

CHAPTER III

THE TRAMPLED LAND IN *THE GLASS PALACE*

We who ruled the richest land in Asia are now reduced to this...

We were the first to be imprisoned in the name of progress;...A hundred years hence you will read the indictment of Europe's greed in the difference between the Kingdom of Siam and the state of our own enslaved realm. (TGP 88)

Humanity flourished in the face of earth with the existence of land. The nature of the human beings varies according to the nature of the land. Land determines the race, culture, tradition, food habits and identity. Tamil Literature substantiates this view in Sanga Ilakkiam that classifies land into five different regions according to the nature of the land. The first type of land is called Kurunji – Mountain and Mountain covered regions, second is Mullai – Forest and Forest covered regions, third is Marutham – Fields and Field covered regions, fourth is Neithal – Sea and Coastal regions and fifth is Palli – Desert and Dry regions. Each type of land determines the career and lifestyle of the people. The land thus constitutes the confluence people of different ethnicities' and traditions in the name of nation. The peoples affectation on their land nurtures sense of patriotism and nationalism.

Land plays a dominant role in shaping the life of an individual, society and a nation. According to Christian belief the exodus of Israelites was towards 'Cannan' – the "Land" that is fertile and abundant in natural resources, the book of Exodus chapter three verse eight states, "... a land flowing with milk and honey" (NIV Ex 3:8). Hinduism also substantiates that human life and the life of various species is originated by the combination of five natural elements namely land, water, air, sky

and fire. These constitute the Pancha Boothangal, amidst which the “Land” occupies the foremost position. Rabindranath Tagore, in his poem, *Pancha bhoota*, has explained that the emotional faculty of the human mind and body is keenly sensitive to the land, all objects of light, colour and sound. Therefore land plays a dominant role in shaping the life of an individual, a society, a kingdom and a nation. In this view, Burma – the land of riches - is known as the “Golden Land” (TGP 126). It is this land that alleviated the survival and growth of the protagonist Rajkumar into a successful businessman.

The history of creation traces down the evolution of nature. Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament in the Bible, chapter one verse 3 states, “And God said, Let there be Light, light appeared” (NIV, Gen 1: 3). He made the brighter light ‘Sun’ to govern the day and lesser light ‘Moon’ to govern the night that serves as a sign to mark the different seasons, days and years. God then made the waters to gather at one place for the dry ground to be appeared. He called the dry ground as ‘Land’ and waters as ‘Seas’. God made the land to produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees; living creatures like livestock, wild animals and reptiles. He finally created Adam and Eve and entrusted them with the responsibility of guarding the land. With the birth of sin, the earth was subjected to destructible changes. The face of whole earth was flooded destroying all the life except for the lives of Noah and his family for his righteousness and every pair of living creatures that was with him in the ark. From him came the different races, languages and nations of the present world.

Colonialism is a forceful way of expanding one’s territory. Initially, expansion of territories began with kings invading their neighbouring kingdoms in order to exhibit their power and dominance. Later this invasion was replaced by the weapon of colonialism by the British. Their target was on countries that were abundant in wealth,

riches and resource but technologically backward. It is with this context the British used this weapon of colonialism to trample the land of the rich Asian countries like, India, Burma, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan and others. The British mercilessly treaded and trampled the virginity of these countries robbing off all its treasures and riches available in the form of natural resources and left them in utter ruin and devastation. Jagroop S. Biring rightly states in his article *Colonising the mind: Civilisational imperialism in Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace* that, "Colonialism as a policy of appropriating other territories and countries was vindicated by the political, economic and epistemological underpinnings of determinate ideological imperatives on the part of the West" (95). They not only ravished the wealth of these countries but also smashed and shattered its identity ruthlessly.

Amitav Ghosh in this novel *The Glass Palace* (2000) traces the desolation of the three countries Burma, India and Malaya. The despondency of these nations was the result of extreme exploitation forcefully vested upon them. These lands were thoroughly trampled off from not only of its natural resources but also of its peoples' integrity and dignity. The colonisers had little humanistic feeling towards the people that the natives were forced into exile and were transformed as refugees to their neighbouring countries for survival. Ghosh portrays the transformation of the 'natives' as 'aliens' and the concept of 'home' by the exile of the last Burmese King and their dislocation as a transnationalist along with his fictional characters' who are transformed bearing the indelible mark that the tumult tide of colonialism had left behind.

The novel is spread over three generations and across different nations emphasising the need for 'humanism' to understand the web of human relationships

despite different nationality and spirit of patriotism and nationalism. Mansing G.

Kadam in *Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace: A Postcolonial Novel* comments,

The Glass Palace treats several issues that intersect on the terrain of a postcolonial nation-state spanning three generations and three nations over a period of two centuries. It narrates the enmeshed history of Burma, Malaysia and India in the British regime. Ghosh debunks the national, political and geographic boundaries and supports his own idea that nationalism is an imaginative construct. (37)

Ghosh proclaims to the world that universal humanism is the key to open the treasure of peace that every individual possesses within.

