
**THE FALL OF EMPIRE AND THE RISE OF COMMON MAN: A POSTCOLONIAL
READING OF AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE GLASS PALACE***

Dr. R. Karthika Devi,
Assistant Professor of English,
M. V. Muthiah Govt. Arts College (W),
Dindigul - 624 001.

Abstract

A Postcolonial text deals with the effects of decolonization of which the roots are traced in colonialism. The colonizers who intruded the lives of people belonging to different countries of America, Africa, Asia and Australia drained the wealth of these regions, exploited the natural resources, destroyed their language and culture and treated the natives as inferior beings. Further, they misrepresented the native history, portrayed natives as negative stereotypes and made them victims of internalized oppression. Amitav Ghosh, being a scholar of History and Anthropology probes into the forgotten and hidden facts of history and brings them into light in his novels.

The Glass Palace is a novel with an epic dimension which encompasses in its purview Burma, India, and Malaysia. Amitav Ghosh describes how Burma was attacked and annexed as the Province of British Indian Empire by the English. The Glass Palace, the Royal residence was looted by the soldiers of the British Army and the local people. The King and the Queen of Burma were banished and put in exile in India. During their exile, they were not permitted to meet anybody. Their living condition was very poor. After twenty years, the first princess became pregnant because of her contact with the household servant. The second princess eloped with the Burmese commoner. The king died. The, only after the First World War, the Queen was brought back to the country with her two daughters who were actually born in India.

Amitav Ghosh also discusses the issues of indentured labor. The rise of common people particularly Indian merchants followed the British policy of free trade through the character of Rajkumar. Ghosh also shows how the Indian peasants were converted into soldiers to fight with the Burmans who, in turn, developed hatred towards the Indians, the arrow and not the hunters, the English.

Ghosh vividly presents the details of the feeling of teak trees in the Burmese regions leading to ecological issues. Rubber plantations were established in Malaysia as an English man

had stolen the seed of the rubber plant in Brazil. Thus, during the British regime, not only men, but wood and plants also crossed the boundaries of the land.

Keywords: *deconstruction, internalized oppression, indentured labor, ecological issues.*

Colonialism had been responsible for the fall of empires and disintegration of institution and individuals. *The Glass palace* written by Amitav Ghosh elaborately discusses the plight of the royal family in Burma as the victim of colonial greed. *The Glass Palace* deals with the condition of three countries as colonies under the British hegemony. The novel portrays the critical situation prevailing in India, Burma, and Malaya during the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century because of the British intervention in the political and the social life of the lands. As in any other country such as India which the white had entered for trade and commerce initially for pepper and later for silk and other commodities, the North American countries like Canada for fur trade, China for opium trade, the English entered Burma with their eyes fixed on the valuable teak trees which possessed high commercial value. When they cut the trees in the Burmese forests and did their business with the teak wood, they never cared any ethics in following the rules and the regulations of the state. They did not bother about paying the tax. Their only aim was to earn money. They felled all the trees indiscriminately without considering the balance of the ecosystem. When the Government of Burma questioned and restricted the British traders who exploited the land and the forest resources of Burma, they came with their weapons to fight with the Burmese king, destroyed and looted their palace, and brought Burma under their power and control. The king, the queen and the princess underwent immeasurable humiliation and sufferings.

The war waged by the whites against Burma, at the first attempt, was successfully won over by the Burmese authority. This may be due to either the white's underestimate of the Burmese military power or the Burmese's determination to save their nation from any foreign colonial power. In the first part of the novel itself, Amitav Ghosh mentions the intentions of the whites while entering any country through the "Royal Proclamation" made by the Burmese king

those ... heretics, the barbarian English Klaas
 Having most harshly made demands calculated
 To bring about the impairment and destruction
 Of our religion, the violation of our national
 Traditions and customs, and the degradation
 Of our race.....(GP, 15)

The proclamation, in nutshell, points out the colonial inclination toward any Asian or African country and any other race in the world other than the white. They consider all native religions,

traditions, and culture barbarous, the native people uncivilized and the natural resources of the native countries to be utilized by the Europeans. These underestimate of the natives were the fundamentals which decided the colonial policies designed for subjugating the other subjects by the whites.

