

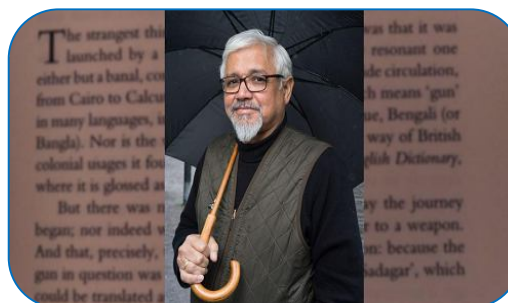


## HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH

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### ABSTRACT:

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most widely known Indian writers, writing from a postcolonial consciousness. The images of the changing India, politically and socially, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh's mind. The novel *The Glass Palace* is about three generations of two families in Burmese, India and Malaya. It is a historical novel about the British colonization of Burma. In this novel Ghosh reveals the brutal greed of the people at various levels. The plunder of the opening scene shows the greed of the colonizer. Ghosh has written about families and nations to highlight the sense of dislocation. He has also described the defeats and disappointments of dislocated people in various places. Ghosh makes a price for internationalism. In his hands, the novel becomes a cultural instrument for hopes of social betterment.

**KEYWORDS :** Human Relationship, Communication, , imagination, political, family, knowledge, Amitav Ghosh.

### INTRODUCTION

Indian writing in English reveals the dialectics of imperialism in its journey from the periphery to the centre and echoes a deep core of neo-colonialism based on power politics. The stalwarts like Salman Rushdie, Khuswant Singh, ShashiTharoor, AmitavGhosh and the like are writing in a postcolonial space, using novel as a means of cultural representation. These writers of the 1980s aimed at enhancing an Indian cultural identity, and projecting Indian cultural and historical heritage to enable an assertion of the Indian self.

AmitavGhosh, one of the most widely known Indian writer, is a serious novelist and anthropologist writing from a postcolonial consciousness. He belongs to the nation that was once conquered and ruled by Imperial Britain. As a writer, AmitavGhosh has been immensely influenced by the political and social milieu of the country. Also the stories and events he heard from his parents during his childhood made an indelible impression on his mind. His mother grew up in Calcutta and her memories were of Mahatma Gandhi, nonviolence and disobedience and the terrors that accompanied partition in 1947. His father worked in the British colonial army in India and his stories were of the war and of his fellow Indians who fought loyally beside the British. The images of the changing India, politically and socially, cast a deep shadow on Ghosh's mind.

His first novel **The Circle of Reason** won France's top literary award, Prix Medici Etranger and was the New York Times notable book of the year 1987. His next novel **The Shadow Lines** won the Kendra SahityaAkademi Award for the year 1990. It also won the AnandPuraskar Award in Calcutta in 1990. **The Calcutta Chromosome** won the Arthur C-Clark Award. **The Hungry Tide** won the Hutch crossword Book Award in 2006. Ghosh's novel **The Glass Palace** won the grand prize for fiction at the Frankfurt International-

Book Awards. He was the winner of the 1999 Pushcart prize, a leading literary award for an essay "The March of the Novel through History: The Testimony of my Grandfather's Bookcase" that was published in the Kenyon Review.

**The Glass Palace** is a saga about three generations of two closely linked families in Burma, India and Malaya from 1885 to 1956. It is also a historical novel about the British colonization of Burma. When imperialism divides and partitions set limits to freedom, the characters in the novel spill so easily over national and family boundaries through friendship and marriage that it becomes difficult to pinpoint a character's affiliation an exclusively Indian or Burmese or Chinese or Malay. This novel is more than merely a revisionary rewriting of a portion of the history of the British empire from the perspective of the colonized subaltern.

The novel opens with the Anglo-Burmese war of 1865. Two senior ministers of Burma, KinwunMingyi and TaingdaMingyi are too eager to keep the Royal family under guard because they expected to get rich rewards from the English for handing over the royal couple king Thebaw and Queen Supayalat, along with their family. As the royal family prepares to surrender the looters, the Burmese public who earlier stood in fear now quickly move into the palace. Similarly, the British soldiers in charge of shifting the king's precious jewels and ornaments from the palace to the ship that was waiting to take the royal family into exile, also pilfer these things. Ghosh here strips the veils off human nature to reveal the crude and brutal greed that drives people at various levels.

In a single remarkable scene, unscrupulous greed is shown to be the animating force cutting across the financial status, racial differences, caste, creed individuals, groups and nations. The plunder of the opening scene transcends its literal significance to become a metaphor for the raw and naked greed of the colonizer and sets the tone of the novel.

