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King Thebaw's Pathetic Journey from Burma to India

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Introduction:

The Glass Palace is a world famous novel by Amitav Ghosh, which is published in 2000, describes a journey of the three generations which are traveling and moving onward and backward in three countries namely Burma, India and Malaya during the 20th century. Amitav Ghosh portrays the life of the narrator-Rajkumar, a central character, who is an orphan boy by Indian origin, after facing lots of trouble becomes a successful merchant. Rajkumar is only witness of the sufferings, humiliation, departure, displaced and helplessness of King Thebaw and his family who narrates the story. British conquered the Burmese Empire, humiliated them and intended to discourage, deject, demoralize. control by humiliation of Burmese Empire. The abrupt removal of the king and the pregnant queen from Mandalay to distant Ratnagiri in the west coast of India and erasing them from public memory at home. The hunger and greed natural in the colonial practice is seen in Burma.

Two senior ministers of Burma, Kinwun Mingyi and Taingda, are willing to keep the Royal family under guard because they expect rich rewards from the English for handing over the royal couple, King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat, along with their family. Sarika Auradkar about this kind of divide and rule British policy she says:

Amitav Ghosh refers to the phrase 'banality of evil' in the context of soldiers fighting for their British masters from neither enmity nor anger, but the submission to orders from superiors, without protest and without conscious. The process of colonization and the state of colonized are very relevant thought components of this novel. The very word used Rajkumar Kaala is objectionable, which is decolonized at least in the actual process of aggression, capture and colonization. How the Burmese people are robbed of all grace with guns and artillery. The British are only giving commands. The soldiers are fighting among themselves. [Auradkar: 99]

After collapsing Burmese Empire became helpless, Queen became powerless, common people dared to disobey their sovereign. 'A day before, she could have had a commoner imprisoned for so much as looking her directly in the face. Today the entire city's scum had come to surging in the palace and she was not afraid, not in the least.' (Ghosh, 2000: 33) Through the eyes of Rajkumar, we witness the humiliation of King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat. As the royal family prepares to surrender, the looters – the Burmese public who had earlier stood far aloof in fear and awe – now quickly move into scavenge what they can find in the palace.

The mystery of human life is such that this terrible lady goes on to live in exile, suffers confinement and degradation for love and affection for her husband. 'What could love mean to this woman, this murderer, responsible for the slaughter of scores of her own relatives? And yet it was fact that she had chosen captivity over freedom for the sake of her husband, condemned her own daughters to twenty years of exile.' [Ibid: 152] Ghosh even mentions Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Indian Emperor who was taken to Rangoon in exile. A parallel is drawn here. One thing apart from the cruel colonization, must their on subjects land and to a shocking extent. When King Thebaw is taken out of his palace, it is for the first time he is seeing his land. 'The King noticed that his canopy had seven tires, the number allotted to a nobleman, not the nine due to king.' [Ibid: 43] What the king loses is not just the governance of a territory but displacement from his territorial land. The loss of rule is symbolically