

Colonized versus Colonizers in The Glass Palace of Amitav Ghosh

K. Sathishkumar, M.A., M. Phil., B.Ed., Ph.D. Research Scholar

Maruthupandiyar Arts and Science College

Thanjavur 613 403

Tamilnadu, India

Cell: +91 8072 715051

englishlit83@gmail.com

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

"An absorbing story of a world in transition, brought to life through characters who love and suffer with equal intensity."—J. M. Coetzee

The Glass Palace

AMITAV GHOSH

A NOVEL



Courtesy: [https://www.amazon.com/Glass-Palace-Novel-Amitav-Ghosh-](https://www.amazon.com/Glass-Palace-Novel-Amitav-Ghosh-ebook/dp/B000QCSAOA/ref=sr_1_1?crid=30DSHZ2ECM3Z4&keywords=the+glass+palace+amitav+ghosh&qid=1566170058&s=books&prefix=The+Glass+Palace+of+Amitav+Ghosh%2Caps%2C613&sr=1-1)

[ebook/dp/B000QCSAOA/ref=sr_1_1?crid=30DSHZ2ECM3Z4&keywords=the+glass+palace+amitav+ghosh&qid=1566170058&s=books&prefix=The+Glass+Palace+of+Amitav+Ghosh%2Caps%2C613&sr=1-1](https://www.amazon.com/Glass-Palace-Novel-Amitav-Ghosh-ebook/dp/B000QCSAOA/ref=sr_1_1?crid=30DSHZ2ECM3Z4&keywords=the+glass+palace+amitav+ghosh&qid=1566170058&s=books&prefix=The+Glass+Palace+of+Amitav+Ghosh%2Caps%2C613&sr=1-1)

Abstract

The present study examines the colonizers' repressive activities on colonized people in Amitav Ghosh's very innovative novel *The Glass Palace*. The novel shows how much colonized people suffered under the colonizers. The British came to India as traders but established

themselves as colonizers and imposed imperialism on the people of India, a subcontinent. having no political unity, with a diversity of religion, caste and many kingdoms. Imperialism and its impact gave a complete political change in all the commonwealth countries especially in India, Burma and Bangladesh. By the intrusions of the British colonizers, the colonized suffered repression and had to loss their identity.

Keywords: Amitav Ghosh, *The Glass Palace*, Colonizers, Colonized, Colonial Hit

Introduction

In *The Glass Palace*, Amitav Ghosh presents the story of an Indian boy, namely Rajkumar, an orphan, who is stranded in Mandalay, which is located in Burma. The boy works in a tea stall owned by a woman called Ma Cho, a half Indian. The author develops enough hints for the legitimacy of his choice of a protagonist. Colonization, re-colonization, neo-colonization and decolonization are the major themes of Amitav Ghosh's novels. This novel represents India whose spirits have been crushed by British domination. The novel shows European greed and the cruelty of colonization. Because of their intrusion, royal families suffered most. The kings and queens were reduced to puppets. Connoisseurship, luxury and abundance come to an end with much suffering. Alluring face of human existence changed. The British ruthlessly cut the jungles through systematized, mechanical ways.

Colonized and Colonizers

Colonialism is actually defined as the process in which troops were on the march, leading to drastic changes in administration, large scale transfers of goods and services and reconfigurations of political boundaries. Amitav Ghosh focuses on colonialism in this novel.

Colonial powers usually win through superior power, manipulative skill and weaponry. Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* also deals with colonial operation primarily in Burma.

Colonized verses Colonizers

The characters of the novel *The Glass Palace* are Thebaw, Queen Supalayay, the Burmese Princess, and the common people are Dolly, Rajkumar, Saya Jhon and Uma. All the characters of the novel suffer from colonial displacement. These characters are driven from Burma to India, Malaya, and Singapore.

The novel opens in the lands of colonized territory. The novel portrays two families over three generations that faced the forces of capitalism, colonialism and insurgency movements. The novelist uses *Glass Palace* as a metaphor, 'Glass' is brittle and implies transparency. 'Palace' is in fact the symbol of power.

Hence 'Glass Palace' is an allusion which is created around power. The people of the glass palace do not acquire the freedom to throw stones at others. Rajkumar is the protagonist of the novel *The Glass Palace*. He worked in a tea stall, which was owned by a matron lady Ma Cho. He was an orphan boy and more experienced with travel. Rajkumar came to understand that British wished to control Burmese territory for wood. Burma was rampaged by the British, using British Indian soldiers under the orders of their colonial masters. So, the Indians became the target of mob frenzy suddenly. Rajkumar was also attacked along with other people. Saya Jhon saved Rajkumar when he perceived something new in Rajkumar that day.

There was something unusual about the boy - a kind of watchful determination. No excess of gratitude here, no gifts or offerings, no talk of honor, with murder in the heart. There was no simplicity in his face, no innocence: his eyes were filled with worldliness, curiosity and hunger. That was as it should be. 'If you ever need a job, Saya Jhon said, 'come and talk to me'. (*The Glass Palace* P. 3)

The Burmese and the Indians are fighting one another instead of fighting their common enemy. *In victory the British had decided to be generous...the British Government wished to provide them with an escort of attendant and advisors...But now it was time to leave, the guard of honor was waiting.* (*The Glass Palace* P. 43) Apart from these scenes of colonization, Ghosh deals with the Europe's greed in his novel. All the things were exploited -- woods, water, mines, people, etc.

Mental colonization is considered as worse. Saya did not consider the English as usurpers. Saya considered them to be superiors. He learned the art of using everything for his own benefit from them. The Europeans stood as efficient exploiters for him. He earned profit. He did not understand anything beyond his immediate gain. After many decades, Arjune joined with westerner's style. He felt that western style was better than Eastern style. *Dinu understood that it was through their association with Europeans that Arjun and his fellow-officers saw themselves as pioneers.* (*The Glass Palace* P. 279)

Rajkumar was convinced that if there was no British Government, the economy of Burmese would have collapsed. Thus, the colonial people were always imprisoned in the glass palace and they lost the capacity to throw stones at the colonial masters, the colonizers. The colonized people endeavored to explain away the exploitation of colonizer's and violence. So, the colonized lost the capacity to speak on their own.

The process of colonization and the state of colonized are very relevant thought components of this novel. The colonial experience and its memories are loaded with a sense of pain and suffering. Thus, the novel relates India and Burma in the shared colonial experience.

Crossing the fences between the two countries, the historical characters like King Thebaw and his family and purely fictional characters like Rajkumar, Dolly, Saya Jhon and Uma reflect upon the historical events and their impact upon the colonized people. Finally, the novel depicts also the decolonization of the images. Many stances are provided where the author Amitav Ghosh has shown the cruelty of colonization and its impact on the lives and minds of the colonized.

Conclusion

It is a very good novel about human contradictions. The novel shows that no human being can be fully explained ever. Thus, the novel reveals the serious issues facing contemporary ex-colonies in Asian continent. The novel is concerned with the impact of the colonial encounter on the political, social and cultural lives of the Commonwealth countries like India, Burma, etc. One can easily understand the colonial oppression and depression applied on colonized people by the colonizers. The novelist zooms the black pages of colonized people and presents a vivid picture lively in front of the eyes of the readers. Amitav Ghosh is seen as a historiography meta-fiction writer in this novel.

Works Cited

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Glass Palace*, New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001.
