

Examining the Consequences and Influence of Post-Colonialism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*

Amalan R¹, & Kumar K²

¹ Ph.D, Research Scholar, Department of English, Periyar University, Salem, 636011, Tamil Nadu-India

² Assistant Professor, Department of English, Government Arts and Science College, Harur, 636903, Tamil Nadu-India, E-mail:harurkkumar@gmail.com

Correspondence: Amalan R, Research Scholar, Department of English, Periyar University, Salem, 636011, Tamil Nadu-India. E-mail: amalan.ini@gmail.com

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Abstract

The Glass Palace (2000) by Amitav Ghosh is a chronicled novel that shows how Burma was colonised and affected the rich and the poor. Post-colonial literature is a group of works of art that deal with the problems and effects of Europe's colonisation of the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Beginning with the British attack on Burma in 1885 and ending with the Second World War, Ghosh covers a vast amount of South Asian history and imperialism. This paper focuses on studying some historical events that have been kept quiet and telling their stories along with those of ordinary people and repressed subalterns. Raj Kumar, the novel's main character, tells the powerful stories of exile and displacement of people who were split up after a radical event and now live in different parts of Asia. The natives are shown as victims instead of enemies of the colonisers. Further, the article tells the ugly truth about colonialism and its effects through the eyes of three generations living in the three regions of the British Empire that were all connected: Burma, Malaya, and India.

Keywords: Displacement, Exile, Colonialism, Imperialism, Identify Crisis

1. Introduction

This study examines how to understand *The Glass Palace* (2000) by looking closely at post-colonial rhetoric. It explains a close reading of post-colonial thinkers like Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak. The main idea behind post-colonial literature is that the Western university has shaped and controlled literary and critical theory based on the politics of Eurocentric Hegemony.

In ancient Greece, hegemony entailed the dominance of one city-state over another. Since the 1930s, the term 'hegemony' has most often been associated with the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Developing Marx's insights, Gramsci argued that the economic and political ascendancy of a given class is organically connected with and prepared for by the achievement of cultural and intellectual hegemony" (Guddon 2013, p.325).

Stereotypes from a dominating alien culture could persuade other cultures and people to define themselves. In post-colonial discourse, it is necessary to strongly disagree with the authoritarianism that ruled the empire's hegemonic structure. It means consciously fighting against the Western academy's hierarchical approach and the idea that Western thinking is better. In new national literatures that mark post-colonial knowledge, there is a trend towards being aware of and paying special attention to how the experience of the colonised culture was presented to imperial powers. "The semantic basis of the term 'post-colonial' might seem to suggest a concern only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power" (Ashcroft et al. 1994, p.1).

One of the most important writers who have studied and written about the experience of being colonised is Amitav Ghosh; his fiction not only shows what it was like to be an Indian during colonisation, but it also shows how different types of imperial power affected other parts of life in countries that were once British subjects. His most recent book shows how he studied, understood, and analysed how colonial forces worked in Asian countries like India, Burma, and Malaysia. The novel turns into a story that is against colonialism. "Amitav Ghosh combines his professional and social skills with literary writing and creates works of arts, concerned with history, anthropology, Diaspora, nations, and civilisation" (Kumar 2016, p.21). The most significant aspect of Ghosh's made-up speech is that the characters' interactions with one another, rather than specific words, give the speech its meaning. One thing that can be seen is how the readers' understanding of most of the main characters changes as the goes on through dialogue.

2. Review of Literature

Singh and Gaur's (2016) article depicted how Amitav Ghosh handles the post-colonial issue of home and nation in *The Glass Palace*. Jayanthi and Suresh (2018) trace diasporic elements and how Amitav Ghosh has used Diaspora in *The Glass Palace*. In addition, their research studies the emotional outbursts and psychological needs of the characters involved in the novel. Srinivasulu (2017) has spoken

about colonial issues, and as a result of Burma's colonisation, many people were forced to leave their homes, including the royal family. He talks about their plight and the cultural trauma that they go through. Swati (2021) portrayed multiculturalism's main ideas, such as moving and identity crisis. Further research on the novel *The Glass Palace* talks about how the people in the book moved from Burma to India and then to the United States. Rajalaksmi and Shankar (2023) pointed out how Ghose recorded detailed account of the lives of Indians who have moved to Burma. Through the characters' journeys through time and space, the novel recounted the story of the connection between colonizers and colonized. Further the novel elicits the themes of national identity, oppression, diaspora, exile, and many other things. Deepa (2023) delineates how diasporic elements show up in the memoirs of people like Raj Kumar, the Burmese Royal Family, John Martins, and Uma Dey, who all left their home countries and moved to new places where they encountered new cultures and experiences. Devi and Srividhya (2021) pointed out about *The Glass Palace* tries to make sense of the social and political chaos that followed the British invasion of Burma and the Japanese attack of Malaysia.

