CHAPTER III

THE GLASS PALACE AND THE EXPATRIATE GENERATIONS

[The Empire is] a huge, indelible stain which has tainted all of us.

—Amitav Ghosh

The colonies in Asia and Africa became free fifty years ago or so, with the unsympathetic anticolonial passion ruined to some extent and the sharp speech, making it quiet. It seems possible to take a detached view of the noteworthy social, political, economic, and cultural experience known as colonialism. Amitav Ghosh started to do the same in The Glass Palace. The earlier novels of Ghosh, The Shadow Lines (1988) and The Calcutta Chromosome (1996), have consistently honoured him as one of the leading Indian English novelists. The Glass Palace, published in 2000, has a variety and sway which cannot be easily synchronized in Indian English fiction. A story of three generations, extend over three interrelated parts of the British Empire—Burma, Malaya, and India, is presented skillfully by Ghosh.

If the title of the novel can be regarded as an indication of its central theme, this book is a case point. An unwary glance at the title might point to nothing more than The Glass Palace of the Burmese king mentioned only twice in the novel after its fleeting appearance in the opening section. At best, the title might represent the destruction, depredation, and exploitation by the British. But going a little beyond the denotative reference, one will hit upon the resonance and recollect the unmistakable allusion to the Crystal Palace built in England during Queen
Victoria’s reign to commemorate and reflect power, glory, and wealth of the vast British Empire, as fragile and brittle as the glass that was used for its construction, even as it was meant to mirror the remarkable achievement of the British in the colonies. But, ironically, the Crystal Palace is as much an emblem of the British prowess as it is of the exploitation of the colonized. The British palace was erected, in a sense, on the ruins of the likes of the Glass Palace. The title would not justify itself had it not been for this resonance; for the novel goes beyond showing the plunder of the Burmese Palace; it points to the exploitation in other British colonies as well.

*The Glass Palace* is a story about three generations of two closely related 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 out so easily over national and family boundaries through friendship and marriage that it becomes difficult to identify 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 story of *The Glass Palace* opens in Mandalay in 1885 and is about the protagonist Rajkumar. This novel is a perfect example of the colonized world and postcolonized world. He deals with dual situations and complexities like the culture which is hybrid. As people crossed the situations of colonization and subsequent periods naturally the culture became hybrid. People wanted to have
their own identity; they strived for individuality. Rajkumar suffers the effects of war when Japanese bomb the nearby fields and he lost everything. Here we can understand the break even point between colonialism and postcolonialism as an artificone and nowadays postcolonialism has become a myth. The marginal group and exploitation and oppression, displacement, nostalgia and the loss of language and culture are the predominant issues related to postcolonialism found in The Glass Palace. The ruler and the ruled, the master and the slave, the suppressor and the suppressed, the colonizer and the colonized are some broad terms which need a close study. These terms indeed constitute the Third World Literature in English.

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, and a generation ago, after killing the two princes openly 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. Two senior ministers of Burma, Kinwun Mingyi and Taingda Mingyi 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 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 soldiers’ faces, no emotion at all. None of them so much glanced at the crowd.” (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. (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.” (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 (1). 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 imperattitude by remaking that The Glass Palace to nothing if not an indictment of imperdue process.” (2) 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, Hardayal Krishan 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

Soueif writes, “Ghosh is one of the most sympathetic postcolonial voices to be heard today. He looks at love and loyalty, and examines questions of Empire and responsibility of tradition and modernity.” (3) The novel presents Amitav Ghosh’s concern with nationalism. Ghosh presents multiple points of view of the dispersed people of different nationalities and makes a plea for internationalism. He intends to show how the context of imperialism has changed in globalization. Ghosh believes that empires imprison their rulers as well as their subjects. In his hands, the novel becomes a cultural instrument for hopes of social betterment.
The Glass Palace is ordered roughly on the interlinked relationships among four families: the Burmese King Thebaw and Queen Supayalat (overthrown by the British in 1885 and banished to Ratagiri in India) and their followers; Rajkumar Raha, a Bengali orphan expatriate to Burma, and his children; Saya John, an orphan grown by Catholic priests, and his son Matthew and his family; and Uma, the wife of the Collector of Ratagiri, who has later became the widow. Their wealth is set against a milieu of exciting historical proceedings—the British invasion of Burma, the consolidation of the Empire in India and Malaya, the First and Second World Wars—planned and carried out on a larger-than-life scale, within the time frame ranging from 1885 to 1996.

Dinu finds “a massive square stone, with a rectangular opening carved in the centre” while Dinu cycles on a morning in Malaya. Apart from its real use, the opening was now “just a hole ... colonized by a family of tiny green frogs” (334–35). The human colonizing process positions incompatibly to the somewhat harmless course of colonization in the natural world position, which is stimulated neither by a requirement for safe haven nor survival, but by greediness and a craving for economic and political boost.

From Dinu’s statements the success of the British in creating this class of people is evident. He spouts out faithfully whatever he has been taught in schools and colleges, and now as an intellectual condemns the Nazis and the Fascists as British would want him to do. Even when Burma and India achieve independence, his gratitude towards the British remains. This is evident from his conversation with Jaya after the rise of dictatorship in Burma. He feels extremely upset at the
loss of democracy due to the rise of military regime, which is understandable because the purpose of driving out the British was to create a society based on equality and fraternity. At the same time, he eulogizes the British by saying that they gave more freedom to masses. At least the common man had greater freedom and was not so much put to trouble to be watched by the “man in the pharmacy next door” (511). Dinu also thinks that the British regime has successfully “reformed” the Indian society and “purged” it of all the evils. This is a great mistake. Dinu has been completely taken in by the pose of the British which is of a social reformist and so he is grateful to them. He argues with Uma: “Look at the way women (are) treated even today, look at the caste system, untouchability, widow-burning … all these terrible, terrible things” (294). Amitav Ghosh clearly brings out the true nature of the colonrule through Uma, who answers to Dinu’s allegation: “Let me be the first to admit the horrors of our own society – as a woman …. Mahatma Gandhi has always said that our struggle for independence cannot be separated from our struggle for reform” (294). Dinu has put blinkers over his eyes and is not able to see through the real colonialist intentions of the British. This is where we find that the British have succeeded in creating a class of people having “black skin in white masks.”

The preliminary urge for a colonial venture, is frequently profit-making, guiding to the institution of a trading post or some such postures like those. Thus, the stimulus for the British colonial drive is the Burmese teak and the Malayan rubber. The seven-year-old Matthew, with an insight afar his years, narrates to his doubtful friend Rajkumar what his father, Saya John, has told him already, that the English “want all the teak in Burma. The King won’t let them have it so they’re
going to do away with him” (15). When the colonial power was resolutely launched and started to practise an obvious military domination over the ill-fated and ill-equipped native kings, the authority looked for opportunities to bring them under control. They often were in the search of a clash with arrival resident king so that they can legalize their removing the particular king from the power, take custody of his government, and exile him out of the state. Always the tyrants would be in search of a reason to start a war against any ruler. A disharmony with a British timber company by the rival king, where it would be obvious that the company is fraudulent and is the claim that, “sidestepping the kingdom’s customs regulations … To avoid paying duties” (21) is utilized as a good reason for waging a war against the King Thebaw of Mandalay. One Of the king’s chief ministers “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 princes—like farmyard pigs in other words, to be fed and fattened by their masters; swine, housed in sties that had been tricked out with a few little bits of finery” (21–22). But that suggestion was ignored scornfully by the burning queen. The success of the British usually was possible not because they have genuine reasons but because of their supremacy, skill of scheming, and the total weaponry. Amitav is very careful in mentioning the attack of British and narrates satirically that the army moves with great competence in such a way “to surprise even its planners” (25), the war lasted only for fourteen days, which was fought on the self-centered unfair issue. The inept resident kings helped the British adequately. These native kings were remote from realism, who always lived in the
daydream of luxury, and the betrayal of traitors among their people, who fought in Mandalay, among themselves to hand out the beaten king to the British.