The first part of the novel *The Glass Palace* brings into light the happening in the Royal Palace situated in Mandalay and narrates the circumstances in which king and the queen with their company leave the palace in exile. Ghosh shows how ruthless and inhuman the British were while sending the royal family out of their place. The Burmese who were successful in their initial attempt had strongly believed in their capacity as military power and moral integrity to defeat the English, whom the Burmese head confirmed that they had entered Burma, in addition to exploiting the natural wealth such as timber and other minerals, they would aim to convert people, degrade their nation, race, culture, and tradition and consider them barbarians. But, they berated the power of the English who could not accept any defeat at the hands of the Eastern people. Within a few days, they began to bombard Burma with their canons of which the very sound both the royal people and the commoners of Burma could not identify what it might be, Raj Kumar, an Indian commoner who crossed the borders was able to mention it as "English Canon" (GP,18)

Rajkumar was actually living with his mother and father, who was a *Dubash* and a *munish* for several merchants, in Chittagong. Due to a quarrel with the family members, his father moved their own family to akyab, an important port in Arakan. Because of a strange fever, are the family members died except Rajkumar? Then, he began to work in the boat as a helper. By chance, only Rajkumar happened to come to Mandalay, the Headquarters of the Burmese Royal family. Through the observation of Rajkumar, Amitav Ghosh presents the colonial impact on Mandalay. Mandalay was the city where people belonging to different countries assembled for various purposes. This kind of assemblage of different people of multiple races is only due to colonialism.

The movement of people belonging to different countries and races involving in trade and commerce suggests that even before the political control, the colonizers had a deep-rooted impact on the social life of Burma. The rulers of Burma had the pride, as Amitav Ghosh mentioned in the words of the Queen Supayalat, ...

they were kings, sovereigns,
They'd defeated the Emperor of
China, conquered Thailand, Assam,
Manipur (GP, 22)

It is interesting to recognize the fact, here, that China was never able to be conquered politically by the British except in bombarding China's Canton city for free trade. But, Burma had been able to defeat the powerful China which could not be controlled by the British. Yet, later, it became the victim of the military powers of the England fleet. The palace of the Royal family is situated at the center of the city Mandalay. It was a complex of pavilions, green gardens, and long corridors. All there had been assembled around the nine-roofed hit of Burma's kings. A stockade of richly grown up, strong, wide and tall teak posts walled off the complex from the outer streets. Guard – posts with sentries, belonging to the king's personal bodyguard, were erected at the four corners of the stockade. Inside, the houses of noblemen and apartments of the Royal family and their servants were found. The rooms were decorated with gilded pillars and shining floors. At the center, there was a very big hall with a richly adorned wall made of crystals and ceilings bearing mirrors. It was called the Glass Palace. Anyone who entered the palace would be put to death. The people inside the glass palace did not have the awareness of the threat from the British. But a seven-year-old Mathew, Saya John, a man who was brought up, by the Catholic priests in Malacca and worked in Singapore as an orderly in a military hospital who kept Ma Cho for his physical cravings, told Rajkumar about the forthcoming attack of the British on Burma. Mathew had got this new from his father. Both of them were highly westernized. Saya John looked Chinese in his physical appearance, had a Christian name and was able to speak in Hindi. It is one of the colonial impacts. Colonial rule paved the way for people assimilating different cultural traits due to their movement from place to place. While the British plan of attacking Burm seemed to be something ideal, alien and unbelievable to Rajkumar with his typical Indian sensibility, Matthew with a westernized outlook on life even at the tender age equipped with the knowledge imparted by the Christian missionary took the message with maturity. Further, he added that the reason for the war had been the British's greed for teak which would fetch them with fabulous wealth.

The fourteen-day war started on 14th November 1885 by the British against Burma and its aftermath has been vividly described by Amitav Ghosh. The British force consisted of some ten thousand soldiers among whom two-thirds were Indian sepoys who were very loyal to their British masters. The British equipment was new. The British had the latest breech-loading rifles and rapid-firing machine guns. The Burmese force could not stand before the superiority of the scientifically advanced equipment of the British. Here it is apt to recognize the British influence on the Indian sepoys as observed by Ghosh. The Indian sepoys working under the British master were young peasants from small country villages. They, who had to plant and plow their lands, had come to the battlefields in order to get a very few annas for which they would permit their master to exploit them as they wanted, "to destroy every trace of resistance to the power of the English." (GP, 29)