3. Rajkumar's Exile Life

The Glass Palace (2000) is about three generations of two families with strong ties to Burma, India, and Malaya from 1885 to 1956. The novel opens in Mandalay, Burma, in 1885, just as the British assemble a sizable army of Indian sepoys to capture the city. The royal family of Burma is compelled to flee their homeland to reside in a little Indian village. There is also severe damage to the royal palace. A Bengali orphan named Rajkumar gets to enter the "glass palace" over the chaos that follows the fall of the Ava Kingdom. He encounters Dolly, an unbelievably gorgeous maid enslaved and owned by Queen Supayalat. Rajkumar makes plenty of money using teak and eventually marries her. Rajkumar's backstory is intimately connected to the establishment and collapse of the plantation system. Bhuvanewari and Shrif (2021) state Raju becomes a coloniser: "As a colonised subject from Bengal, Rajkumar turns into a coloniser in Burma" (p.52). Rajkumar, the novel's protagonist, goes from being a forced slave in Bengal to a master coloniser in Burma. Rajkumar's life story shows how people struggled to stay alive during the troubled British era. He moved slave labourers from South India to other colonies, and as a colonised Bengali, he turned Burma into a coloniser state. There is conflict because of his post-colonial consciousness. Saya John, Matthew, and Rajkumar work at settling people and land to gain money. His family's entire death was caused by a fever that swept through the community. Only his mother and Rajkumar went back to their native home in Chittagong. The child remained to work on the boat after his mother passed away since he had nowhere else to go.

Rajkumar's mother had died on a sampan tethered in a mangrove-lined estuary. He remembers the tunnel-like shape of the boat's galley and its roof of hooped cane and thatch; there was an oil lamp beside his mother's head on one of the crosswise planks of the hull. Its flickering yellow flame was dulled by a halo of night-time insects (Ghosh 2000, p.11).

After their marriage, Neel and Dinu, Dolly and Rajkumar's two boys are born in Burma. Dinu, one of the sons, is crucial to the plot since he survives the Japanese invasion of Burma and World War II, decimating the Raha family's wealth. Dinu established a prosperous timber business and wed a Burmese princess banished to Ratnagiri. In 1942, Neel lost his life during the Japanese invasion of Rangoon. Rajkumar and Dolly fled to India in 1943 as part of the "Forgotten Long March" in the interwar period. Over a million migrants, primarily from India, entered the country through difficult jungle paths. After the war, Rajkumar remains in India and works as a hanger-on in Uma Dey's house, while Dolly returns to Burma as a Buddhist nun. Dolly creates a friendship with Uma Dey, an Indian nationalist activist from Ratnagiri. She was crucial in getting Rajkumar and Dolly together. Although Rajkumar loved his granddaughter Jaya deeply, he passed away before she married. Her son proves that he is the storyteller in the end.

Rajkumar worked and stayed at a small food stand in town. He is there when the British enter and get rid of the king. After the British took over in 1885 and made their rule official, the plantation economy did very well. However, it fell apart in a big way when Japan attacked Southeast Asia in World War II. The British currently hold the royal family in Ratnagiri, a place on the western coast of India. The Burmese and everyone else have almost forgotten about them. Even so, they become close friends with the people who are jailing them. Uma Dey, the wife of the District Collector, and Dolly become very close. Following the death of her husband, Uma changes her life and becomes an activist for Indian freedom. She also gets the chance to travel to Europe and the United States.

"In 1857 the British had exiled the deposed emperor to Rangoon. He'd lived in a small house not far from the Shwedagon. One night the prince had slipped off with a few of his friends and gone to look at the emperor's house." (Ghosh 2000, p.43). The people in Amitav Ghosh's books are trying to figure out who they are and are looking for reason and the truth. In this way, they are real talks about the human quest. The characters travel to different places and times because their physical and mental journeys lead them to other worlds and visions. The unique, eventful, exploratory Journey comes to life through memories of oneself and others.

The person's search for a meaningful life is a relief event in memory. So, Rajkumar goes on a search for himself by going through all of his memories, but the ending is not particularly interesting. The novel shows how clever the imperials were at changing the natives so that they would follow their orders by wiping out their identities. The adventures of the various characters in *The Glass Palace* (2000) also illustrate the social and political unrest that followed the British occupation of Burma and the Japanese invasion of Malaysia. "The Glass Palace ranges over a hundred years of precolonial, colonial, and post-colonial Burmese history" (Yadav 2023, p.159).