The strengthening of the Empire happened in the usual method, with its regular dealings and components in Burma. Edward Said says, “The business of empire, once an adventurous and often individualistic enterprise,” becomes “the empire of business.” To declare they deliberate lyre present the native rulers, the king’s palace “had been refurbished to serve the conquerors’ recondite pleasures: the west wing had been converted into a British Club; the Queen’s Hall of Audience had now become a billiard room; the mirrored walls were lined with months-old copies of *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*; the gardens had been dug up to make room for tennis courts and polo grounds; ... Mandalay, it was confidently predicted, would soon become the Chicago of Asia” (66).

The Britishers never failed to hit with the hostile blow at the kings who were exiled by them. At the outset it is difficult to tell between the treatment of the British towards the kings whom they demean and whom they do not in their careful external courtesies. When King Thebaw was sent into exile, was given not more than an hour to prepare for a journey from which he is never going to return (40). The king’s horse and carriage was “fitted out with a ceremonial canopy” which, the king noticed quickly, “had seven tiers, the number allotted to a nobleman, not the nine due to a king.” So “the well-spoken English colonels,” the king guesses that they “had had their revenge after all, given the knife of victory a final little twist. In his last encounter with his erstwhile subjects he was to be publicly demoted, like an errant schoolchild. Sladen had guessed right: this was, of
all the affronts King Thebaw could have imagined, the most hurtful, the most egregious” (43–44). The misery of his imprisonment in far-off Ratnagiri in India is compared with that of the last Indian Mughal emperor, Bahadurshah Zafar—a brilliant poet, in poor health, almost becoming blind, was imprisoned till his death in Rangoon, and miserable, in his celebrated and heartbreaking verse says that he could not find even two yards of burground in his native land (49). The living conditions of the Burmese King in India were so disgusting which infuriated the English tutor hired to teach English to the princesses, had to be sent back to England.

A fairly minimum number of men were able to overpower the native rulers because of their lack of concern, the inactivity, and the dodging of native rulers, which Ghosh pens seriously in the novel. When the Burmese army surrenders before the British, King Thebaw is not even informed (26). Ghosh contrasts these weak spots with the power, the managerial expertise, and the inventiveness of the colonizers. “It was the Europeans,” Saya John tells Rajkumar, “who saw that tame elephants could be made to work for human profit. It was they who invented everything we see around us in this logging camp. This entire way of life is their creation” (74). The story makes it obvious that the cause they served was morally the most excellent but total evil at the most terrible. This is made clear by the story without pulling down the British undertaking, and the staying power of such officers as Buckland.

Before independence in India it was habitual in the courses of “Indian history” to ask the interviewee to itemize the “benefits” of British rule in India.
The typical reply would speak well of the British reign for the social reforms which have been undertaken by the British Regime, such as humanizing health and sanitation, ascertaining law and order, and initiating up to date transport and communication through the railway and the postal system. The British beneficence was taken as unquestioned similarly by teachers and students, and agreed with the system designed as such not to develop free thoughts which would neither take a critical look at what the fact had done to India. The details of the British rule in India may appear to be the best in obstructing as it did the more serious aspects of the rule: the humiliation of the colonized people through a range of unfair practices. In smaller towns in Malaya, there were signs on their club doors saying “No Asiatics allowed” (345), while at Sungei Pattani base the English Commanding Officer had been known to call his Indian officers as “coolies” and even on one occasion had kicked an officer (353). And even during wartime, Dinu, Allison, and an ailing Saya John are not allowed to board an emigration train at Butterworth because it is only for Europeans (424). The severe laws lead to cruel oppression in the slaughter of an innocent crowd in Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar, and to the putting to death of a young freedom-loving idealist, Bhagat Singh, after a short trial. Edward Said rightly speaks of “the ravaged colonial people who for centuries endured summary justice, unending economic oppression, distortion of their social and intimate lives, and a recourseless submission that was the function of unchanging European superiority.”[4]

In *The Glass Palace* it is Uma who best interprets the reality about the colonialism when she tells Dinu: “we must not be deceived by the idea that imperialism is an enterprise of reform.... It is simply mistaken to imagine that
colonialists sit down and ponder the rights and wrongs of the societies they want to conquer: that is not why empires are built” (294–95). Queen Supayalat foresees the lifeless future of Burma under the colonial rule: “In a few decades the wealth will be gone—all the gems, the timber and the oil—and then they too will leave. In our golden Burma where no one ever went hungry and no one was too poor to write and read, all that will remain is destitution and ignorance, famine and despair” (88). The roots of abuse have run so profoundly which would make the Indian future genesis badly prepared for continued existence. The Indians who meet in Uma’s New York apartment realize “that the conditions being created in their homeland were such as to ensure that their descendants would enter the new epoch as cripples, lacking the most fundamental means of survival; that they would truly become in the future what they had never been in the past, a burden upon the world.” They are horrified “that a time was at hand, when even the fall of the Empire and the departure of their rulers would make little difference; that their homeland’s trajectory was being set on an unbudgeable path that would thrust it in the direction of future catastrophe” (222).

The destructive and unbearable effects of colonization on the personality of the colonized hang about among the more painful features of the process, beyond the dangerous forms of unfairness, economic exploitation. The Colonial rule has debased the character of the colonized by developing a culture of aggressive sycophancy. For instance, there is prevalent loss of self respect in the Indians who fight with one another to win British admiration and try to shape their lives and conduct in “conformity with incomprehensible rules” (187) of the Empire.
A significant aspect of the colonial rule is “its Policy of ensuring its necessity through the division of its subjects” (243). Thus the British counter act one colonized people against another. Both in Burma and Malaya, laborers transported from India under fake pretext keep going economic activity, so that “every rubber tree in Malaya was paid for with an Indian life” (233). Indian soldiers are used by the British to defeat Burma and to restrain any revolt that may take place. After all, out of “some ten thousand soldiers in the British invasion force … the great majority—about two-thirds—were Indian sepoys” (26). Besides, British encouraged Indians to make their way to move up to significant places in trade and commerce in Burma, to the annoyance of the Burmese.