Ghosh further compares the nature of the Indian sepoys with the Chinese peasants who would never involve such activities for the foreigners for the sake of money. The same idea has been once again mentioned In *River of Smoke*. The Chinese authorities, officials and common people were different from other Asians such as Indians and Burmese, as they could not be cheated with bribes or gifts for improving the trade atmosphere of opium. But the Indian sepoys looked innocent to the eyes of Saya John. Not only the Poor peasants but also the Indian Princes have received ironic comments from Amitav Ghosh in the *Glass Palace*. In order to maintain the comfort of luxurious life and sometimes due to the fear for evil effects of English force, most of the *Rajahs* had accepted the British authority on the lands, through various schemes such as subsidiary Alliance and Doctrine Lapse. Accepting British authority might facilitate the Kings to retain the titles and position as puppets and enjoy the same cozy life but the political and the economic control would be in the hands of this British. The Indian kings and princess were led to the shameless condition due to colonialism. And one of the senior minister's of the Burmese king, The baw, The kinwun Mingyi suggested the same stand of the Indian kings to accept the British colonial rule when the Burmese faced the humiliating ultimatums of the British Governor in Rangoon followed by the complaints of the British timber company against the Burmese customs officers demanding of payment of duties for the teak, fine for side-stepping the kingdom's customs regulations and arrears of payment for fifty thousand logs of teak. The colonizer's policy had been always to do business only with profit without following any rules and regulations of the native land. The Burmese demand aroused the anger of the British authorities and led to the war. At the time of the serious course of the war, one of the ministers advised the king to accept the British conditions following the Indian examples.

.....the kinwun MIngyi had suggested

Discreetly that it might be best to
Accept the terms, that the British
Might allow the Royal family to remain
In the palace in Mandalay, on terms
Similar to those of the Indian princess
-like farmyard pigs in other words,
To be fed and fattened by their master;
Swine, housed in sites that had
Been tricked out with a few little bits
Of finery (GP, 21-22)

The words of the Burmese minister the kinwun Mingyi reveal the colonial impact on the Indian kings openly. In spite of leading a decent life, their status had been equal only to "Farmyard pigs". They did not have self-respect and honor except their titles and gorgeous livelihood. But, the queen of Burma was not ready to yield to the threat of the British. Her pride

did not allow her to give up the honor of her country due to a dispute over some logs of wood. She was actually expecting a male child with whom the state would be entrusted later. As both the Queen and the Burmese court did not accept the British ultimatum, they had to face the war. It is an irony that the all-powerful queen had not known the status of war till they were kept as prisoners in their own palace which had been already rounded up by the soldiers of the British force. Colonel Sladen who had been the British emissary took the responsibility of arranging for the exile of the Royal family. They were not given enough time but only one hour to start the journey king the baw had not come out of the palace for seven long years. The Queen was pregnant. In this situation, Sladen appealed to the courtiers and other servants to accompany the Royal couple with their children in their exile. The response was recorded by Ghosh:

Sladen's appeal went unanswered; there
Were no volunteers. The king's gaze, that
Mark of favor once so eagerly sought,
Passed unchecked over the heads of his
courtiers his most trusted servants
averting their faces.... This is how power
is eclipsed...(GP, 41)

Even more pitiable is the quarrel between the two ministers on the possession of the Royal household in order to be handed over the British so that they might be well rewarded by the English. The plight of the Burmese Royal family revealed the universal fact that man lives with his fellow beings only for the sake of materialistic benefits. When one loses his property and prosperity, none will accompany him but only solitude and isolation would remain with them. At last, only the orphan girls, who had been adopted by the Queen in order to look after her daughters came forwarded to accompany them. They did not know where there were transported and how long the journey would take place. Even before they left the palace, it had been looted by both the people of the enemies and the king's people. They departed with palace with some wealth and the orphan girls with the thought of returning Burma soon. The cart that would carry the king should have nine tiers but the one, now, given for the king had only seven. It was considered a king of English revenge by the king.

On the way, the, as well as the travelers, did not know the direction of their destination. They traveled the whole day in the opposite direction and only in the evening, the cart driver realized his fault. After crossing hundreds of miles inland and water, the Royal family was put in a mansion in Madras They met with an innumerable problem. They met with an innumerable problem. The Queen expected the Tamil Servants to Shiko and crawl. They were unable to do. When the English nurse was appointed. She refused to do all these. The English officials also supported it. At the time of delivery, there was a clash between the Burmese. Masseur and the

English doctor. At last, a girl baby was born to the Queen, who had actually expected a boy. But, she was glad saying, "a girl would be better able to bear the pain of exile" (GP, 56)

The king, who did not have the habit of coming out of his residence, unusually expressed his wish to visit Madras museum but at once his desire was refused. Moreover, to the dismay of the people living inside the mansion, rigid-looking British soldiers always stood at the gate.

When the Viceroy visited Madras, as the King of a country, The baw expected that the Viceroy would meet him and his wife. He would like to know about their permanent residence from him. But, without any consultation once again he was humiliated by saying that the Royal family had to move to Ratnagiri, a place nearer to Bombay.