4. Colonial Discourse

This research article has depicted colonial discourse by explaining the condition of Rajkumar in war. Rajkumar loses his parents and has to work in Burma's teak forest. There are more than one group of characters in the novel, and they all have different goals and experiences

with the empire. These characters include men, women, merchants, the rich, and the poor. The Japanese attack on Burma during the Second World War breaks their hopes even more. The novel discusses being poor and finding your identity as a South Asian family before and after colonisation. In this book, the author shows the horrible things that happened during the war between two foreign countries, Britain and Japan, because they wanted to take over Burma. When the Japanese took over Burma in 1942, thousands of people, mostly Indians and refugees who were scared of war and destruction, walked thousands of miles from Burma to Calcutta to try to stay alive.

Ghosh says the following about the large number of people who left Burma:

Everyone was heading in the same direction: towards the northern, landward passage to India, more than a thousand miles away. They had their possessions bundled on their heads; they carried children on their backs, wheeling older adults in carts and barrows. Their feet had stirred up a long, snaking cloud of dust that hung above the road like a ribbon, pointing the way to the northern horizon. They were almost all Indians (Ghosh 2000, p.403).

This is how war turns out. Ghosh writes about the plight of large groups of people who are stuck between Burma and India. In their own country, they feel like "outsiders. "The Glass Palace focuses on historical facts like World War II, diasporic beginnings during major events of exile by the Royal Family of Burma, and resettling in Ratnagiri, India" (Poorani and Sujatha 2022, p.346).

Ghosh has written about historical events, the roles of men and women, and the end of wars in the form of a novel, which always interests readers who do not find history interesting. He makes me think about people who have moved or are on the edge of moving. Here, Ghosh imagines the worst things that happen to people touched by war. They are forced to be in this situation, facing problems in staying alive and jobless.

Thus, once again, Ghosh creates the thinking for the migrated people or people at the fringe of migration. Ghosh projects the worst situation for war-affected people. They are forced to such a position that they face challenges for their very existence apart from the fact of homelessness situation. The novel's theme is the inevitable recognition of human beings, especially at the time of large-scale dislocation of the people, individuals outraged by war. (Malathi 2019, p.352)

5. Displacement

Yadav's research unfolds Ghosh interest on anthropology. His research examines many different issues and viewpoints covering many other academic fields. Within the broad framework of his stories, his research shed light on history, science fiction, travel writing, and newer findings in anthropology and human evolution. In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh writes about much of South Asian history, from the British attack on Burma in 1885 to the Second World War. Ghosh explores and retells the stories of ordinary people, repressed subalterns, and events in history that have been kept quiet so the Yadav asserts *The Glass Palace* has a scope and depth that are hard to find in other Indian-English stories (Yadav, 2024). In *The Glass Palace* (2000) the main idea is that people will always be recognised as people, even when most live in different places because of war. "The migration of native people from one place to another forcefully or voluntarily shows the cruelty of imperialism" (Solanki and Rated 2021, p. 757).

Through Arjun, a character in *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh shows how people will follow foreign masters in their own country. "Hardy gave a full-throated laugh, his eyes shining. "Yaar Arjun, think of where we've fallen when we start talking of good masters and bad masters. What are we? Dogs? Sheep? (Ghosh 2000, p.378).sGhosh sets his talk in the middle of a family saga that includes more than a dozen people from three generations. Rajkumar is the main character of the book. At the beginning of the book, he is an eleven-year-old who lives on the streets of Mandalay, Burma's capital city. A Chinese businessman raised Rajkumar and always sought ways to help himself. He becomes rich and finally becomes the father of Ghosh's large family. Rajkumar is an interesting main character, but he's not the most interesting person in the book. He does not care about politics enough for it to matter to him. He has confused feelings about this, which makes him disagree with Uma, the most political character in the book. As a widow who now fights for independence, Uma's attempts to understand her situation and help others do the same stand out as achievements. As a ruler, Uma questions what England has done for India. Some say England modernised India by bringing reforms, courts, and railroads. Uma says that these benefits differ from what England wanted: to use India for business. Ghosh makes an argument from a general point of view through the character Uma, focusing on the idea behind government. The novel does not stress how cruel the foreign government is, but it could have been done so as a case against colonialism. Uma's point is connected with Fanous postcolonial critic Fanon, who has pointed out "Colonialism is the business of adventurers" (Fanon 1952, p.91).