The true nature of colonial rule can be identified in its individual culture, which is followed and promoted as a policy matter. Thus, the British stayed detached and superior, while the Muslim invaders became more or less absorbed in the Indian civilization, as shown in E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India (5). While setting up residence in the quarters for Indian soldiers, the Muslims drove the Indians into slum areas in the inner city, with poor fundamental community facilities. They not only practiced what Said calls “monoculturalism,” (6) but also tried to set up “little Englands” in the colonies. The agricultural estate manager, Arjun, has a house in Malaya with a garden dotted with bursts of color, but “the flowers were mostly English varieties” (433). In The Glass Palace, Rajan talks about life as an agricultural estate laborers with “every action constantly policed, watched, supervised.” He tells Arjun that it calculated to “being made into a machine: having your mind taken away and replaced by a clockwork mechanism. Anything was better than that” (522). Above all the heartbreaking is the torment and confusion of
Indian military officers youthful, optimistic, and eager to do what is right employed in the British, who are fighting a war to protect not their own country, but a foreign authority that has imprisoned it. “If my country really comes first,” Hardy asks Arjun, “why am I being sent abroad? There’s no threat to my country right now—and if there were, it would be my duty to stay here and defend it” (330). While hiding in the ditch, Hardy tells Arjun, he had “an eerie feeling. It was strange to be sitting on one side of a battle line, knowing … that you’re risking everything to defend a way of life that pushes you to the sidelines. It’s almost as if you’re fighting against yourself” (406).

Arjun can find no suitable response to this comment. He wonders whether he was in effect no more than a “mercenary,” and to realize that “to kill without conviction violated some deep and unalterable human impulse” (347). He feels that “he and his peers had been singled out to pay the price of a monumental inwardness” (349). Allison concludes the pathetic position of the Indian officers in the British army when she says: “Arjun—you’re not in charge of what you do; you’re a toy, a manufactured thing, a weapon in someone else’s hands. Your mind doesn’t inhabit your body” (376). Arjun, who comes to analyze critically, his actions in relation to the colonsituation (428; 430; 437; 441), ultimately dies fighting for the Indian National Army in Burma.

The impact of western educational courses is easily apparent on Arjun in who follows the graded order of low standard and authority, native and “angrez” are so deep-seated that all his effort is to be like an Englishman. As a young army officer in the colonial army, he is proud that he belongs to a reputed regiment. His unmistakable recognition of the supremacy of the colonial officers, and his admiration and respect for them, acquaint intensely himself with the European
ethics, etiquette, way of dressing, and food habits by imitating the Britishers. The training he received in the army instigates him to follow the British way of life and he is influenced by it. He is very proud for being incorporated to the British military culture, principles, and food habits which are made obligatory on Indian soldiers by the British government. He even brags, “Every meal at an officers mess, Arjun said, was an adventure…. bacon, ham and sausages at breakfast; roast beef and pork chops for dinner. They drank whisky, beer and wine, smoked cigars, cigarettes and cigarillos” (278). Arjun has a strong belief that only from this kind of practice a new and more perfect kind of man who is suitable to cross the threshold of the class of officers comes out. Instead of being ashamed, he is proud enough to declare that as officers they have to justify to themselves as well as to their higher authority that they are qualified to be the leaders, to meet the criteria to be the members of the privileged society. In the early stages due to his charm for armed forces life, he felt proud for the new life he has started. To Arjun “modern” and “western” are synonymous. To be a “modern Indian” he is prepared to erase all traces of being Indian: discard his past and embrace western habits of thought in its whole. At this stage, he does not realize the cost that he is going to pay for being accepted as a member of the superior class, the rulers’ class. When his sister Bela, wishes to know people’s opinion about him, Kishan Singh, an NCO says, “He’s a good officer…. Of all the Indians in our battalion, he’s the one who’s the most English. We call him the ‘Angrez’ (297).

Arjun is shocked for the first time in his life when he attends his sister’s wedding. Some Burmese student campaigners and Congress party work force rebuke him for serving in an army by profession. On this happy event he controls
his temper and responds, “We aren’t occupying the country ....We are here to defend you” (287). The activists respond fast: “From whom are you defending us? From ourselves? From other Indians? It’s your masters from whom the country needs to be defended” (288). However, Arjun, is not taken aback by these controversies. One of the protesters of anti-war march throws a brochure through his car window. Arjun reads some quotations from Mahatma Gandhi and a passage that says, “Why should India, in the name of freedom, come to the defence of this Satanic Empire which is itself the greatest menace to liberty that the world had ever known?” Arjun is extremely irritated by this time, and cannot control his anger: “Idiots .... I wish I could stuff this down their throats. You’d think they’d have better things to do than march about in the hot sun” (292). Evidently, Arjun has become totally slavish at this juncture. He not even once questions why the British Empire should rule India. As Gouri Viswanathan points out, “Without submission of the individual to moral law or the authority or Goad, the control they were able to secure over the lower classes in their own country would elude them in India.” (7)

Arjun’s mind comes out of the colonized control only at the commencement of the Second World War, which observed hundreds of Indian soldiers of the British army shifting their devotion and joining themselves as armed services in the Indian National army. Ghosh persuasively articulates the psychological crisis and indicates the transition that occurred in Arjun’s mind, a man whom his equals call “Angrez.” Hardy (Haridayal), his friend and colleague, rings a bell to him of the inscription at the Military Academy in Dehra Dun which says, “The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every
time. The honour, welfare and comfort of the men you command come next ....
And your own ease, comfort and safety come last, always and every time, “and
adds: ‘Well, didn’t you ever think: this country whose safety, honour and welfare
are to come first, always and every time – what is it? Where is this country? The
fact is that you and I don’t have a country – so where is this place whose safety,
honour and welfare are to come first, always and every time? (290)

*The Glass Palace* blows up the legends about the profitable results of
colonialism on the colonized methodically and expansively. Buckland is sincere,
but self-deluded in arguing that the British are staying in India “out of a sense of
obligation” (417). The notion of the white man’s “burden” of civilizing the
“inferior” races of Asia and Africa is equally mythical. The people had believed
erroneously that the most important aspiration in the wake of colonization is the
desire to get the living conditions of the colonized better. And it is self deception to
believe that at any cost the British have proved to be more humane colonial
masters than the Germans or the Japanese.

In *The Glass Palace*, Ghosh shows how such “constructions” are internalized
by the colonized, generating fundamental cracks within colonized societies and
some times in the realization of folks. The British were not satisfied with spur-of-
the-moment interpretations of the colonial state of mind as observable as in
Kipling’s “The White Man’s Burden.” (8)

It is a mark of respect to balanced approach of Ghosh that he depicts with
meticulous realism how most of the colonized people have worked under the
control of the native rulers after getting freedom from colonial masters. Said points
out that which Frantz Fanon calls the “rationalist bourgeoisie” often “ran the new countries with a callous, exploitative tyranny reminiscent of the departed masters.” (9)

Ghosh exposes the painful facts of existence of the colonies after independence, the iron handed government in Burma and the abuse of the people in India. Arjun comments that to those fighting for India’s freedom, “India was the shining mountain beyond the horizon, a sacrament of redemption,” but wonders “what would they find ... when they crossed the horizon?” (522). Dinu describes to Jaya the situation in the colonies after independence: “while misrule and tyranny must be resisted, so too must politics itself ... it cannot be allowed to cannibalise all of life, all of existence. To me this is the most terrible indignity of our condition—not just in Burma, but in many other places too ... that politics has invaded everything, spared nothing ... religion, art, family ... it has taken over everything ... there is no escape from it ... and yet, what could be more trivial in the end?” (542). One of the most constant fictional themes in postcolonial India has been the omnipresent dishonesty, regularly occurs in lofty chairs, consuming the essentials of the humanity and developing disappointment and pessimism among the citizens.