The novel narrates the story of three families – the royal family of Burma, the family of Rajkumar and the family of Saya John, Rajkumar's mentor. The story is intertwined to three generation of three families in the form of friendship, love and marriage. The plot of the novel is also constructed on the theme of colonization and the historical impact on the colonized people whom Ghosh has depicted as the fictional characters. It depicts different types of trades that were in practice during the British rule in the Eastern part of the South Asian region. It gives a glimpse of the teak trade in Burma which is why the British Government had conquered Burma. It also records the then burgeoning trade in 'rubber'. The novel gives a vivid picture of how all the characters are affected and afflicted by colonization.

The story begins in the year 1885 introducing the protagonist, Rajkumar, a young boy of eleven years, working in Ma Cho's tea stall in Mandalay, a small village in Burma. He was the sole survivor of his family from India. It was he who informed the village people about the 'English cannon' (TGP 3) heading towards their place for war with Burma. The war between Burma and Britain lasted for fourteen days in

which the King Thebwa was defeated. The Royal family (1885-1916) – King Thebwa and Queen Supalayath with their three Princesses and maids were sent to exile to Ratnagiri in India. Rajkumar on the day of exile met Dolly, the youngest of the Queen's maid and fell in love on his first sight and was haunted by her memories.

Rajkumar ventured his own prospects with the help of Baburao, by transporting indentured labourers from India to the plantation in Burma. He then tries his hand in timber business along with Saya John and becomes a successful businessman. Saya John also urged his son Matthew to join hands with Rajkumar in exploring the new 'rubber' business. They move to Malaya on account of their business as 'rubber' was mostly available there. Matthew moves to America for his higher studies and Rajkumar along with Saya John flourish in their new trade. Rajkumar owns up the 'Morningside' estate in Malaya, whereas Matthew marries Elsa and settles down in America with their son Timmy and daughter Alison.

In Ratnagiri, the Burmese Royal family have already spent twenty years of stay at the "Outram House". The royal family, especially the daughters and their maids have adopted Indian culture. They were very much at ease with Indian clothing, food habits and language. In 1905 Ben Prasad Dey an Indian-Bengali and an employee of the British Government, was appointed as the district Collector and in-charge of the Royal family. Beni Prasad-Dey held a higher position in the British Civil Service, one of the rarest Indians to have been conferred with such a distinction. He along with his wife Uma Dey, who was fifteen years younger to him lived in a house named 'The Residency'. Dolly and Uma are united with a strong bond of friendship.

Rajkumar is successful in winning his love by marrying Dolly after twenty long years with the help of Uma. Dolly had to leave to Burma with Rajkumar as the

Queen did not approve her marriage. The young couple sought refuge in Saya John's house. They were gifted with two sons, the elder is Neeladhari fondly known as Neel, whose Burmese name is Sein Win, inherited some typical characteristics of Rajkumar, and the younger is Dinanath fondly known as Dinu, the other name is Tun Pe, who is four years younger to his brother Neel, inherits Dolly's mood and temperament. Dolly is much drawn towards Dinu, because of his infirmity that polio had left him with at a very young age. Dolly dreamt that King Thebaw warning her to take care of Dinu well and the very next day she learns about the death of the King that very night due to heart attack because both his daughters had married an ordinary man. The marriage of the two Princesses also gloomed Uma's life with widowhood as Ben Prasad Dey sought his untimely end.

Uma's widowhood gained her huge wealth and financial support from the British on account of her husband's employment. Uma decide to visit European countries. She shaped her own life as she enjoyed both freedom and financial security. She unlike the ordinary woman exhibits her revolutionary thought by daringly visiting European countries. There she undergoes a great transformation when she realizes the cruelty of the British Empire. She bravely joins the revolt against British rule and becomes a leader of the movement to free India. On her visit to New York she meets Matthew and persuades him to visit his aged father. She continues her cause even at the age of fifty. On her return in 1929 she exhibits her patriotism by joining with the team of Mahatma Gandhi to fight for Indian independence. Uma latter settles with Dolly family in Malaya and accuses Rajkumar for his selfish greed and leaves to Calcutta to stay with his brother.

The story shifts its focus to the second generation of the two families. Neel, the first son of Rajkumar is married to Uma's niece Manju and Dinu, the second son

was in love with Saya John's granddaughter Alison. Arjun, Manju's brother was also in love with Alison thus forming the triangular love. Neel takes up his father's business and dies prematurely. Dinu becomes a passionate photographer and Arjun joins the British Indian Army. Alison chose to live with Dinu for his independent life rejecting Arjun for she felt that he was a toy in the hands of the British. All the characters are caught up in the tide of Second World War and were thrown away to different directions in search for survival.

