant who works for the queen. Following their marriage, he returns to Saya John, his mentor in Burma.



In Malaka, he conducts business once more with his assistance. His family and business in Burma were eventually destroyed by the Japanese invasion and the Second World War, forcing him to relocate to India. British colonialism, cultural hegemony, exile and displacement, mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity are all revealed in the book. This critical approach looked at the political, psychological, and economic effects of colonization on the lives of native people, in addition to shedding light on the conclusions that British imperialism had created.

The Anglo-Burmese conflict is where the novel starts. Due to their refusal to carry out their assigned duty of vigil over the royal family, the two senior parsons of Burma anticipated receiving enormous rewards from the imperialists for their caretaking of King Thebaw, Queen Supayala, and their own family. British soldiers had plotted to loot the royal family's wealth after colonisation. Here, Ghosh exposes the British people's callousness. The royal family is captured and banished to Ratnagiri, India. With the release of King Thebaw's "Royal Declaration," the palace was on the verge of collapse. The declaration caused widespread depression throughout Burma.

On November 14, 1885, Burma and Britain went to war. The Burmese army was

routed, and the King was subsequently imprisoned. Burmese king Thebaw and his family were taken prisoner and exiled to Outram, the Home in Ratnagiri. Dramatically conveyed is the miserable state in which the captives are held in their motherland. Also, the queen says in fury, "They took our kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports, but mark my words, this is how it will end. In a few decades, the wealth will be gone – all the gems, the timber, and the oil, and then they too will leave" (TGP 94). The novel masterfully reveals how the British subjugated the nations, nearly eradicating their entire populace and erasing their kings from popular culture.

The protagonist of the novel *The Glass Palace* is a coal-black man named Kaala Rajkumar. By accident, he was brought to Burma. Following British colonisation, his life completely changed when he landed in Mandalay. He begins looking for the locations and people. He is living in extreme poverty in a foreign city, has no friends, and has to fight to survive in the colonial system. Subsequently, he was taken over by the imperialists and began bringing indentured servants from south India to other colonies. His postcolonial perception indicates a struggle. Rajkumar, the main character, and his friends Saya John and Mathew are tasked with settling a

place and its inhabitants in search of treasure after colonization. Later, after becoming a successful young businessman, he goes to India to find Dolly, his true love, and convince her to wed him. They were married and relocated to Burma with Uma's assistance. The novel describes their family's struggles to find themselves and where they fit.

Arjun, Uma's nephew, is a soldier in the British Army and has generally assimilated, beginning to dress in Western fashion and use slang from the country. He thought of himself as an Englishman. Several types of displaced individuals are depicted effectively in this novel. According to John Skinner, Ghosh worries "not only with colonizer and colonized but with historical and contemporary relations between different colonized groups" (Hawley 17).

People inherently become hybrids when they relocate, and their cultures undergo this process. Individuals who aspired to be unique have battled for self-reliance. For instance, Rajkumar, an impoverished orphan who unintentionally migrates to Burma, appears in the book *The Glass Palace*. He was penniless at first, but British colonization completely altered his life later on, making him a financier and business magnet. However, the war

ultimately shatters his life, leaving him destitute and forcing him to return to India.

Rajkumar's wife, Dolly, accompanied him to India when King Thebaw was banished as a colonizer from Burma to India and subsequently died as a migrant. However, she later died back in Burma when she returned to join the Buddhist religious shelter. Each character in the book conquers a particular situation, and the effects of British colonization have changed their beginnings and journeys. Therefore, consequential issues such as the movement of people, replication, combination, anxiety, division, a lack of roots, and dislocation are the main subjects of his narrative.

The novel *The Glass Palace* explores Amitav Ghosh's interest in human beings and heritage. Ghosh presents viewpoints from marginalized members of diverse ethnic groups who yearn to return to their native countries. In light of these national concerns, we can declare that Ghosh is the first Indian author to accurately capture, via post-colonial perspectives, the suffering of the alien people.



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