Eventhough The Glass Palace approves the colonial experience, ascertaining that it is indispensable to the people who were mixed up in it; the novel also describes conditions and characters in a normally complex organization that offers strength and matercomfort. Ghosh’s outstanding analysis and mnemonic forms of nature, the beautiful feeling of landscape, the feeling for the countryside and the environment are to some level amazing. In fact, Ghosh shows a poet’s
sensitization to nature and is fully observant to the colors and sounds in nature. This highly communicative style, marvelous use of phrase, combines to provide the quality that Khushwant Singh calls its “unput downability”(10) to Ghosh’s work, while colonialism in its raw legislative structure may have approximately disappeared, it carries on to be obvious itself in delicate masquerades. The enduring significance of a sensitive and perceptive study such as *The Glass Palace* can be identified in this remark. For example, the colonial heritage can be seen, in the state of mind that turns down to face the truth about colonialism and try to find to polish it over with reassuring literature.

The ending of political domination of the Western powers in the colonies does not mark the end of colonialism all over the world. Colonialism is more than a substantive reality. It is an approach, a mind-set; emerging in dangerous, disguised forms and hence in stable want of being fought against. Like economic and cultural dominance, colonialism remains very much breathing, even though it has turn out to be more delicate in calculating skills through the working out with new technological and media networks.

However, Ghosh does not touch upon, the cultural stumble upon between the colonized and the colonizing powers which at times has had a positive side too. It seems that a restriction of *The Glass Palace* as it is of many studies and analyses of the colonial experience. Moreover, Ghosh’s accession gives the impression as to some extent summing up as the novel does not adequately provide for a wide variety of historical and social variation among Burma, Malaya, and India. Sometimes colonialism emerges in the novel as a large monument, with intricate
and significant aspects of the different communities immersed, and otherwise altogether lost completely in the bringing together, assimilating procedure. The Glass Palace does not really illustrate how colonialism disturbed the lives of women at a greater level, even if the women do not play a very important role in the novel nor does it expose the pathetic condition of the peasants and tribal peoples in the colonized community. In fact, Ghosh seems all but unreceptive to the exclusive nature of modernization the colonial powers may be credited with bringing about in the colonies.

It may well be that these eliminations were purposeful and were imposed by the dramatic requirements of theme and character as the author had imagined them. In any case, the truth of colonialism has hardly ever been brought out with such shrewdness and impartiality as in The Glass Palace. Ghosh’s tone stays calm and balanced and does not turn out to be rough even when handling with the more unpleasant facets of colonialism. The novel remains free from the self-pity and melodrama. Ghosh’s use of a assortment of speakers with completely disagreeing views facilitates him to scrutinize the colonial experience from a range of perceptions and makes the exhibition more complicated and shaded. Thus The Glass Palace is significant not only as a marvelous work of fiction but also as an excellently insightful literary work.

This novel informs the readers a great deal about the destiny of the refugee in the present world, a theme which reappears in Ghosh’s succeeding works with much expressiveness. In addition to this theme, the other ideas which persists in Ghosh’s works are: the individual’s difficult situations and participation in the
wide range of legislative proceedings; the doubtful character of boundaries, whether between nations and peoples or between one literary genre and another; the role of memory and realization in one’s quest for self identity in the course of time; the role of the artist in the world and the significance of storyline in determining history. But above all these major serious literary concerns the due credit must be given to Ghosh, the superb narrator and representative of characters. John Hawley rightly comments:

*The Glass Place* is an ideal expression of almost all the major anxieties of Ghosh, mixed together into a fantastic narrative. But superseding all the thematic concerns is the theme of post-coloniality. The destitute and disturbed expatriate native is an indivisible fraction of a post-colonial novel. Amitav Ghosh is significantly a writer of histories and takes care of thoughtful examination of individuality and society above all a post-colonial characteristic. He rejoices and explores multiplicity, synthesize and difference, other than from decreased all demarcation, whether physical or psychological.

A principal instrument in the procedure of colonization is formation of nation, as in journeying from an unstructured no nation condition to that of alert nationhood. The people feel privileged of the new nation and later pass on their really unsystematic past to the spheres of history. This nation-formation engrosses a heartrending dispersion and spreading of people across man-made borders. The broad association of people in the recent history of human race in the wake of royalist and expansionist programmes across Africa and eastward in Asia tolerate sufficient proof to this. *The Glass Palace* records and points out the experiences of
first such races inhabiting British occupied territories in South East Asia, who are craving to make their own nation.

_The Glass Place_ is the author’s effort to redesign the history of three South Asian countries, Myanmar, India and Malaysia all locations of the British Empire through the late 19th and 20th centuries. The tumultuous cultural crossbreeds, disagreements, histories and nations as a symbol of loss configure the main concern of Ghosh. Rajkumar, the main character of the novel, symbolizes the vanished, expelled and destitute native whose family is additionally spread in the course of the novel in the course of post royalist dislodgment in different parts of the Asian continent. The dramatic multiculturalism and nationalities is apparent at the very beginning when the eleven year old Rajkumar observes the blowing of English cannons and British invasion of Burmese Royal Palace in Mandalay. “English soldiers were marching towards the city... Panic struck the market. People began to run and jostle. Rajkumar managed to push his way through the crowd... He could not see far: a cloud of dust hung over the road, drummed up by thousands of racing feet... Rajkumar was swept along in the direction of the river. As he ran, he became aware of a ripple in the ground beneath him, a kind of drumbeat in the earth, a rhythmic tremor that travelled up his spine through the soles of his feet. The people in front of him scattered and parted... Suddenly he was in the front rank of the crowd, looking directly at two English soldiers mounted on horses.” (104)

It is not simply the protest marches and the frightened crowds but the fact that most of the British invading forces engage Indian soldiers, which is a
surprising point in the novel. Even the royal proclamation before the bolt from the blue attack of Burma stands acknowledgment to this:

“To all royal subjects and inhabitants of the royal empire those heretics, the Barbarian English –Kalaas having most harshly made demands calculated to bring about the impairment and destruction of our religion... the degradation of our race, are making a show and preparation as if about to wage war, have been replied with the usages of great nations and in words which are just and regular” (15-16).

*The Glass Place* consists of a large number of characters which include the advantaged as well as the subaltern. The royal family-Thebaw, Queen Supayalat and the Burmese princesses and common public like Dolly, Rajkumar, Saya John and Uma are combined paradoxically by the strong winds of colonial dislodgment. These leading roles are compelled by the coarse historical winds are transported from Burma to India, Malaya, Singapore and back again, each time relating a pattern of fear, jam-packed crowd and soldiers on the rally as already pointed up in the very beginning of the novel.

Initially Rajkumar, is shown as a subaltern who comes out as a true international post-colonial citizen first of all by being a Kalaa, a foreign person in an unfamiliar country, then by being victimized to colonization of a more brutal kind in taking part in the great national turmoil that the British occupation of Burma demands, followed by another chaotic incident in colonial India and his venture into the Malayan forest assets. He occupies a really indeterminate post-colonial scope beyond the openings of race, class and nation in which his life is entangled. The crossbreed nature of the colonized-subaltern who changes himself
into an prosperous capitalist and comes to bear a resemblance to the colonizer is exposed through the character of Rajkumar, who becomes a graduate from an insignificant refugee boy, through his training as a luga lei under Saya John, to a trader who is respected in the timber trading circles of Burma. Saya John, his adviser, is another transnational from China who develops himself into bearing an appearance of Europeans in his costume and conduct. Saya John teaches the life of young Europeans who taught them how “to bend the work of nature to your will” (75) Rajkumar. Saya John’s idea that the entire venture of cutting timber from the forests could not have been possible without the Europeans’ resourcefulness; Saya’s knowledge of this and his copying of the white Sahib’s lifestyle, engages conciliation between the complete partition from the empire and complete reliance upon the empire for its survival.