As the life of King, The baw had become a depressed one, Mandalay also had become "a city of ghosts" (56). There was a Hack between the occupiers and the soldiers of the Kings. Another side, the King's palace, once upon a time considered sacred by his subjects who dared not to enter it, had been fully transformed into pleasure domain of the conquerors. The Queen's Hall of Audience was changed into a billiard room, the west wing into a British club, the mirrored walls into shelves for keeping the English periodicals, the gardens into tennis courts and polo grounds, and the monastery, which had been king The baw's novitiate, into a chapel for the Anglican Priests' administration of sacrament to the British troops. Here, it is apt to recall that once the king's father sent him, who had been actually enjoying himself in a monastery, to a missionary school which Thebaw never like. All on a sudden, the king's father changed his mind and withdrew his son. But, after the British invasion, the whole of Burma seemed to be westernized. The very city Mandalay become "the Chicago of Asia" (GP, 66). Burma was "forcibly converted into a province of British India" (GP, 66).

In addition to describing the condition of Mandalay after British control, Ghosh portrays Rangoon, the present Burmese capital city Myanmar, which had been already invaded, conquered and exploited by the English. As, Thebaw, the Burmese king was transported to India, the last Mughal king of Bahadur Shah, Zafar had been sent in exile to Rangoon, after suppressing the sepoy mutiny in 1857. Rangoon was, then, due to the free trade policies of the British, a hub of the multinational and multicultural business center with its:

..... Chinese junks and Arab dhows and Chittagong sampans and American clippers and British ships-of-the-line. ... the Strand and its great pillared mansions and Building, its banks and hotels; about Godwin's wharf and the warehouses and timber mills that lined Pazundaung Creek; the wide street and the million crowds and the foreigners who thronged the public places: Englishmen, Cooringhees, Tamils, Americans, Malays, Bengalis, Chinese (GP, 49)

Here also, Ghosh brings out the degraded condition of Indians who were used to pull rickshaws, to clean the lavatories, and to do hard manual works in the docks and mills, by the British, as the British could not compel the local people, who knew to read and write, to do such menial jobs. By throwing a few annas, the British were able to make the Indians die in the battlefields without any cause and clean their shits. That was why more Indians brought by the British than the Burmese lived in the Mughal Street of Burma.

As the places have become multicultural and multinational, people also began to embrace multicultural ethos in their life. When the Royal family was transported to Ratnagiri, the girls began to wear saris as the Marathi girls not so rich as the Princess deserved but cheap, cotton saris usually worn by the middle-class Marathi girls. Further,

They began to wear their hair braided and oiled like Ratnagiri schoolgirls; they learned to speak Marathi and Hindustani as fluently as any of the townsfolk...(GP, 77)

Colonialism actually not only changed the place of the Royal family physically but also transformed their way of life, their language, etc., They became actually very curious to mingle with the life existing in Ratnagiri. They were small children knowing not anything about the aristocratic life of Burma. Why should they grow to womanhood never knowing any company other than that of the servants?" (GP, 77)

The queen did not care about looking after the residence, as it was chosen for them by the British who had the responsibility of the maintenance of it. She grieved:

...how besotted they were, these men, in their arrogance, to imagine that in such a land as India they could hold a family imprisoned in isolation on a hill...(GP, 87)

They were very much satisfied with Madras. Or, they preferred Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta or any other city to a small town. But, they were consoled or made their mouth shut up by saying that Ratnagiri was the headquarters of a district.

Mohan Sawant, The coachman belonging to a very poor family helped the king's family in many ways, being the guard of the house which was situated at the isolated top of the hill, accompanying them while going on a ride to town and helping in all activities. Hence, he was allowed to have a hut beside their residence.

Outram house. When the plague attacked the nearby villages, none was found to work for there, particularly to clean their latrines. Sawant helped them and suggested that if some of the poor

families were allowed to build their shanties near Outram house, they would take care of cleaning the toilets. His suggestion was obliged. The residence, soon, became surrounded by more and more huts and shanties. The princess was happy as their loneliness disappeared with the arrival of new children with whom they began to play. The king, on his part, using binoculars, gave information about the happenings at the sea. An English woman was appointed to teach English to the Princesses, she was horrified at the condition of living led by them and reported and recommended for arranging more amenities for Royal family. Immediately, she was sent back to England. It shows the English prejudice against the Burmese Royal people.