The dawn of Second World War transformed everyone to be a refugee. Arjun is called to join his battalion to fight for the British Indian Army. Rajkumar, Dolly and Manju were on their move towards India for survival and safety. It is in this tumultuous situation Manju gives birth to Jaya and soon seeks her untimely death by drowning herself in the river while crossing. Saya John and Alison head towards Singapore by car with whom Dinu was to join later. On their journey Saya John is shot dead by the Japanese soldiers and Alison takes her life in order to escape from the inhuman tortures of the Japanese soldiers. Rajkumar and Dolly seek refuge in Uma's flat in Calcutta and after six long years Dolly returns to Burma in order to find her son Dinu. In 1948 she meets Dinu and stays with him for some time and later joins a Buddhist nunnery where she happily breathed her last. Rajkumar stays in India with Jaya who is married to a doctor and is a college professor. In 1996 she happens to attend an art history conference at the University of Goa and comes in contact with a renowned photographer whom she later discovers that it is her uncle Dinu. Dinu at the age of eighty-two lives in Burma conducting classes on photography that focuses on humanism and aesthetics essence of life in confluence with philosophy, in his studio named 'The Glass Palace'. Thus the story begins with 'The Glass Palace' of the Royal family and ends with Dinu's photographic studio 'The Glass Palace'.

Ghosh in *The Glass Palace* portrays the anti-humanistic methods employed by the colonizers for self wealth accumulation. He describes the devastation caused by the devouring spirit of the colonizers treading and trampling all the available resources of these lands right from the natural to the humans. He also portrays the trauma of the colonized due to extreme exploitation, social, economic and political upheavals. He probes into economic condition along with trade and commerce in an area spanning from India to Burma during the colonial period. According to Anshuman A. Mondal in his book *Amitav Ghosh* writes:

the novel demonstrates how the economic and political were two sides of the same colonial coin and it explicitly figures economic exploitation of land, resources and people as a counterpart of political oppression.....The meticulous descriptions of the Burmese interior – its jungle, its villages, its lifestyles – that accompany the equally exhaustive accounts of the timber industry are paralleled by the fastidious descriptions of the Morningside estate in Malaya, and the logistics of the rubber plantation. (110)

Ghosh lays bare the inhuman acts of British in exploiting and destroying the riches of its colonies.

The British trampled the land of Burma for its riches even to the extent of transporting the royal family to India as transnationalist. The theme of transnationalism is brought out with the invasion and exile of the Burmese king Thebaw. The royal family of Burma was the last kingdom in the Burmese empire. This Konbaung Dynasty includes King Thebaw, Queen Supayalat, and their three Princesses along with their orphan maids whom the Queen had adopted them as her maids who wait on the Queen. These maids were the beautiful girls in their empire purchased by the

Queen's agents from the far away mountain regions of Burma. In the thirty-year old 'Glass Palace', lived the twenty-seven year old Thebaw (1885-1916), King of Burma and Queen Supayalat.

The Queen was King's supercilious and hardnosed chief companion. She had assassinated altogether seventy-nine contenders including the family members, who might protest against her husband's right to the throne, thereby ensuring her husband's Kingship. The Queen proved to be the active, dominant and arrogant ruler of the dynasty. The ten year old Dolly was the youngest of all the girls and the most beautiful girl. She was the favourite personal attendant to Queen Supayalat, Thebaw's wife, and she was bestowed with the responsibility of nursing the second Princesses. So, it was Supayalat who wields the real power and not the King, who remained ignorant about the state affairs. In fact, he had not even stepped out of the palace in the last seven years and had never left Mandalay.

The Royal family was deprived of its nationalistic and patriotic feeling by the British invasion. The family was forced to be transformed into a transnationalist to an alien land –India. The invasion was the result of a problem in paying tax for the teak logs. The British took under hand methods in trading teak woods. They cannot accept the fact of being questioned by the Asian countries. According to them, these resourceful countries are meant for exploitation. Sakunta Das writes in *Contextualizing Identities in Amitav Ghosh's Novels* "The colonies served as the site for providing raw data for research that is carried out in the metropolis" (167). The invasion of Burma was for its rich resource of raw materials:

Things happened so quickly: a few months ago there'd been a dispute with a British timber company – a technical matter concerning some logs of teak. It was clear that the company was in the wrong; they were

side-stepping the kingdom's customs regulations, cutting up logs to avoid paying duties. The royal customs officers had slapped a fine on the company, demanding arrears of payment for some fifty thousand logs. The Englishmen had protested and refused to pay; they'd carried their complaints to the British Governor in Rangoon. Humiliating ultimatums had followed. (TGP 21)

The natives of Burma were brought to trial for following the custom and regulation of their land. This served to be a good opportunity to exercise their power and dominance on Burma.

Thebaw, the King of Burma and his royal army had to surrender to the British just in fourteen days. The fall of the Konbaung Dynasty was the result of British colonial expansion; after their defeat at the hands of the British, the King, Queen and their daughters were sent to exile in India. Kanwar Dinesh Singh in *Exile as Leiti motif in Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace* comments, "the biggest harm is noticeable in the form of economic breakdown, social disorientation, identity crises, ecological exploitation and cultural bedlam" (148). The royal family of Burma is now at the mercy of the British. Their sense of attachment towards their land and their sense of patriotism had been nudged off. The royal family in order to survive had to withstand the disgrace and demeanour of the British.