Imitation of the colonizer’s language, characteristics and way of dressing is another notable feature of a postcolonial hero. Saya John’s purposeful efforts at anglicizing, by his way of dressing and the author’s description of Beni Prasad Dey, the ICS officer appointed in Ratnagiri where the Burmese royals are held captive are worth a mention here.

“It was a ritual with Saya John, a kind of superstition, always to start these journeys in European clothes: a sola topee, leather boots, khaki trousers” (67).

“Collector Dey was slim and aquiline with a nose that extended in a sharp beak – like point. He dressed in finely cut Savile Row suits and wore gold-rimmed eyeglasses” (104).
Ghosh’s reference to Dey’s behaviour, his shielding of ruling power before the Burmese King, and his tongue-in-cheek reference to the British as amader gurujon (our teacher) brings out the feel of compromise with which such acts of involvement and imitation are concentrated in the colonized space.

The compassion of the colonized subject with the equals colonized, though of separate nationality is clear when Rajkumar shows astonishment at his own participation with the common bereavement at the sudden employment of Burma and the loss of the ruler.

“Rajkumar was at a loss to understand his greed. He was in a way, a feral creature, unaware that there exists an invisible bond linking people to one another through personifications of their commonality. In the Bengal of his birth these ties had been sundered by a century of conquests and no longer existed even as a memory but that, there should exist a universe of loyalties that was unrelated to himself and his own immediate needs, this was very nearly incomprehensible” (47).

The royal maid Dolly also contributes to her deadlock with Rajkumar. She feels the same unfathomable devotion to the royal family’s dislodgement to India. She started to become aware of strange small alterations around her, of the servant’s impertinence, their negative response to shiko and her own undecided situation. She was told that she is free and that she is a slave and not a prisoner. But she knew that she is destined with the princesses, who she had been locked up to take care of. Dolly embodies the twice colonized prey of the partitioned nation. She symbolizes the silent and hidden violence of dislodged people. Dolly’s most unforgettable worry is that Burma her birth place is nowhere to be found by her
evermore. Her dislocation from her roots and her uneasiness with her altered self is clear when she confesses her difficult situation to Uma, the collector’s wife:

“If I went to Burma now I would be a foreigner – they would call me a Kalaa 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” (113).

The imperial subjects experience from a knowledge of imaginary mother country having to suffer major part of their lives in relocated places. Dolly and Rajkumar both satirically have a loyalty to the nation of their exile or dislodgment which they have accepted as their home. For Dolly, her life in Outram House is the only life she knows and amazingly she is the most self-assured, in her place of banish. She asks Uma, “where would I go, this is home” (119).

Both Dolly and Uma are sufferers of the same colonial force and share a profound realization and admiration for each other’s difficult condition. Dolly tolerates the trouble of slavery at the hands of the Burmese royalty. However, both are very fast to admit their personal position and any imposing discrimination either may harbor. Ghosh provides a conversation full of typical post-colonial disappointment:

One night, plucking up her courage, Uma remarked: ‘One hears some awful things about Queen Supayalat.’

‘What?’

‘That she had a lot of people killed… in Mandalay…’
Dolly was quiet for a moment and Uma began to worry that she had offended her. Then Dolly spoke u ‘You know Uma’ she said in her softest voice. ‘Every time I come to your house, I notice that picture you have hanging by your front door...’

‘Of Queen Victoria, you mean’

‘Yes’

Uma was puzzled. ‘What about it?’

‘Don’t you sometimes wonder how many people have been killed in Queen Victoria’s name? It must be millions wouldn’t you say? I think I’d be frightened to live with one of those pictures.’

A few days later Uma put the picture down and sent it to the Cutchery, to be hung in the Collector’s office” (114).

Dolly’s on time angry reply exposes her emotional affinity to the only home and family she knows and loves before her marriage. Her love for the royal family is evident when before leaving with Rajkumar, she takes a “last glimpse of the lane, the leaning coconut palms, the Union Jack, flapping above the gaol on its crooked pole...”(171).

The understanding of the banished victims of the partition of nations is strange in the logic that they slip easily into foreign cultures, at the same time activating off the force of isolation, longing for their own nation and transnationalism in their separated personalities. Ghosh’s characterization of Rajkumar, the insignificant luga lei turned timber magnate is a way of expressing the challenging of settling and resettling of group of people and individuals in the middle of the joining together of nations and nationalities. He is a true multicultural, a reinvented migrant, who, by
mark of his endeavor, carves a niche for himself and flees from harbouring in low cultural slum areas. Like most of Ghosh’s other characters, Uma is a resident of the world away from bound by borders. Her short travels to Europe and America after her husband’s death showed her the way to the Indian Nationalist movement and consequently she carries her tussles to the subcontinent. The hybridity and adaptableness of characters like Rajkumar and Uma strips off the derogatory connotations of exile like subjugation and significantly softens the twofold colonized-colonizer.

The next theme which structures an indivisible component of a post-colonial story is the confrontation to and struggle against imperialism. Despite the portrayal of nationalism through the character of Uma, the reminiscent depiction of another more difficult and more resultant fight of the Indian officers and soldiers serving in the British army. Uma’s nephew Arjun is immeasurably proud to be among the fortunate minority who are able to enter the class of the rulers. It is Hardayal Singh, his peer and a third generation army officer, who makes Arjun aware about the Britishers’ bigotry, mistrust and doubt of Indian officers as well as soldiers. When their recruitment orders came for which they were waiting for a long time, Hardayal remembered the inscription in Chetwode Hall at the Military Academy in Dehradun and expresses uncertainty at the thought of ‘country’:

“Where is this country? The fact is that you and I don’t have a country, so where is this place whose safety, honour and welfare are to come first, always and every time?” (330).

Although Hardayal has comprehended this paradoxical situation quite early in life, Arjun is stunned into acknowledging it after a small number of drawbacks.
When Arjun’s regiment arrives at Singapore on its way up the Malay Peninsula, he receives the kind of experience that one of his fellow officers had forecast:

“...it was as though they were examining their own circumstances for the first time in retrospect; as though the shock of travel had displaced an indifference that had been inculcated in them since their earliest childhood” (346).

Suddenly they realize the truth that they have never been received as equivalents by the British. Later Arjun starts paying attention to Hardayal’s complaints:

“It’s strange to be sitting in a trench, holding a gun and asking yourself; who is this weapon really aimed at? Am I being tricked into pointing it at myself? ... This is what I ask myself Arjun: In what way do I become human again? How do I connect what I do with what I want in my heart?” (406)

Amreek Singh of Indian National Army drops from the air brochures to wake up the soldiers to the national cause during the battle of Jitra. They say,

“Brothers ask yourselves what you are fighting for and why you are there: do you really wish to sacrifice your lives for an empire that has kept you country in slavery for two hundred years?” (391)

As soon as Arjun notices Kishan Singh and other soldiers of his company reading the brochure, he inquires them to dispose them off and cautions the soldiers of terrible penalty if any of them is found with the brochure. Arjun is tattered between compassion repulsion and terror, as a contradictory to the rigid resolution of Hardayal. He later admits to Dinu about his predicament:
“We rebelled against an empire that shaped everything in our lives... We cannot destroy it without destroying ourselves” (518).