The king from the newspaper came to know about the visit of King Chulalongkorn of Siam to Europe, his stay at Buckingham Palace, warm welcome given to him by the King of Austria, his friendly meet with Denmark king, Paris President and Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany. King The baw, at this time, lamented over the victories of his ancestors who defeated Siam and chose a new ruler for her. He recalled, ".....Because of The Baw's ancestors,... Siam had its present dynasty and its ruling king" (GP, 87). He felt sorry over the fact that while the Siamese king the foundation of whose dynasty was laid by the Burmese kings, was a guest at Buckingham Palace, he was lying in the dungheap. The visitors would be shocked to see The dwelling of Burma's last king as "the nucleus of a shantytown", (GP, 88)

The Queen was well aware of the consequences of colonialism. She told the shocked onlooker at them and other visitors that the colonizer had taken their country, which was one of the richest lands in Asia, with a promise of constructing roads, railways and ports. But, they had actually robbed everything from them the timber, oil and the gems. In Burma, people were rich as they were literate. But, colonialism would certainly make them destitute and ignorant, according to the Queen. What she had said about the effects of colonialism became true within fifty years, because while the colonizers who traveled around the world for their lives have become the first world, the Colonized countries which had been once rich with natural resource and wish have become the third world seeking their help for development. That is why the Queen had never any liking for both the English and the Indian collectors who visited them. All collectors seemed to be arrogant and sincerely supported the British Raj. Even the Indian collector Beni Prasad Dey got densed when the king expressed his happiness over the victory of Japan, the Asian country again Russia. He was sharp that the British empire was a century old and its influence would persist for a very long time. Amitav Ghosh repeatedly mentions that all in India, whether are maharajahs, Civil servants or peasants tuned soldiers were very much loyal to the British empire with great confidence in their strength.

The colonizers also had been influenced by the natives in the course of their colonial process. Ghosh points out through the observation of the Queen that the English collectors and officials

were able to speak in Hindustani fluently, India collectors belonging to Parsi community and Bengal could not speak it but they would stumble and stutter. The Burmese Queen also was able to speak in Hindustani fluently. It may be here considered that in a way colonialism is responsible for the integrity of feeling as Indians among the people who live in a land that stretches among the Himalayas, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal.

The impact of colonialism is more reflected in the upper-class society than those at the bottom level. They were able to speak English fluently. The queen notices it in the language of Indian collectors who undertook difficult examinations and exercise in England in order to serve as civil servants in British India. Their visit to England had its own impact on their wives. Uma Devi wife of the new collector, Beni Prasad Dey wore her sari in a new fashion influenced by European costume with a petticoat and a blouse. And it was attractive to the Queen who asked Uma Dey to teach them the new fashion of dressing.

It was Uma Dey who, for the first time, thought of the future and the marriage of the four princesses and Dolly after nineteen years of their exile. When the royal family departed Burma, they had not thought that they were leaving their country forever. The cunning colonial officers never revealed their plan of disposing the king permanently and transforming Burma as a supplier of their raw materials. Only when Uma Dey appealed her collector husband, who was loyal Indian servant to the British, to make arrangement for the meeting of Rajkumar, an orphan boy turned into a millionaire in Burma, with the King, the collector revealed the design of the colonizers in dealing with the life of the King.

The collector, Beni Prasad Dey told his wife Uma that the colonial rulers would not allow the king and the Queen to have any visitors. If anybody liked to have a visit, the collector would have to forward the request to the higher officers in Bombay and in turn, they would seek permission from the colonial secretary in London. Moreover, the King would be able to exert an immense influence of the people of his own country and if they happened to see him, their patriotic feeling would get inspired and they would rise and revold against the colonizers in order to restore the throne of the king. They would become ready to sacrifice their life for the sake of their king in a single glance at him. The memory of the king should be erased from the mind of the Burmese people. Then, only the colonizers could enjoy or swindle the resources of Burma, one of the richest provinces, the British had ever occupied. The collector says:

.....don't want political trouble in Burma. It's their richest province and they don't want to take any risks. The king is the one person who could bring the country together, against them. There are more than a dozen different tribes and people there. The monarchy is the only thing they have in common.... The king should be lost to memory-like an old umbrella in a dusty cupboard (GP, 136)

The collector further said that the Royal family was never allowed to be even photographed due to the fear that the photographs might reach Burma leading to riots. Perhaps, it was the Government policy not to allow taking pictures of the Royal family. The collector justified the British rule saying that Indian like Rajkumar were able to prosper in Burma only because of the British rule, otherwise, if it had been ruled by TheBaw, the Burmese would have thrown them out of their country.