The novel reveals how tactfully the British conquered countries and subjugated whole population exiling kings to erase them completely from public memory at home. The last of the Mughal King, Bahadur Shah Zafar, deportation to Rangoon, a generation ago, after killing the two princes right in front of the public, and the Burmese King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat's exile to Ratnagiri in India were such astute moves by the conquering Britain. Having forced the rulers into a life of obscurity, they freely plundered the Burmese natural resource, like the teak, ivory and petroleum.

In the opening scene of rampage, the novelist for the first time mentions how the British soldiers marching past with their shouldered rifles looked to the Burmese crowds:

"There was no rancour on the soldier's faces, no emotion at all None of them so much glanced at the crowd." (TGP.26)

And the realization dawns on them that the British army consisted not of British but Indians mostly. Now the hostility of the Burmese crowd turns towards the Indians and the eleven year old Indian boy, Rajkumar becomes an easy prey to their wrath. When he was beaten black and blue by the crowd, he had to be rescued by the Chinese Saya John.

Indians serving under the British rule in the British Indian army are weapons in the rulers hands. They are mere tools without a head or heart. Saya John throws more light on the phenomenon of Indian soldiers constituting the British army. When he was working as an orderly in a hospital in Singapore, Saya John came across several wounded Indian soldiers who were mostly peasants from villages, in their twenties. It was the money that drew them to this profession. Yet what they earned was a few annas a day, not much more than a dockyard coolie. He is certain that "Chinese peasants would never allow themselves to be used to fight other people's war with so little profit for themselves. (TGP.29). Ghosh explores the plight of the British Indian Army fighting against the Japanese in Malaysia during the Second World War. Some students and the congress leader ask Arjun, "From whom are you defending us? From ourselves? From other Indians? It's your masters from whom the country needs to be defended." (TGP. 288) These remarks reveal the writer's indictment against the position of a colonized subject.

At one extreme we have individuals like collector Beni Prasad Dey and at the other extreme, people like Uma. In between, there are individuals belonging to different degrees. The problem for these individuals

is to come out of the shell of British influence and set through the hypocrisy of their master's intentions towards the colonized people.

Rajkumar's life-story is a story of the struggle for survival in the colonial turmoil. As a colonized subject from Bengal, he becomes a colonizer in Burma transporting indentured labourers from South India to other parts of the colonial world. He has even sexually exploited a woman worker on his plantations. His post-colonial consciousness represents a conflict. Rajkumar, Saya John and Matthew are engaged in the task of colonizing land and people for the sake of wealth.

Ghosh writes about families and nations to highlight of sense of dislocation. He asks questions of national identity-cultural and political in right contexts. Brinda Bose comments that **The Glass Palace** signals a dislocation in our understanding of the myth of our so-called community (Bose 30). The human interest is predominant in this novel, under the spell of colonialism. The social chaos in Burma during the colonial days is one of its threads. Different strands of history of king Thebaw, Dolly and Rajkumar are woven in this sage of family matters. Rashmee Z. Ahmed supports the argument against the imperial attitude by remarking that **The Glass Palace** to nothing if not an indictment of imperial due process." (Rashmee 10)

Ghosh describes the aspirations, defeats and disappointments of the dislocated people in India, Burma, China, Malaysia and America such as king Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, Saya John, Rajkumar, Dolly, Uma, Alison, Dinu, Neal, Arjun, HardayalKrishan Singh, Jaya and Ilango.

This novel is about many places, war and displacement, exile and rootlessness, depicting human helplessness. All that a human being can do is to try to adjust, compromise, live and about everything else form relationships. This forming of new bonds, mixing of races and castes is something that does not stop.

#### CONCLUSION:-

AmitavGhosh adorns a pride of a position among Indian English literary dons in presenting a new paradigm of novel writing, quite different from the popular genre of Indian writing which the international audience is familiar with, through the works of R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao and the like. He pioneers the elite group of Indian writers called the "Stephanine School" (Trivedi 184) who are more comfortable with the English language than with any other Indian language. It is little exaggeration to state that AmitavGhosh's prolific creative output provides immense scope for further literary research which could be in the form of an exploration into the intricacies of his postcolonial discourse vis-a-vis an in depth structural and stylistic reading of his novels. Repercussions of his earlier training as a social anthropologist impart a cultural significance to the literary merit which invites a comparative analysis of his fictional strategies with those of his contemporaries.

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