The growing distress extensively among the Indians who are fighting under the colonial army is woven mixed up with the other cherished annoyances of the protagonists. Arjun’s passionate connection with his assistant Kishan Singh is the only long-term bond in the otherwise impassive unscrupulous practice of war. Dinu and Alison both have a crossbred bloodline fall in love, challenging different geographies and races. This love bond is ordained to blossom, between Rajkumar’s son and Saya John’s granddaughter and is peculiarly representative of a mutual coercion across undecided and expelled regions. In the midst of wartime hopelessness and disappointment, Ghosh appears to recap here the silent and accepted faith that only such love and aspiration can carry on. Dinu’s suppressed disapproval against imperialism is given in contrast to Uma’s and Hardayal’s hostile revolt. Dinu’s sympathetic anxiety for Burma is not triggered by revolt. He leads ahead a quiet life in post-colonial Rangoon under the harsh shade of the junta. Arjun is projected as a sensitively distressed, perplexed individual who is trapped between two worlds but belonging to neither, while the remaining characters, both violently or passively, have found and followed their calling.

The pursuit for self identity and basis, a tight spot strange to colonized individuals is discussed by Ghosh to reveal the isolation and loss of a sense of belonging of the natives. Rajkumar lives the life almost close to needy in Uma’s Calcutta home and after all his wanderings, dies with the belief that the “Ganges could never be the same as the Irrawaddy” (544). While barriers and boundaries seem to identify the characters that contemplate the making of nations and
nationalities in *The Glass Place*, the author appears to disintegrate these margins and is symbolically at home wherever he stays. Menakshi Mukherjee in her essay on The Anxiety of Indianness comments:

“For Ghosh as in some of the best Indian language writers, words like ‘Marginality’ and ‘hybridity’ seem quite irrelevant and segmenting the worlds into third and first regions is a rather absurd activity.”(11)

In other angle, the post colonis free of gender, group and political associations as he travels without any disturbances across the worlds ‘spaces and cultures. Regardless of the immense expeditions, Ghosh writes with a sagacity of personal touch with the colonial history of India. The work is enhanced to a great deal by autobiographical elements like his class family attachment with the Indian freedom fight and his involvement in General Slim’s Burmese voyages. Even his invented characters show a sensitive realization of colonial history and family tree. Rakhee Moral highlights this feature of Ghosh’s work:

“If *The Glass Place* is a rather loose, sprawling Bildungs roman constructed around the life of Rajkumar Raha in Burma, Malaysia and India, it is also on a more subterranean level the acknowledgement of those changing parameters from the history of colonial India through the post independent nationhood that determines the personal and psychological identities of the author himself.” (12)

Ghosh emerges as a combination of a post-colonial and the multi-national, who identifies smoothly with the world of the colonizer. Ghosh surrenders to the
yearning to succumb to the world and deal with it without a sense of the trouble of the earlier hundred years.

The genre of novel is particularly well-matched to bring essence to the bare structures of colonial subjects. Rukmini Bhaya Nair comments on the proliferation of characters in *The Glass Palace*:

“That is why I cannot think of a clutch of sentences which better describe this massive 547-page book than these: ‘He has a small photo studio. Does wedding – pictures, group photographs - that sort of thing?’” (502).

Burma is the focus of concern for Ghosh in this novel, but the reader can easily imagine or rather see him depicting refugees from any nation or culture in the similar manner. All his works of fiction especially *The Shadow Lines* stand evidence to this. Ghosh’s blending of fiction with other genres like travelogue, anthropological research thesis and the historians’ books, is a well-known trait of the postcolonial novel nowadays. Post-colonial novels especially those of Amitav Ghosh are manifested by fusion, an aptitude to transfer perception and move between genres and cultures voyaging across limitations. Rukmini Bhaya Nair reaches the level of making it the reason for the characters to have a feeling of being at home wherever they are in the world:

“For the only way to make one’s presence felt on a world stage, be visible and at home in the world, ironically, is to hark back, preferably in English, to a forgotten history in which the colonizer participated as vigorously as the colonized.”(13)
The hero in *The Glass Palace* is tormented by the same problem. He crosses the border line beyond the definite borders of nations and family history to locate an abode for him in a foreign land. He confesses to Dolly:

“My father was from Chittagong and he ended up in Arakan; I ended up in Rangoon; you went from Mandalay to Ratnagiri and now you’re here too. There are people who have the luck to end their lives where they began them. But this is not something that is owed to us” (310).

The post colonial crisis of exile is apparent when the king broods over over his destiny on his way to be banished in India:

“The king raised his eyes and spotted several Indian faces along the waterfront. What vast, what incomprehensible power to move people in such numbers from one place to another: emperors, kings, farmers, dockworkers, soldiers, coolies, policemen. Why? Why this furious movement – people taken from one place to another to pull rickshaws, to sit behind in exile?” (50)

This dislodgment and movement on a classic level leads to another most important anxiety of Ghosh in most of his fictional and even non-fictional works, which has the vague impression and a succeeding abolition of borders whether geographical, cultural, racor even psychological. In an interview with John Hawley, Ghosh comments:

“What interested me first about borders was their arbitrariness their contractedness – the ways in which they are ‘naturalised’ by modern political myth making. I think this interest arose because of some kind of inborn distrust of anything that appears to be given or taken for granted. This is why I distrust also the lines that people
draw between fiction and non fiction. I think these lines are drawn in order to manipulate our ways of thought: that is why they must be disregarded.” (14)

Colonialism instills in itself migration and displacement, troops marching, administration changing, large scale transfer of masses and redefining of political boundaries. Rajkumar reveal these shifts across frontiers in his life having left without home and ruined in childhood. He is a remainder of the circumstances produced by colonialism where a feeble person would have surrendered. Hardayal and other Indian soldiers in the British armed forces, begin to shoot questions about borders that no one is brave enough to ask, which during Japanese attack appear ediological and unimportant.

The insignificance of these divisions is seen when the narrator informs us;

“...when Singapore fell, there were some fifty five thousand Indian troops on the island. Of these more than half joined the Indian National Army” (520).

The inner development of Dolly is fairly noteworthy in the novel. When her son Dinu was on the road to recovery in the hospital, Dolly became thoughtful and felt sad with other mothers shedding tears over their dead children.

“... She’d found herself listening to voices that were inaudible during the day: the murmurs of anxious relatives; distant screams of pain, women keening in bereavement. It was as though the walls turned porous in the stillness of the night, flooding her room with an unseen tide of defeat and suffering... She’d begun to cry – it was as though her voice had merged with that of the unknown woman: as
though an invisible link had arisen between all of them – her, Dinu, the dead child, his mother” (210).

Her sympathy liquefies all psychological blockades and joins her with the other greedy women.

The ideas of immigration, crossbreed and diaspora, are combine in a recurring prototype of history. This unusual historical style was initiated by Ghosh in *The Shadow Lines* and with *The Glass Palace* he once again resumes to it. But this time it is on a bigger image, the stories are cherished, private and yet have a greater implication. The imaginary lives of Rajkumar and Dolly, Saya John, Ma Cho, Uma, Dinu, Neel and Manju, Arjun and Kishan Singh are merged with historical and political figures like the last of the Burmese royalty and Aung San Suu Kyi. Rajkumar’s granddaughter Jaya is an art historian who fastens up the untied ends of the novel. Although the royal family endows with the setting for the novel still it is a story of common man and even colonized. The expatriate state is depicted by Ghosh through the innermost crisis of the novel which is the clash in faithfulness that the Indian soldier in the British Indian Army experiences. It is the throbbing catastrophes that rocks at the bottom of unequal forces collectively and makes one choose. Ghosh in this method draws out the inner anguish of diaspora.