The collector's words reveal the colonial impact on the Indian and Burmese life. On the one hand, the King is banished, isolated not only from his own people but also from the rest of the world and on the other hand, the British thrived on the wealth of Burma along with the subjects of neighboring colonized countries such as India other than Burma. Moreover, from the beginning, the colonizers had applied the principle of "divided and rule", for the sake of their own convenience, in order to maintain their hold on the colonized countries, which had multicultural social set up, such as India and Burma. It is apt, here, consider the same case found in Indian History also. In 1905, when the nationalistic spirit was felt strong in India, the British Viceroy Lord Curzon divided Bengal, in the name of efficient administrative convenience, actually with the intention of breaking the brotherly relationship existing between the Hindus and the Muslims so that they might control them easily. The crack created by the British, later, led to the partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. And, its effect is still realized in the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. The same technique was utilized in Burma also by isolating the unifying force, i.e., the King.

The Royal family, unaware of the British plans, endured the alienation caused by the exile with a king stoic hope of returning home. Their status further degenerated when the first princess, at the age of twenty-three, became pregnant because of her ties with the poor, low caste, coachman Mohan We want who had been standing with them since they had settled in Ratnagiri.

When Uma Dey shocked to hear the pregnancy of the Princess by a low cast man, Dolly took it lightly and considered it normal man-woman relationship to the surprise of Uma. Dolly is an unusual girl who had given such surprises which reveal the evil effects of colonialism. The Colonizers used to portray the natives as barbarous with all negative qualities. In the same way, Queen supayalat had been already picturized as a blood-Thirsty woman who had killed almost all the rivals of his husband to the throne. While it was mentioned by Uma, Dolly put forward a counter argument saying that throughout all the colonies, millions of natives had been killed in the name of Queen Victoria. Thereafter, Uma took away the portrait of Queen Victoria hanging in their hall.

The Europeans who condemned that people of other races as barbarous considered themselves superior to them. They preached equality before the law and regarded themselves as champions

of liberty and democracy. But Queen Supalayt's questions against their behavior and stand towards the Royal family's life made the Collector, who told the queen that the Government had not given license for the marriage of the princess and hence the birth of a child would become a 'scandal', stunned and dumb-bound:

The scandal lies in what you have done to us; in the circumstances to which you have reduced us in our very presence here. What did my daughter ever do, collector-sahib, that they should have to spend their lives in the prison? Did they commit a crime? Were they tried or sentenced? We have heard so many lectures from you and your colleagues on the subjects of the barbarity of the Kings of Burma and the humanity of the Angrez; we were tyrants you said, enemies of freedom, murderers. The English also understand liberty, we were told; they do not put kings and princes to death; they rule through laws. If they are so, why has king Thebaw never been brought to trial? Where are these laws that we hear of? Would the English not do the same? (GP, 150)

The collector also knew the arrogance of the colonizers, the rudeness towards the natives, their selfish exploitation, and their racist prejudices. But, he could not transgress their will as a sincere and loyal civil servant. All the collectors of Ratnagiri, who were the custodians-in-charge of the Royal family for twenty years had many a time, talked of the negligence shown towards that family. But, the Government never considered their plea regarding the life of the Royal couple and their children. At last, when they happened to know about the pregnancy of the princess, they were at the height of their rage unable to accept the "miscegenation". (GP, 173).

The words of the Collector reveal the fact that the British Government actually did not bother about the life of the members of the Royal family. For the twenty years, they were careful and particular about the erasure of the memory about the Burmese Royal people from the mind of the public, as their presence might kindle the nationalist spirit of their subjects they never bothered about their welfare. But, the Collectors had always reminded of their obligation to the king and the Queen. But, the British never minded it. Their only aim was to maintain the colonial rule in Burma and drain its natural wealth. It was a pity on the side of the Queen to be expected to get a license for the marriage of the 'princess from the British. But, the Queen sharply said: "Children can be born without a license". (GP, 149). The situation in which the Princess became pregnant and the Colonial rulers' response to it shows that the British kept the Royal family only as prisoners and they did not consider them as human beings with feelings and emotions. That was the reason why they could not accept the union of the Burmese Princess with the low caste Indian. It resulted in the termination of the Collector from his tenure in Ratnagiri.