The royal family along with their maids went into exile to be a transnationalist. The duty of escorting the royal family into exile fell on the shoulders of Colonel Sladen. They first arrived to Madras, and then settled eventually in Ratnagiri, some hundred and twenty miles south of Bombay. Lata Chaturvedi in *The Glass Palace: A Critical Assessment* comments, "The Royal family goes into exile in India, an exile that will test their powers far more than their monarchy ever did.

Thebaw, settled into the mansion called Outram House a poor excuse for his royal palace, becomes Lear-like tragic figure” (115). The house allotted to them was called “Outram House”, which was situated on a hill overlooking the town. A local man named Sawant is appointed for their service. Lata Chaturvedi in *The Glass Palace: A Critical Assessment* writes, “The abandoned King and Queen led a life of oblivion and obscurity in an unknown territory while their homeland was being robbed off its precious natural resources – teak, ivory and petroleum” (115). The Royal family was reduced as nomads in no time and was transformed to transnationalist to a far off place in India.

The sense of patriotism is exhibited through Arjun, Ben Prasad Dey and Uma. Rajkumar is the representation of dehumanised self ambitious victim. The Royal family of Burma is the representation of the colonized victims whose patriotism towards their nation is nullified with the powerful weapon of colonialism.

Arjun Roy is portrayed as a proud and a vibrant soldier of the British army. He airs for being the first Indian officer in the British army and delights the prospect of being independent in acquiring the democratic spirit in the army. His pride is revealed in his letter to his 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 Jats: it seems like such a huge responsibility – as though we’re representing the whole of the country!
(TGP 262)

He is delighted to be a part of the army as his expression of his patriotic feeling. He is one of the very few Indians at the Academy among which Hardayal Singh is also one. Hardayal – known as Hardy – also belongs to a family that is rooted in the lineage of military career serving the British army.

Arjun and Hardy began their service as loyal British lieutenants totally enthralled with the idea of modernity. Both of them readily executed the orders and rendered their service promptly. Their battalion is sent to Afghanistan, where they happened to witness the rebellion of the Sikh unit of Bombay. Meanwhile, their Military Academy classmates were sent abroad to places like North Africa, Eritrea, Malaya, Hong Kong and Singapore. They were also expecting their time to join forces abroad when they were assigned with the job of preparing a unit of mobilization scheme. Both the characters' feeling of patriotism is utilized by the Empire by victimizing them as soldiers of British Indian Army. They were like clay in the hands of the British, a puppet who danced to the tunes of its colonial masters.

Arjun and Hardy's sense of Patriotism searches for its root to shoot up to liberate their country India. Hardy feels that they are deprived of liberty to know the plans and prospects of the army. He feels that they are being just used as mere tools with which the British Empire executes their prospects. He is haunted with the sense of loss and belongingness. Hardy remembered the inscription that he read in the Chetwode Hall at the Military Academy in Dehra Dun that reads thus:

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 everytime. (TGP 330)

It was these words that triggered his sense of patriotism towards his country India. He is puzzled and confused of his roots – the country to which he belongs. He is of the opinion that he being born as an Indian is left at the mercy of the foreigners to decide upon his destiny. He feels that he has no country of his own. He expresses his dejection to Arjun in these words:

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? (TGP 330).

This revelation makes him to take his stand for his country against the British army. His affirmation is revealed in his conversation with Arjun. He says: “If my country comes first, why am I being sent abroad? There's no threat to my country right now – if there were, it would be my duty to stay here and defend it” (TGP 330). Hardy's transformation becomes the cause for Arjun's transformation too.

A sense of rootlessness, restlessness and futility haunts Arjun on understanding that he is a toy – a robot – in the hands of the British. The revelation dawned in his mind with his encounter with the students and Congress Leaders who asked him, “From whom are you defending us? From ourselves? From other Indians? It's your masters from whom the country needs to be defended” (TGP 288). The transformation dawns on understanding the fact that the soldiers in the British Indian Army were fighting neither to defend nor to extend the territory of India. They were simply facilitating the British policy of colonial expansion. Hardy reasons out their insignificance in serving the selfish colonial masters thus:

Yaar, I sometimes think of all the wars my father and grandfather fought in – in France, Africa, Burma. Does anyone ever say – the Indians won this war or that one? It would have been the same here. If there had been a victory the credit for it would not have been ours. By the same logic the blame for the defeat can't be ours either” (TGP 406).

Hardy, despite of his familial association with the British army, decides to quit to serve the conquerors. Mansing G. Kadam states, “It is Hardayal Singh who makes Arjun conscious of the Britishers’ prejudice, distrust and suspicion about Indians and their notion of sovereignty” (41). He also exhibits his strong contempt against these colonizers for exploiting, moulding and utilizing human resource as per their whims and fancies.

Arjun’s dilemma is further intense by the pamphlet signed by Amreek Singh which says,

Brothers, ask yourselves what you are fighting for and why you are here: do you really wish to sacrifice your lives for an Empire that has kept your country in slavery for two hundred years? (TGP 391).