A shared historical predicament goes a long way to bridge the gap between people of diverse national and cultural backgrounds and *The Glass Palace* is a perfect embodiment of first such historical citation. To quote Rakhee Moral:

“This crisscross of history with narrative fuelled by the author’s own remembered images and fabulations of people trapped in the
machinations of time serve to bridge the widening psychological gap between nations and geographies. Ghosh’s account of colonial conflict and his rendering of time past allow sufficient distance, as it were, in which to reconsider some of the issues that racked South Asian history more objectively.” (15)

The entangled histories of Burma, Malaysia and India in the British government without any reference to national, political and geographical precincts, offers a picture of colonial history as if it is a transnational cultural fiesta. According to Ranajit Basu: “History is a brooding presence in Ghosh’s books, almost a living entity able to shape the lives of his characters.” (16)

The focal point of the novel combines excess of history particularly the places where the British Indian army combating in opposition to the Japanese in Malaysia during the Second World War is uncovered. The clash of allegiances is brought forward through Uma Dey’s nephew Arjun Roy, his batman Kishan Singh and, Hardayal Singh – his fellow officer in 1/1 Jat Light Infantry. Some of the students and congress leaders 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” (288).

Like Beni Prasad Dey, Arjun Roy was also puffed with self esteem of the domain. He was proud to be connected with a company that had collected awards such as the Victoria Cross from the Somme, two military crosses for settling down the Arab rebellion in Mesopotamia. The addition of these pieces of information shows Ghosh the historian researcher at work. Arjun writes to his twin sister
Manju, “...what makes me prouder still is the thought that Hardy and I are going to be the first Indian Officers in the 1/1 Jat: It seems like such a huge responsibility – as though we’re representing the whole of the country!” (262).

The subsequent resistance to imperialism can be seen as a separate theme or a part of the research work of Ghosh the historian. Ghosh confesses in The Anglophone Empire (2003):

“I am Indian and my history has been shaped as much by the institutions of this empire as a long tradition of struggle against them.” (17).

In addition to talking about India, Ghosh also depicts the opposition to armed forces despotic rule in the post-colonial Burma, through some activities of the students, debates about the violence of tyrants like Hitler and Mussolini in Dinu’s photo studio called ‘The Glass Palace’ in Rangoon. Away from this the center of attention is on the experience of Indian Diaspora in South East Asia. But the indistinctive lines are able to be seen not just through colonial dislodgments but through the colonized – colonizer two fold under recognition. Rajkumar is a harassed sufferer of colonization from Bengal, but he becomes a colonizer in Burma by carrying laborers under contract from South India to other parts of the colonial world. He becomes a deceiver when he sexually abuses woman workers on his agricultural estates. Rajkumar, Saya John and Matthew are engaged in the mission of colonizing land and people for the advantage of money. Rohini Mokashi Punekar comments:
“The line between the colonizers and colonized is blurred, even erased; colonization is run as a continuous ongoing process, and often reversible.” (18)

Rajkumar’s life story is knotted with the colonial history in order to annihilate and generate latest histories in many South Asian cities. At the end he seeks shelter in Calcutta away from Burma and not making out himself with India. To quote Meenakshi Mukherjee: “Human lives spill over national boundaries, refusing to stay contained in neat compartments. A person is remembered not as Burmese, Indian, Chinese, Malaya or American.” (19) But far from having a good occasion of this worldwide identification, Ghosh articulates anguish over the diasporic status of the characters. All through the novel, the territory enlarges and then withdraws, riches are won and lost. Namrata Mahanta opines, “the novel sees Amitav Ghosh’s recurrent concern with nationalism: boundaries and statehood transform into multi-levelled dilemmas.” (20)

The novel is a cultural store in that it digs deep into history and traverses over the borders of nation, races, and cultures in his depiction of characters. He explains the ambitions, crush and frustration of people in India, Burma, China, Malaysia and America such as King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, Saya John, Rajkumar, Dolly, Uma, Alison, Dinu, Neel, Arjun, Hardyal, Kishan Singh, Jaya and Bongo.

Meenakshi Mukherjee says, “The story spans more than a century in the history of the subcontinent, people get involved in unexpected relationships, across countries and cultures. Wars are fought; rebellions quelled, political and
ethical issues are debated, fortunes are made and lost. The writer reports everything accurately, thoughtfully-his precision backed up by meticulous research.” (21)

But though in exile the various characters and their families strewn around the world are; some naturally and some painstakingly brought together. Rakhee Moral writes, The Glass Palace is “...symbolic of exiles coming together, as it were of families meeting out of a shared compulsion across disputed and dispossessed territories.” (22)

The Glass Palace established on industrious research work and an intellectual creative mind behind it, projects out as an adorable piece of historical fiction. Of course, it requests to find out the relationship with traditional historical romances; even though Ghosh’s thematic interests are much larger in range. Rukmini Bhaya Nair evaluates the novel to Walter Scott’s Ivanhoe and comments on the phrases where Ghosh describes Dolly’s and Aung San Suu Kyi’s beauty as being ‘beyond belief’, ‘beyond imagination’. According to Rukmini’s opinion, it is, “tackling history within the boundaries of contemporary fiction, that duty to create an imaginative grace out of the relatively recent memories of an embittered history of disgrace which I have suggested marks the teleology of the post-colonial novel.” (23). But it would not be fair to make comparisons based on a panoramic view of the two works. While Ivanhoe was first a representation of Europe’s popular history; Ghosh according to Rukmini Bhaya Nair, makes the research work meticulous himself and his historical research is united with the force of postcolonialism and even his anthropological training.
“The Glass Palace is a formidable researched presentation of one of the less-known theatres of World War II, yet no less horrific than Dunkirk or Stalingrad. Ghosh confesses in his author’s notes: ‘I read hundreds of books, memoirs, travelogues, gazetteers, articles and notebooks, published and unpublished; I travelled thousands of miles, visiting and revisiting, so far as possible, all the settings and locations that figure in the novel; and I sought out scores of people in India, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand’.” (24)

Ghosh’s enormous learning and talent united with the development accomplished by current novel effect in a work loaded with historical detail, and amusing at the same time. Rukmini Bhaya Nair offer sowing recognition to Ghosh’s intellectual and graceful approach: “Some post-colonauthors achieve this through exuberant wordplay or fantasy – one need hardly mention Marquez or Rushdie’s ‘magic’ approach to ‘real’ history. But Ghosh cannot be accused of stylistic excess or of pandering to a sheer love of language; he is one of the few authors I know who does not balk at using words like ‘governance’ in a novel!” (25). Ghosh is dedicated to follow a line of investigation and providing barren aspects of history and dislodgment therein. So he desires to maintain balance of the resulting austerity with some heavenly features and these he try to find in the perfect human beauty of Dolly and Suu Kyi; the new and bright initstages after great turmoils like the immigration of Burmese royal family in Ratagiri, Saya John and Matthew’s creation of the beautiful ‘Morningside’ farm in Malaysia and many happenstances which the reader comes across through the track of this classic.