The Contemporary system of Indian Administrative service, in which the post of Collector possess important powers and duties, is the offspring of Indian Civil services established during the colonial rule. During the early, only Europeans were allowed in the civil service. Later, Indians were also included but they had to write their examination and take their training in England. Whenever, Beni Prasad Dey out his duties as the collector, he always referred to the Europeans as "our teachers" (GP, 173). The collector educated at Cambridge evinces the fact the English education had actually made Indian intellectuals slaves to their British masters. Being true, sincere and loyal to the colonial governments, Beni Prasad Dey, the District collector, consider as a good man by everyone, he executed all his works with "intolerable minuteness" (GP, 186). His wife Uma recalls how her husband discharged the duties of the District collector in a nervous way. Through the character of Beni Prasad Dey, Amitav Ghosh sarcastically reveals the fact that though the post of collector wielded immense power, that status gave the Indian collectors only "unease and uncertainty" (GP, 186). With their administrative capacity, they could not do any welfare deeds for the subjects on their own. They should do only what the British authorities had dictated. Beni Prasad Dey sympathized with the plight of the Princess when she became pregnant due to her contact with the household servant. But, he was not understood both by the Queen and the British Raj. The queen satirized Indian as fools who divide people as high and low in the matter of marriage. She told Dey that Sawant and the princesses were man and woman and that was enough for their union. The British officials made him the scapegoat, in the case of the Princess, without bothering about their twenty years of negligence towards the Royal family. Dey was terminated and his wife also was fed up with the condition of being the wife of the collector who tried had to mold "her into a reflection of what he himself aspired to be", there seemed never to be a moment when he was not haunted by the fear of being though lacking by his British colleagues. (GP, 186). Having lost his position in Ratnagiri and wife at his home, the collector was in great stress. With mental agony, he took the boat and went into the sea which its uncongenial currents swallowed him. Though the civil services is an introduction of administrative machinery by the colonial rule, it was not easy for the Indian officials to do their duty during the British Raj.

While the Royal families and high officials were severely subjugated by the colonizer with a view to maintaining a strong hold on the colonized land and its subjects, the common people like Uma, Rajkumar, and Saya John were able to enjoy certain privileges due to colonialism.

After the death of the collector, Uma got a lot of money, as the collector, with his lucrative job, had already invested money in different ways in the name of Uma. Moreover, she became the beneficiary of the government pension as the wife of the dead collector. With the security of money, she did not need to stay at home with a shaved head not eating meat and fish. She had already served as the intermediary between Raj Kumar and Dolly to get married with the help of

the Collector. Dolly was settled in Rangoon as the wife of Rajkumar. Both of them were loyal and affectionate to Uma. Rajkumar was an Indian orphan willingly settled in Rangoon whereas Dolly was a Burmese orphan accidentally settled in India. Union of these two transcending nation, race and cultural was, one side possible because of love and on another side such circumstances were created by colonialism.

Rajkumar happened to see Dolly when the Glass palace was seized and looted by the colonizers. Again, he saw her, when she was traveling along with the Royal Family to India. As a boy, he developed a love for her and gave her some sweets. He did not forget her even after twenty years. When his material needs were fulfilled, he came to India and won the hand of Dolly with the help of Uma. There is no doubt that his dream of marrying Dolly was fulfilled due to his true love for her but it is equally true that without the colonial intrusion or intervention in the household of the Royal family he would not have got a single glimpse of Dolly. Hence, the foundation for such transnational, transcultural and transracial unions could be attributed to colonialism. And, novel after novel Ghosh speaks of it. Because of such unions, migration also took place ultimately leading to create a multicultural atmosphere.

Uma, with the help of Rajkumar and Dolly, visited Rangoon and Europe and then went to United States of America, Uma, during her European tour, felt that the sense of freedom which she enjoyed was the result of the circumstances of her marriage. But, Uma's friend, Kadambari Dutt said referring to the freedom enjoyed by women:

...this was one of the greatest benefits of British rule in India; that it had given women rights and protections that they'd never had before. (GP, 188)

But, Uma was not ready to accept the view of Kadambari and she was of the idea that while the entire country had been subjugated, it was illogical to consider the colonizer to be responsible for the freedom of one section of the people. Kadambari and Beni Prasad Dey represent the early Indian intellectual like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dadabai Nourojo who believed that the British rule would make a better India while people like Um and Dolly in spite of not having higher education would be able to realize the fact that the colonizers were only exploiting the natives.

On one side, the Royal people like the king and the Queen of Burma and Raja Neel Ratnam in *River of Smoke* underwent intolerable humiliation. Another side witnessed the gradual upliftment of common people like Rajkumar and Saya John on the materialistic plane, following the colonial route. Yet, their destination also encounters an abrupt end due to the greediness inherent in colonial policies.