Arjun who rendered his service loyally to the British army is now plagued with the dilemma over whether to desert the British Army and join the Indian National Army thereby giving wings to his spirit of patriotism. His dilemma is expressed in the following lines:

...where would his loyalties go now that they were unmoored? He was a military man, and he knew nothing—nothing important—was possible without loyalty, without faith. But who would claim his loyalty now? The old loyalties of India, the ancient ones of—they’d been destroyed long ago; the British had built their Empire by effacing them. But the Empire was dead now—he knew this because he had felt it die within himself, where it had held its strongest dominion—and with whom was he now to keep faith? Loyalty, commonality, faith—these things were as essential and as fragile as the muscles of the human heart; easy to destroy impossible to rebuild. How would one

begin the work of re-creating the tissue that bound people to each other? This was a labour beyond the abilities of someone such as himself, someone trained to destroy (TGP 380).

To further substantiate the point, Mansing G. Kadam writes on the state of Arjun's dilemma thus: "Arjun is torn between sympathy, revulsion and fear. He faces a moral crisis and gets a setback."(68) Meanwhile, Hardayal has now joined in Indian National Movement, deserting his position in the British Indian army. On understanding the cruelty of the British, the members of the Indian National Army are now assisting Japanese for the time being against the mighty British. Even Arjun finally decides to join hands with Hardayal unit.

During the Second World War Arjun's battalion is deployed in the Malaya Peninsula fighting against the Japanese army. However, during the Japanese attack, Arjun is wounded and deserted by his units except for his batman Kishan Singh who comes to his rescue saving him from Japanese bullets in the rubber plantation, after Arjun has been shot in his hamstring. Both of them hide in the storm-drain the whole night until the firing cease.

He (Arjun) had a sudden, hallucinatory vision. Both he and Kishan Singh were in it, but transfigured: they were both lumps of clay, whirling on potter's wheels. He, Arjun, was the first to have been touched by the unseen potter; a hand had come down on him, touched him, passed over to another; he had been formed, shaped—he had become a thing unto itself—no longer aware of the pressure of the potter's hand, unconscious even that it had come his way. Elsewhere, Kishan Singh was still turning on the wheel, still unformed, damp,

malleable mud. It was this formlessness that was the core of his defence against the potter and his shaping touch (TGP 430).

At this moment he introspect his state of helplessness and his position as a lieutenant. He is disheartened to understand that he shares commonness with his batsman than with his masters. It is Kishan Singh who informs him about the emerging new Indian army. He tells him that many people from his village had joined the Indian army because of fear. To this, Arjun responded: “What are you saying, then, Kishan Singh? Are you saying that the villagers joined the army out of fear? But that can’t be: no one forced them—or you for that matter. What is there to be afraid of?” (371). Kishan Singh responds thus:

“Sah’b,” Kishan Singh said softly, “all fear is not the same. What is the fear that keeps us hiding here, for instance? Is it a fear of the Japanese, or is it a fear of the British? *Or is it a fear of ourselves because we do not know who to fear more?* Sah’b, a man may fear the shadow of a gun just as much as the gun itself—and who is to say which is more real?” (TGP 430).

Arjun identifies himself and understands that the difference between him and with the common people of Kishan’s village is nothing but fear.

The day dawned with this realization and transformation in Arjun and is happy to find Hardayal. Hardayal is already resolved to listen to his inner voice that forces him to transform into a human being. His resolution is thus made:

It was strange to be sitting on one side of a battle line, knowing that you had to fight and knowing at the same time that it wasn’t really your fight— knowing that whether you won or lost, neither the blame nor

the credit would be yours. 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. 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?... But when I was sitting in that trench, it was as if my heart and my hand had no connection—each seemed to belong to a different person. It was as if I wasn't really a human being—just a tool, an instrument. 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? (TGP 407)

The view of Hardayal is similar to Wilfred's Owens poem, *Anthem for Doomed Youth* which reads thus:

WHAT passing – bells for these who die as cattle?
 Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
 Only the struttering rifles' rapid rattle
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.
 No mockeries for them from prayers nor bells,
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
 The Shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

the poet portrays the state of soldiers fighting against another human being who is not his enemy and the destiny of such young men destined to die in battle and war.

The poet was shocked by the savagery of war, and expressed his disgust for its pity, cruelty and horror. For Arjun, it is this shocking experience that he had to encounter with the barriers of race in Malaya and Singapore deprived and

disheartened him. At last it reveals to him that his association with the British is hallow and futile. Despite the defeat of the Japanese and the Indian National Army, Arjun fights on without hope and finally dies, all alone, in the jungles of Meiktila in Burma. Arjun's thirst for freedom goes unfulfilled. The transformation of Arjun from a loyal soldier to a rebel is accentuated in the course of his military career the beginning of which is hailed with celebration on his part.

Ben Prasad Dey, like Arjun is the representation of the intellectual victims of colonization. He was appointed as the district Collector and in-charge of the Royal family in 1905. He held a higher position in the British Civil Service, one of the rarest Indians to have been conferred with such a distinction. He who worked for the British, showed his contempt for the British policies, especially the harsh treatment implemented to the Royal family and exploitation of labourers in the plantations. He kept updating King Thebaw of British activities and informed him about the Japanese victory over Russia:

Japan's victory has resulted in widespread rejoicing among nationalists in India and no doubt in Burma too... The Empire is today stronger than it has ever been. You have only to glance at a map of the world to see the truth of this..... Britain's Empire is...already more than a century old, and you may be certain, Your Highness, that its influence will persist for centuries more to come. The Empire's power is such as to be the proof against all challenges and will remain so into the foreseeable future.

