



Ecological Devastation and Imperialism in Amitav Ghosh's *Glass Palace*

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Abstract

Environmental problem now a days is popular in every corner of the world. Ecocriticism is also an important issue in every field like philosophy, literature and other arts. The British government supports imperialism, which is defined as the deliberate exploitation of others and reshaping of the local ecosystems of the peripheries for economic welfare of the center. In the *Glass Palace* (2000) depicts the despotic practices of colonizers over the colonized land, people and their culture through the process of commercialization and commodification of human and natural resources. Culture and nature are simultaneously are exploited by the western supported by the natives. The novel reflects theme of such as human greed, migration, history, and imperial exploitation. British colonised Burma and took advantage of its natural resources, which included rubber and teakwood. Ghosh has channelized an ecological concern to us and make aware about the ecocide exploitation.

Keywords: Environmental degradation, commercialization, eco imperialism, culture and nature.

1. Introduction:

The intertwining of ecological devastation and imperialism forms a poignant backdrop in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*, a sweeping narrative that traverses the landscapes of Burma, India, and Malaya over a century. Through the lens of a diverse cast of characters, Ghosh meticulously unravels the complex fabric of colonial exploitation and its profound impact on the natural environment and indigenous societies. This novel not only serves as a historical account of colonial rule in Asia but also as a critical exploration of the environmental degradation and cultural disintegration wrought by imperialist endeavours. By weaving together personal stories with historical events, Ghosh invites readers to reflect on the enduring consequences of imperialism, not just on human societies but also on the ecosystems they inhabit. *The Glass Palace* stands as a compelling testament to the intricate connections between human actions, geopolitical ambitions, and environmental changes, urging a reevaluation of our relationship with nature in the context of historical and ongoing imperialistic practices.

2. Discussion:

One useful method for raising public awareness of environmental degradation is literature. Human activity is concerned with society as it relates to the existence of human life on Earth. Ecocritical texts depict the complex interaction between humans and their physical environment and reflect social, economic, and cultural repercussions in literary works.

Ecocriticism is the connection between social, environmental, economic and cultural implications in the literary works and presents complicated relationship between humans and their physical environment. Eco criticism is the link between the environment and social fairness. As such, it's a complicated subject that has to do with globalisation and the environment. The ecology is deteriorating because of human greed. Man must seriously reconsider his relationship with non-human entities. Through literary analysis, ecocriticism also discusses how society has changed in relation to nature. Eco criticism also talks about the social changes towards nature through literature. Cheryll Glotfelty, in introduction of an anthology, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, defines the term:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary studies. (19)

Environmental justice talks on class, race, gender and colonialism to evaluate texts and ideas from Eco critical perspectives. It believes that preservation of environment along with the poor people is necessary. It is an important aspect of eco critical theory. It consists the sacredness of the Earth and everybody is ready to protect the nature, In *Glass Palace* (2000) Ghosh presents that British exploit not only natural resources but also poor people who depends on forest for survival. Labourers were brought from the other regions for the deforestation of the Burma country. They were operating in a highly hazardous environment with little assurance of life. The cruelty towards labourers is shown through the voice of Uma. *The Glass Palace* shows how women and the natural world are exploited. In the novels, both nature and women are treated as things. They are only consumables and objects of enjoyment.

Ghosh delivers it in the voice of Rajkumar's wife, Dolly, novel also shows the effects of colonisation and conflict. Ghosh explains that nature has little significance in a human's life. British colonists colonised the country at all costs in order to employ industry and money, which led to environmental degradation. Everything, including humans and the natural world is in disarray and destruction as a result of the battle between the British and the Japanese Industrialisation and imperialism worked together for greed and resulted in the loss to environment. The pressing issue of climate change is the direct reaction to the actions of the colonizers in the past. The former colonies are in the most vulnerable situation today, which is the outcome of the overuse of natural resources of those countries by colonial powers. *Glass Palace* is a novel which tells a story spanning a whole century, covering the whole development, progress along with the destruction and exploitation, migration and predicament of people and Mother Nature.

The novel extends over three generations spread over three interlinked parts of the British Empire. They are Burma, Malaya and India. It is structured around the joining relationships among four families. This novel examines the sensitive relationship of Man and Nature, in this novel depicts how the British involvement in the South Asia has affected the environmental damages which resulted into the demolition and displacement generated by it and the approach of the relationship between literature. Ghosh portrays the harsh reality of the colonization that how the colonialization remains the reason for the degradation of the green culture. He focuses on the never ending human greed which is not only bitters the environment but also humans. Ghosh says that the invaders have destroyed the store houses, oil tanks and the successful sounds of attacking. The dangerous clouds of smoke are the creators of air and noise pollution and a warning to the human and non-human worlds and passionately contributing in the environmental degradation. This unbeatable and impossible attitude of man towards nature and mankind itself is a warning to the world. This how the British involvement in the South Asia has caused the environmental damages. These environmental damages are depicted as concept of eco criticism.