Rajkumar entered Burma as an orphan boy. He was given shelter by the Burmese, but half-Indian, a woman running a food stall. In spite of his poverty, he was very ambitious and curious to know everything. He was a very good observer. He made friends with Saya John who used to visit Ma Cho for his pleasure at the demise of his wife. Saya John was middle-aged and westernized. Like Rajkumar, he was also an ambitious man seeking for materialistic prosperity with greediness. His personality was a peculiar one with Chinese look, Christian name and the capability of speaking the Indian language. He gave a reason for this multicultural personality. He was brought up by the Catholic priests in Malacca. The priests belonged to different places such as Portugal, Macao, and Goa and spoke different languages. Moreover, he had worked as an orderly at a military hospital in Singapore where he had got the opportunity

Of meeting Indian soldier with who he would have conversed in Hindustani. His wide experience with people belonging to different races at various places had enriched his knowledge of the condition of the contemporary world which had been much influenced by the colonial policies. He felt that the European way of life would enable him to enrich his life. He made his son Mathew study in a missionary school so that he might also inherit the western way of life. Mathew did not fail but even at the tender age, he was able to describe and discuss mortuwagon, an invention of the colonizer. He also had the aim of buying his own motorwagon, when he became big to the surprise of Rajkumar. The boy was well informed. Rajkumar goes the information of the English preparation of war against Burma from Mathew only, It was unbelievable for Rajkumar to think of "war over wood" (GP, 15). But the colonizers waged war in different parts of the world for the sake of trade only. As Burma was attacked for teak, China was attacked for opium. The pity is that while the commoners like Saya John knew about the war efforts taken by the British, the Royal family were unaware of the enemy's approach until they seized that Glass Palace.

The Glass Palace which was protected with strong vigil was looted by the commoners. Rajkumar who had developed a desire of visiting the Palace also entered it. As the soldiers in the British Arm were Indians, Rajkumar was attacked by the Burmese mob but saved by Saya John.

Saya John was not ready to accept the brave words mentioned in the "Royal Proclamation" about the king's strong will to conquer the English whom he considered "heretic foreigner's" Saya John's response to the Royal Proclamation was an ironic one. Ghosh records: "Saya John pulled a face. 'Brave words', he said, "Let's see what happens next" (GP, 16)

Saya john's skeptical response to the words of the king in Royal Proclamation is the result of his strong belief in the potentiality of the British force and scientific weapons. The poor king and the Queen, after all, did not know what was happening around them. Ghosh also records the

victory of the British force: "...the British had destroyed the fort at Myingan with immaculate precision, using their cannon, without losing a single soldier of their own".(GP, 25)

Two days later, it was heard about the triumphal parade of English soldiers in Mandalay city. But, to the surprise of all including Rajkumar, all the soldiers were Indians. Rajkumar, then only, noticed that all the cookies, the cobblers and the shopkeepers of Indian origin who used to visit there regularly, had already disappeared from the scene. When Rajkumar was attacked by the mob, Saya John rescued him.

After the capture of Mandalay city, everybody in the city was able to enter it which had not been allowed one day before. Amitav Ghosh writes;

A day before, she could have had a commoner imprisoned for so much as looking her directly in the face. Today all city's scum had come surging into the palace and she was powerless to act against them. (GP, 33)

The change of fortune in the life of the Royal family and the commoners was caused by colonialism. Ghosh again writes: "Just one day earlier the crime of entering the palace would have resulted in summary execution". (GP, 34). The commoners who entered the palace were ready to perform shiko in front of the Queen but not prepared to give up what they had taken from there. The Queen shouted at them due to her powerlessness. But, they after the fall of the Palace in the hands of the English, local riots and the other confusion included the looting of Ma chose food stall also. Macho, herself disappeared one day. Rajkumar was once again left all alone. But even in that thoroughly isolated situation, he was not ready to go homewards to India. On the other hand, he pondered over the stand of the British towards the teak trees. He felt something rich in it. Somehow he related the with his lingering desire of obstinate stay in Burma. Above all matters discussed by Matthew, his mentioning of "the British invasion being provoked by teak" (GP, 58) engaged more in the mind of Rajkumar. With the hope of seeing the wealth calculated by the Colonizer in the wood, Rajkumar sought the help of Saya John in order to Stay and Survive in Burma. Now, under the Colonial British control, Mandalay had become a busy commercial center. The British belief and practice of free trade policy allowed the resources to be exploited enormously in an unimaginary manner. Shrewd and well-informed people like Saya John utilized the situation in a potential way. Rajkumar and Saya John began to supply provision to teak camps using ox carts, boats, elephants and porters. Following the British way of life and policies, people like Rajkumar and Saya John flourished in their life whereas monarchy disappeared in Burma. The first two princesses born in Burma settled in India as the wives of ordinary men. The last two princesses born in India came back to their ancestral country as simple girls in Indian fashion. Republic paving way for the common man to become the ruler was established in Burma. Making the innocent Indians soldiers in the British

army the British authority actually made a rift between Indians and Burmans who lived amicably for centuries. Thus, *The Glass Palace* encompasses in itself a hundred-year history of Burmese social and political life under the British impact.

Works Cited

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Glass Palace*. Noida: Harper Collins. 2000, Print.