(TGP 121)

Ben Prasad himself rejoiced in the victory of the Japanese against the Empire for whom he works. John Hawely in his *The Ebb and Flow of Peoples Across Continents*

and Generations: The Glass Palace, comments, the collectors as thus, “he works for the British and though he keeps his protest unspoken...” (116). He though, was fully moulded by the British in adopting the mannerisms of the colonizers he had the touch of humanism in him and his sense of patriotism is nullified with sheer helplessness.

Ben Prasad Dey despite of his covetable position proved to be a man of failure. Though he occupied a prominent position in the British Empire he understood that he was a mere toy in the hands of the British. He was helpless on the prospect of the princesses’ marriage. The eldest princess, Ash in Hteik Su Myat Phaya Gyi, married Mohan Sawant their coachman and the second princess of whom Dolly was responsible eloped with a commoner and never returned. The conduct of the two princesses claimed the life of their father King Thebaw in a heart attack and became a threat to Ben Prasad’s prospect as a collector.

Ben Prasad is haunted by his feeling of guilt for being responsible for the injustice done to the royal family of Burma. His incapability in administering the Royal family and the princesses’ marriage proposal along with the dejection from his wife drove him to find his untimely death. He confesses,

The Princess’s pregnancy has awoken our teachers suddenly to the enormity of what they have done to this family. All the letters that I and my predecessors wrote had no effect whatever. But the smell of miscegenation has alarmed them as nothing else could have: they are tolerant in many things, but not this. They like to keep their races tidily separate. The prospect of dealing with a half-caste bastard has set them rampaging among the desks. I am to be the scapegoat for twenty years of neglect. (TGP 173)

His incapability to face dejection forced him to drown himself in the sea. Ben's realization of his status in the hands of the British forced him to drown himself as to him death was the only liberating force to get rid of his memories.

Uma, unlike her husband Dey is an embodiment of optimistic character. Being born in an ordinary family she embraces all the opportunities that life could offer her. She is married to Ben Prasad Dey, who was fifteen years older to her. She had to lose her originality just in order to meet her social standards set by her husband who had rich trace of male chauvinism. She was not given the freedom of thought and action; she was totally conditioned according to his whims and fancies. But for Uma, his expectations were beyond her reach. She ponders:

The wifely virtues she could offer him he had no use for: Cambridge had taught him to want more; to make sure that nothing was held in abeyance, to bargain for a women's soul with the coin of kindness and patience. (TGP 153)

Uma had to cope up with such condition just to be a suitable wife for Ben.

Uma, before marriage, was a simple girl, who after marriage had to transform herself in order to move towards modernity for the sake of her husband, who wanted a modern wife. She had to embrace modernity and lose her originality just in order to satisfy her new fortune – her husband. It is because her mother had said: "Treasure your good fortune, Uma. Don't let your day go by without being grateful for what you've got" (TGP 159). She had to lose her identity in order to lead her life. She deems her subjugation as suicide, "This was a subjection beyond decency, beyond her imagination. She could not bring herself to think of it. Anything would be better than to submit" (TGP 153). In such subjugation her only source of consolation was her friendship with Dolly.

Uma is portrayed as a desperate woman who finds opportunity to exhibit her originality. Shobha Ramaswamy in her article *Woman as Initiator: Women in Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace* defines her character thus:

Uma Dey is desperate to find recognition as the 'independent other.' Even within the narrow confines of her life as the wife of the collector, she manages to assert herself by draping her saree in the newly introduced way. This earns her the appreciation of Quen Supalayat. Uma considers her husband's attempt to take over her mind as "subjection beyond the bounds of decency" (96).

Apart from being subjugated, she exhibits extra-ordinary shrewdness in understanding her husband's state of mind. She could foresee her husband's helpless state yielding to his position in the British Empire on his mission of guarding the royal family. She concludes that her husband is a mimic man, a prisoner of the colonizer. She expresses the state of her husband thus:

There seemed never to be a moment when he was not haunted by the fear of being thought lacking by his British colleagues. And yet it seemed to be universally agreed that he was one of the most successful Indians of his generation; a model for his countrymen. Did this mean that one day all of India would become a shadow of what he had been? Millions of people trying to live their lives in conformity with incomprehensible rules? Better to be what Dolly had been: a woman who had no illusions about the nature of her condition; a prisoner who knew the exact dimensions of her cage and could look for contentment within those confines. (TGP 186-187)

Uma, thus enjoying a special standard of living offered by the imperialist is unhappy to remain so because the loss of her husband has transformed her radically.