Coincidence is the character which suddenly enters into the novel is at times upturned to, by Ghosh the historical researcher, not just to join loose ends together, but
also to add a little beauty to a really dull historical research composition. When Ghosh makes Neel, Rajkumar’s son meet Manju, Uma’s niece, there is a terrible requirement in the novel to unite together the hugeset of connections of families scattered transversely the South Asian countries being watched. So Neel and Manju by opportunity meet in a small studio, fall in love and followed by their marriage uniting the families of two best friends, Dolly and Uma together. An additional happenstance occurs when Arjun’s unit is positioned in Malaysia very near to Momingside farm and he meets by chance not only just Alison but also Dolly and Rajkumar’s younger son Dinu. Their lives are now connected with Arjun and Alison’s short issue in dissimilar to Dinu and Alison’s long lasting association. Later, when after Arjun had joined the mutineers of the Indian National Army and has been roaming in the forests for days in a pitifully withered status, he meets Dinu who has been requested by the villagers to speak to the Indian soldiers because of his Indian associations. Even though the concomitance are too unanticipated and deliberate, yet Ghosh’s skillful move towards history and entwining a classical story into it, makes the reader stop thinking about his suspicions or willingly make a ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ for a complete, amusing work. Rukmini Bhaya Nair comments on his use of co-existence:

“The Glass Palace is not just a thoroughly researched novel; it is a carefully plotted one. This means that Ghosh goes out of his way to tie up loose ends. Stylistically, he is always measured, correct, objective – in the manner of the historian but managerially he isn’t altogether able to resist the temptation to play God in the mode of the novelist.” (26)

The Glass Palace can be included in the list of fantastic classical group of tales which admit the label of post-colonial historical discourse relating a number of
journeys across the borders, but which diverges very much from travelogues written by authors of other countries. The traveler here is one among the victims, belonging to the place, and compassionate with them. To quote Rukmini Bhaya Nair:

“Family sagas with a sweeping historical backdrop were always a failsafe item in the publishing world from The Forsyte Saga to Gone With the Wind. The only crucial change to have come about in the past decade or two is that ‘the Orient’ is now increasingly represented not so much by Paul Scott or a Pearl S. Buck as by best selling writers like Jung Chang or Vikram Seth speaking in their own voices... This is because travel writing is logically the province of the ‘outsider’ and there is thus a certain legitimacy that a writer can claim when he traipses off to say, Ladakh or Somalia or Kandahar, and records his own misadventure there. In contrast, considerably less sympathy exists in today’s politically correct climate, for the fiction writer who ‘appropriates the perspective of the ‘third worlder’.” (27)

When Ghosh’s rich literary yield is read scrupulously, it can be understood the various literary genres he blends to generate a fictional work. In An Antique Land (part fiction, part autobiography, anthropological research work and sociological history of Egypt) and travelogues like Dancing in Cambodia At Large in Burma are perfect examples besides other significant works. This blending of genres for a novel that challenges organization is another way of communicating his major anxiety which is the annihilation of all tangible and intangible partitions. Rukmini Bhaya Nair shields Ghosh’s challenging categorization: “...an Indian writer like Ghosh, who lives in ‘the West’ but writes about ‘elsewhere’ is almost
forced today to occupy an intergeneric cusp; between travel-writing, autobiography, informed journalism and fiction.” (28)

Ghosh transmits his fondness for forming relations a little too far when he brings together Uma – Rajkumar in a rather sedative way at the end of the novel. But regardless of these wandering unpleasant events, the novel is a complete feast for those who look for research as well as those who seek sensational family stories. Albeit the all-inclusive themes, volume of research matter and a large number of characters, the novel is to a certain extent well pictured and well plotted. The novel is being divided into seven parts, each named after the place or occurrence of uppermost significance, the novel provides regularity to a scheme of classical scope. The parts are entitled as follows in sequence ‘Mandalay’, ‘Ratnagiri’, ‘The Money Tree’, ‘The Wedding’, ‘Morningside’, ‘The Front’ and ‘The Glass Palace’. The novel is well-formed with its beginning and end, both concerning ‘the glass palace’ although of diverse connotations. It begins with a reference to the hall full of mirrors in the Royal Palace in Mandalay and ends in a small photo-studio of the same name, Royal Palace run in Rangoon, by an elderly Dinu, where innovative ideas sprout out daily. To come to the point with Rukmini Bhaya Nair’s remarks:

“Ghosh is a worthy writer not a scintillating one, and his The Glass Palace is important not because it opens new stylistic or thematic doors, but because it reopens old ones so effectively. Burma at the present time is near inaccessible territory; yet Ghosh’s book manages to hold up before a global community of readers a historically authentic “golden” Burma as it was and could be again. At a time of millenndoom, when we are having to radically
reconfigure our dimly remembered pasts in order to understand their effects on our chaotically disturbed present, that is, the novel’s signal post-colonial virtue-elephants, teak, pagodas and all.” (29)

Rajkumar with acumen and “watchful determination” continues to generate a fortune in the teak business and to locate and marry Dolly. Rajkumar, after starting to lead a family and progressing to advanced success in the rubber industry, it crumbled down in the pandemonium of World War II. Towards the closing stages of his life, he comes to a conclusion deeply at chances with his youthful paying no notice to “invisible bonds linking people to one another through personifications of their commonality.” In reply to the hale and hearty cry of a baby, the opportunistic and selfish Rajkumar takes hold of “At that moment the world held no more beautiful sound than this utterance of rage: this primeval sound of life proclaiming its determination to defend itself.”

Away in Glass Palace, this type of longing for freedom in the midst of the outwardly un defeatable force of tyrants and difference of opinion finds a resonance in another’s realization that “while misrule and tyranny must be resisted, so too must politics itself.” It “has invaded everything, spared nothing,” and must not be “allowed to cannibalize all of life, all of existence.” There is no escape from politics, but “what could be more trivial, in the end?”

Still, Ghosh’s propelling novel, for the most part written in an attractively clear-cut and matter-of-fact style, makes up for its scattershot approach to portrayal of characters with its all-encompassing analysis of historical, social and cultural expansion. Along the process, the reader also get a few lessons in stuffs as rubber
production, charging elephants and leeches, which, by the way, find the webbed skin between the toes “the most prized of the human body's offerings.” In the swarming Glass Palace, there is still a fragment of wriggle space for economics and the exotic, too.

In fact Amitav Ghosh’s remarkable endeavor in the novel is to present an inventive restoration of the most distressed times of India’s recent history. What amazes most about the novel is the way Ghosh lays down matters perfectly, caringly, with accuracy supported by painstaking research, whether it is the portrayal of the Royal Palace in Mandalay, coolies’ lives, oil wells, planting of rubber trees, the intricacy of actions carried on in the timber trade, military exercises, finer points like cameras, automobiles, aircrafts, clothing, or food – each and every aspect is perfectly period specific. But in the convention of postmodern fiction, *The Glass Palace* also defies the detachment of the historical and the literary aspects. On the other hand, it should be kept in mind that *The Glass Palace* is not a historical novel as many a reader is inclined to mistaken it as such. The novel tries to modify the traditional historical attitudes without escaping ideas of historicity or historical purpose. *The Glass Palace* perhaps is the best example of the postmodernist, postcolonial, historiographic fiction.