Ghosh needs to be disciplined to carry out this point. Instead of bombarding readers with political philosophy, he lets the things in his book (like cars, photos, and umbrellas) become a case against giving up freedom and culture. So, culture is freedom, and habits are defiance when they are linked. Ghosh's choice to use World War II to destroy his carefully crafted relationships seems just as random and handy as his matchmaking. The dips and rises are not as impressive as one might think. It is a surprise to read *The Glass Palace* because it writes about the politics of empire-building thoughtfully and beautifully. This is a great way for Ghosh to connect his characters to historical events. He has trouble connecting his figures. People who read Ghosh's work have to work hard not to let their questions about his plotting affect their trust in him as a historian. If they let him do this, it would make people richer after reading his work.

The story depicts India, Burma, and Malaysia both during and after colonisation by following three generations and three families across borders. In this book, more than a century has gone by. The story ends in the 1990s when Jaya, Rajkumar's granddaughter, searches the

internet for her long-lost uncle Dinu, currently residing in Rangoon. Myanmar is the new name for Burma, which is no longer the "golden country" it once was. Famines, petty politics, and the self-centeredness of its rulers have reduced Burma to an impoverished nation where a military dictatorship has taken control and imprisoned opposition figure Aung San Suu Kyi. The family get-together coincided with the emergence of Aung San Suu Kyi's post-colonialist fight for independence in colonised Myanmar. Dinu, also known as U Tun Pe in Burma, is solitary. He teaches photography in his workshop for a living. According to the book, the studio was known as "The Glass Palace Studio." The book, therefore, opens and closes with sequences from "The Glass Palace." The plot spans a significant period of Burma's/Myanmar's past, from before to after colonisation, and moves from King Thibaw's opulent palace to Dinu's tiny, dilapidated studio. Kumar & Prakash (2023) states, it is essential for any writer to possess Local Knowledge for depict the historical details, "New Historicist is indebted to Clifford Geertz for the term Local Knowledge" (Kumar &Prakash 2023, p.21). Ghosh has depicted power discourse and colonial issues because he possessed local knowledge.

The Glass Palace (2000) is a strong story showing how the imperial powers tried to control the people under their rule.

It shows how these powers devised a set of theories and practices to get what they wanted. It is very important to understand Edward Said's views about how imperial powers work in order to understand the fictional discourse in *The Glass Palace*. He has made it clear that he thinks imperialists' main ideas are made up and are only fiction.

It is not very disputable to say simply that modern Orientalism has been an aspect of both imperialism and colonialism. Yet it is not enough to say it; it must be worked through analytically and historically. I am interested in showing how modern Orientalism, unlike the precolonial awareness of Dante and d'Herbelot, embodies a systematic discipline of accumulation (Said 1979, p.123).

With a powerful post-colonial voice, *The Glass Palace* re-examines the concept of a transcendental, unified identity. This book shows a variety of folks who don't care about their nationality. People remember them as Daw Thin Thin Aye, Alison, Dinu, Neel, Raj Kumar, Saya John, and Dolly, not as Indian, Burman, or Malay. Similar to how the two distinct names of Raj Kumar's boys—one Burman and the other Indian—shake national identities. This book's narrative depicts a life transcending national boundary. It subverts the singular, stable, and cohesive concept of identity that imperialists established to demonstrate their purported superiority by drawing contrasts between physical and cultural distinctions.

6. Conclusion

In the end, India and Burma's broken economies made things even worse. Of course, the Second World War and British rule also made things hard for Indian troops. The idea of hegemony ends with the British and people like Rajkumar transporting the lower class for their benefit. Rajkumar is from India and makes his money by hiring Indian workers. The British did the same thing as him, so he was in the same group. This book is a great example of post-colonial writing because of this. Imperialism and how it affects people is a big theme in *The Glass Palace*. This research article show about colonialism by explaining the of British took advantage of India and Burma's wealth and people. It also shows how wealthy and powerful people in the area, like Rajkumar, worked together with the British to keep their power and rank. Through this research this researcher unfolds colonial issues primarily. The novel depicted how strong and determined the regular people dealing with colonialism were. Ghosh shows through the characters of Saya John and others how important it is to stand together and work together to fight evil. Further this research shows the complicated relationships between those who were coloniser and those who were colonised in many ways of life, such as business, politics, and social structures.

The people in the book are shown to have many sides, and their wants and needs are often shaped by their time living under colonial rule. The author of the novel skillfully mixes historical facts with imaginary parts to make an interesting story that shows what life was like during colonialism. Ultimately, the user's comments and analysis of the book show how important post-colonial literature is for understanding. The research has unveiled the cultural and colonial crisis such as identity crisis, exile, colonialism, displacement and dislocation through the story of Burma's royal family.

He also thinks about what will happen to the helpless people in Burma and India who are seen as victims of colonialism. Finally, this article led to future study of decolonization helps to focus on the area such as minority discourse, neo-imperialism

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Author 2 (Kumar K): contributed for the validation of the arguments presented.

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