Uma's widowhood turned to be the catalyst to her transformation. She gained huge wealth and financial support from the British on account of her husband's employment. She had to undergo the painful customary observance of a widow at a young age of twenty-eight, "...her hair was shaved off; she could eat no meat nor fish and she was allowed to wear nothing but white" (TGP 184). But then Uma decide to shape her own life as she enjoyed both freedom and money breaking the shackles of the orthodox and customary society.

Uma unlike her contemporaries decided to soar high in her spirit of nationalism. Though being a woman she exhibited her revolutionary bent of mind in deciding to visit European countries. There she undergoes a great transformation when she realizes the cruelty of the British Empire. Shobana in her article *Woman as Initiator: Women in Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace* writes of her transformation:

She shares with the modern woman the desire for mental freedom. Later, she has to struggle to release herself from the bondage imposed by the oppressive traditional society upon the young Hindu widow. Her escape is made possible by the fact of her economic independence, which was a rarity in the Victorian era, but a necessity in today's world. Her situation is an argument in favour of property rights for women, Owing to her inheritance, she becomes a woman of substance, travelling abroad, quite the equal of many respectable and cultured Western women in similar circumstances. However, she refuses to spend her life in leisured ease. Instead she becomes an active member of the Indian Independence Party, which she later leaves to join

Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha. She acquires the aura of a legend in her lifetime. Her involvement in India's freedom movement appears to be an extension of her struggle for personal independence and identity.

(96)

Thus she exhibits her patriotic and nationalistic feeling and joins the revolutionary movement.

Uma visits the United States and raises funds for liberating India and settles in New York, where Saya John's son, Matthew, is living. Matthew, meanwhile, has married an American girl named Elsa Hoffman. She continues her cause even after coming back to India and ultimately joins with Mahatma Gandhi to make India free from British rule. Kadam quotes,

“After her husband's death, she goes on a Continental tour, yet the Indian nationalistic cause gives her what Edward Said terms an almost “aggressive sense of nation, home, community and belonging” (42).

She bravely joins the revolt against British rule and becomes a leader of the movement to free India. Ghosh, quotes here transformation thus:

In the past, she had been dismissive of Mahatma Gandhi's political thinking: non-violence, she had thought, was a philosophy of wish-fulfilment. She saw now that the Mahatma had been decades ahead of her in his thinking. It was rather the romantic ideas of rebellion that she had nurtured in New York that were pipe dreams. She remembered the words of Mahatma, which she had often read and always disregarded: that the movement against those who bore arms – both Indians and British – and that its chosen instruments were the weapons of the weaponless, its very weakness its source of strength. (TGP 254)

Her patriotism is kindled and joins the Quit India movement.

Uma ultimately proves to be an independent, assertive thinker and leader. Her radical and non-conformist political thinking changes drastically in the new milieu of independence. Thus a simple Indian-Bengali woman is transformed to a world popular nationalist and a revolutionary for the independence of her nation. Uma's transformation is epidemic and her passive resistance is contrasted by her nephew Arjun. Arjun in his attempt to exhibit his patriotic and nationalistic feeling dies a daring death, whereas Rajkumar exhibits his inhuman nature in his attempt to survival.

The protagonist Rajkumar is a self ambitious and a transnational character. To him survival was primary. He grew up believing that he belongs to every nation and every country where survival becomes possible. He reached Mandalay at the age of eleven as a young orphan boy. He had secured his job as an errand boy in his sampan in return for his mother's gold bangles. His formative years had taught him to make the most out of every opportunity to make his survival sure. He also understood that money was predominant for living. He with his mother's words echoing in his ears, "live my Prince" (TGP 14), set his foot on the 'Golden Land' – Burma for survival. He as a young boy was confident of becoming rich in his future and regretted that his family would not be with him, his revelation was that, "they (his family) had left him so soon , so early, without tasting the wealth or the rewards that he knew, with utter certainty, would one day be his" (TGP 14). He in order to mend his living from water to land joined Ma Cho's tea stall as a *Kalaa* (TGP 7) and was informative about the arrival of British cannons for war against Burmese King.

The invasion of Burma served as a rich platform for Rajkumar to thrive as a successful businessman. His association with Saya John had enabled him to explore

newer heights. His friendship with Matthew – Saya John’s son – was lucrative that kept him informed about the war over Burma for woods. He being a self ambitious man indirectly indulged in war-profiteering with the British in exploiting Burma. He even indulged in human trafficking with the help of Baburao. His love for money and desperate need to become rich erased off his humanistic concern and allowed him to do menial job of transporting indentured labourers from India.

Rajkumar’s strips off his humanism and exhibit his selfishness by human trafficking. His desperate need for survival urged him to take up any job that came his way. He with Saya John’s words lingering in his ears: “The time has come when you have to make your own place in the world” (TGP 124), readily accepted the work of transporting labourers from south India, killing his morals, conscience and humanism. Rajalakshmi N.K. in *Nation and Violence: A View from The Glass Palace*, describes Rajkumar thus:

The complicity of the Indians with the British reaches its culmination in Rajkumar. He is a completely dehumanised figure. His trade of indentured labour, relationship with Ilongo’s mother, his dream of Burma as a “golden land” shows his lack of refined human values. He staunchly believes that the colonizers is not only promoting their life but also protecting their life in Burma (54).