The Glass Palace points out that, how colonialization has cruelly blasted in the South Asia and grades into the environmental degradation and spoils the green culture. This novel interconnected in the different historical events like colonization of Burma by the British, the First World War, and the subjugation of Japan over Russia, the passionate changes shaped by World War II. The environmental degradation is the major concern of Eco criticism. This novel mainly depicts the concept of environmental degradation. Because it has many incidents of ecocide damages which happened during the colonialization in Mandalay. The major intention of British attack over Mandalay is the teak forests which they want to convert into the ligneous yards for their commercial purposes.

In this novel Ghosh does not use only anti-colonial voice. He has shown how greed and ignorance of natives made it easier for the colonial power to suck all the natural resources. People were working insensitively for their own benefits but never foresaw the outcome of could be imposed upon a landscape of such natural exuberance. First the departure of the King and Queen then the whole transformation of the country, it all snatched the mental peace of its people. And then as if it was not enough, the Japanese attacked on Burma during the Second World War. It all enraged the public who was once a contented and innocent people.

In *The Glass Palace* (2000), Ghosh highlights the environmental injustice inflicted on Nature and on the indigenous people of Burma. While manoeuvring the logs on the strong, currented *changes*, the native Burmese village folk leaped, darted, swam, and ducked between the giant logs. The native forest assistants in the infection-infested teak camps risked their lives for meagre salaries of three annas. They would fall eventually prey to malaria or dengue fever and with no medical treatment. As for *Theo-sis* or elephant handlers, they often ended up being trampled by their elephants. The helpless animal protagonists like the elephants, fell prey to anthrax. Ghosh's fictional scape of Burma thus reveals the environmental injustice of human and animal protagonists whose lives are at peril due to colonial pursuit for natural resources.

Ghosh describes the plundering of natural resources like oil reserves in Yenangyaung that belonged to the *twin-zaps*, an old tribe that has claimed ownership of these wells for centuries. The Yenangyaung wells oozed petroleum naturally to the surface of the earth, thus drew the attention of colonists who cast their greedy eyes on this natural resource that was scarce in the West. Petroleum was initially an indigenous industry owned by the *twin-zap* tribe until the British decided to exploit it. Ghosh's fictional space reveals how the colonists deplete the land of this rare natural resource, making it sink down several hundred feet. Before the British launched on mass extraction, the rocks used to exude oil profusely, resulting in large puddles joining to form creeks, streams, and rivulets. Settling their colony, the British employed tight control not only on the action, behaviour and vibrancy of the people but also on the natural resources and managed to design the proper management of the transporting such natural resources for their commercial purposes. The British government entraps some Indian people in engaging them in teak business by giving them enough profit.

Saya John and Rajkumar are described in the novel as teak merchants who aided the government and went on to participate in both the business world and the process of destroying the ecosystem. Saya John and Rajkumar's ambition and greed, which destroys natural resources for financial gain and economic prosperity, are subtly highlighted by Ghosh. The story focuses on the current state of the globe, which is experiencing a global catastrophe brought on by the devastation of nature at the hands of humans. The term "ecocide" itself suggests that humans have intentionally and cruelly interfered with the natural world, destroying it. The novel portrays the callousness, brutality, and materialistic mind set of the lumber merchants who cut without caution, sending the message that if this destructive practice is allowed to continue, The world is about to face a catastrophic crisis that has the potential to wipe out all human kind. In *The Glass Palace*, The depiction of the carnage and destruction caused by the riots in Burma illustrates the ongoing degradation of the environment. Japan's attack on England and the conflict between England and Germany are to blame for this kind of devastation. Bombers struck Burma directly, aiming for houses, railway stations, mills, water fronts, and oil tanks. The excavation of emotional fury, grief, and hidden misery is revealed in this novel. *The Glass Palace*, which establishes a symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, criticises globalisation, imperialism, and western scientific advancement as major causes of environmental destruction. The concept of the globe is broadly expanded by ecocritical studies to encompass the entire ecosphere, emphasising the interdependence of both natural and man-made elements. Thus, Ghosh in *The Glass Palace* upholds the reckless destruction of human and non-human world by colonial practices and war and also by the heart-core commercialists and materialists leading ultimately to ecocide through the whole devastation of nature. But Ghosh had developed a sense of high ecocritical and optimistic sensibility by expecting the resurrection of nature after its upheaval and by expositing the unity between nature and human in the midst of ecocides turmoil. In *The Glass Palace* Ghosh proposes that the discourse on nature always projects cultural implication which enhancing the symbiotic and reciprocal relationship between human and non-human world conveys a constructive and re-configuring accessibility of 'nature-culture' discourse.

3. Conclusion:

Ecocriticism is a vital field of research in the study of how humans interact with environment. In his work, Amitav Ghosh uses nature as a sensitive tool to illustrate the bond between the human and non-human worlds. The main theme of this novel is the historical events mixed with environmental hardship. Through the narrative, he shows that colonialism kills not just the environment but also humanity. He explained how the ecological balance was broken by Europeans in their avarice and power struggle. Famine and epidemics were brought with them to every colony they established. They not only wreaked havoc on the economy and culture, but also on the environment. *The Glass Palace* serves as a warning to humanity that when nature is abused over time, it will eventually explode. By addressing the delicate link between man and nature in the novel, the author effectively introduces the notion of ecocriticism. It is a vital field of study that focuses on the interaction between humans and nature.

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