

## Socio-Political Aspects in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*: A Post Colonial Study

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### Abstract:

Literature is a reflection of society as well as it is a portrait of contemporary society and its social life influenced by present political scenario. *The Glass Palace* is a world famous novel by Amitav Ghosh, describes the problems of contemporary socio-political condition. The plot moves onward and backward countries namely Burma, India and Malaya during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a saga of many families and the characters whose social lives are spoiled by political decisions in colonial period. So it is a pathetic journey towards displacement. However, the principle aim of this paper is to focus on critical study and to draw out socio-political influences on human lives in *The Glass Palace*.

**Key-words:** Colonial rule, Hybridity, Displacement, Multicultural, Marginal

### Introduction

Literature as a reflection of society mirrors the social life and the spiritual of the age it represents. Literature also reflects the tendencies and concerns of the age. Social conventions, Socio-political influences, historical events, religious and political ideas make up writers background are reflected in the themes he chooses and the way he treats them.

Writers like Amitav Ghosh were greatly influenced by the socio-political and cultural aspects of post colonial India. The work of Ghosh shows political, historical and social consciousness that goes side by side with colonialism.

### The Glass Palace: An Overview

The present novel *The Glass Palace* deals with Hybridity and displacement due to colonialism and its effects on human lives. Hybridity refers in its most basic sense to mixture. The term originates from biology and was subsequently employed in linguistics and in racial theory in the nineteenth century. Its contemporary uses are spread across numerous academic disciplines and are salient in popular culture. Homi Bhabha defines Hybridity as a problematic colonial representation that reverses the effect of the colonialist disavowal, so that other denied knowledge enters upon the dominant discourse and estranges the basis of its authority.

In the novel characters like Saya John and his family, Rajkumar Raha and his family, King Thibaw Min and his family, Uma Dey and her family are the victims of such a Hybridity. Rajkumar The main protagonist of the novel is a true multicultural, hybrid personality. Being an orphan he created his own relationship with people who belong to different casts, religion, race, culture, nationality and language. Rajkumar marries Dolly and they become hybrid. Dolly has fear of such a hybridization her displacement from her roots and her discomfort with her changed identity is clear when she confides her predicament to Uma, the collector's wife: 'If I went to Burma now I would be a foreigner – they would call me a *Kala* like they do Indians – a trespasser, an outsider from across the sea. I'd find that very hard I think. I'd never be able to rid myself of the idea that I would have to leave again one day, just as I knew what it was like when we left' 1 [Ghosh: 2000: 113]. Padmini Mongia quotes Gayatri Spivak's explanation of such dilemma:

"For the post colonial the idea of a nationhood is a metaphor constantly being 'reclaimed', as the post-colonial space cannot advance referents that are 'historically adequate' in the case of the colonial subject nationhood is perhaps the only real and historically immediate concern." [Mongia: 277] 2

The colonial subjects suffer from a sense of imaginary homeland having to suffer most of their lives in displaced locations. Dolly and Rajkumar both paradoxically have a commitment to the nation of their exile or displacement which they have appropriated as home. For Dolly, her life in Outram House is the only life she knows and surprisingly she is the most assertive, in her place of exile. She asks Uma, 'where would I go, this is home' [Ghosh: 2000: 119] 3 Her worship for the royal family is obvious when before leaving with Rajkumar, she takes a "last glimpse of the lane, the leaning coconut palms, the Union Jack, flapping above the goal on its crooked pole..." [Ibid: 171] 4 Dolly in her spouse relationship with Rajkumar, gets two sons Neel and Dinu. Dolly due to her association with Uma Day, Collector's wife, developed her personality and whereas Rajkumar through successful in business remain uneducated.