The indentured labourers were often coerced to sign in the contract in exchange of few thousand rupees. Many of them did not survive the sea passage from Calcutta to the locations of the plantations. The lives of these human beings were reduced even lesser than that of commodities.

The status of human life was reduced to mere “things”. The indentured labourers who had sold themselves for money were treated like things, it is evident by

the comment of Baburao's who, upon reaching the Rangoon docks, estimates the relative loss of his human merchandise thus "Two out of thirty-eight is not bad... On occasion I've lost as many as six" (TGP 127). On the plantations, the value of these coolies was lesser than the value of the elephants even an *oo-si's* (elephant trainer) dead body could be abandoned for saving the more precious commodity of the elephant herd. Lata Chaturvedi in *The Glass Palace: A Critical Assessment* opines that, "The novel unmasks the process by which Indian agents became rich by transporting indentured labourer to work in the plantations" (117).

Rajkumar had totally stripped off his humanistic concern in his process of becoming rich. He started to exploit human resource just to enjoy selfish gain. His acquaintance with Baburao dehumanised him from the quality of being a human. Uma even goes to the extent of accusing and condemning Rajkumar of being neo-colonialist, an accomplice in the exploitative policies of the British. Uma blames him thus:

It's people like you who're responsible for this tragedy. Did you ever think of the consequences when you were transporting people here?

What you and your kind have done is far worse than the worst deeds of the Europeans. (TGP 247)

Thus Rajkumar dehumanizes himself to be an unscrupulous local agent who exploits human life just to earn money. He in order to start his own business he finds his means by importing and exploiting labourers from India to the Burmese oil fields which are controlled by the British.

Rajkumar lacked the core of being human. He who began his life as a *kalaa* – an Indian – in an alien land Burma opts to forget the humanitarian help rendered by Saya John in his initial years. He establishes teak trade with the money that he earned

through importing indentured labourers. He in the wake of becoming a businessman abides by the culture and language of Burma. It is stated that, “What Rajkumar wanted most was to go into the timber business.” (TGP 124). For this he thought that “the best possible way to enter the teak business... would be through the acquisition of a timberyard” (TGP 124). His urge to become a successful businessman starts to imitate Saya John, and dresses like an Englishman. He masters the art of negotiation and is successful in signing a contract with the company that is building a new railroad into the various teak forests.

Humanism and Loyalty is replaced by wealth in case of Rajkumar. He lacks humanistic concern even to his wife. He not only became a dehumanized figure but also disloyal husband. Though he had won Dolly after twenty years, he fails to be loyal to her. He had extra marital relationship with one of the woman labourer in the plantation and had fathered Ilongo. His unfaithfulness is discovered by Uma and her anger brewed hatred towards Rajkumar. Shobha in her article *Women as Initiator: Women in Amitav Ghosh's The Glass palace* writes, “She is outraged by Rajkumar’s infidelity to Dolly”. He had indulged in relationship with a plantation labour woman and becomes father of Ilongo too which was discovered by Uma latter.

Ghosh has merged the British colonialism with that of the Japanese invasion on Burma the wake of the Second World War. Rajkumar, who till then flourished in the timber industry, stamps his mark also on rubber business. Saya who is acquainted with the British foreknows the new trade of rubber and involves his son Matthew into rubber plantation in Malaya. He states,

This was the material of the coming age; the next generation of machines could not be made to work without this indispensable absorber of friction. The newest motor cars had dozens of rubber parts;

the makers were potentially bottomless, the profits beyond imagining.

(TGP 182)

He urges Rajkumar to join as his partner along with his son Matthew. He also assures Rajkumar that, “Timber is the thing of the past, Rajkumar: you have to look to the future – and if there is any tree on which money could be said to grow then it – rubber” (TGP 184). Rajkumar having learnt the nuances of timber business also tries his luck in rubber. He in association with Saya and Matthew starts a new business of rubber plantation near the island of Penang in northern Malaya which was bought by Saya John during the British rule. Colonialism served as a good platform for men like Saya to flourish in business and trading.

Rajkumar is a non-patriotic character. His thirst for life and survival had urged him to utilize the period of Burmese invasion to thrive as a successful businessman under the tutelage of Saya John. Initially, he participates in the transfer of Indian slave labour into the Burmese plantations. Then he along with Saya John flourishes in Teak business. His selfish desire is revealed through his own words to:

... it’s hard to think of leaving: Burma has given me everything I have... This is a golden land – no one ever starves here. That proved true for me, and despite everything that’s happened recently, I don’t think I could ever love another place in the same way. But if there’s one thing I’ve learnt in my life, Dolly, it is that there is no certainty about these things. My father was from Chittagong and he ended up in the Arakan; I ended up in Rangoon; you went from Mandalay to Ratnagiri and now you’re here too. Why should we expect that we’re going to spend the rest of our lives here? 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. On the contrary, we have to expect that a time will come when we'll have to move on again. Rather than be swept along by events, we should make plans and take control of our own fate. (TGP 310)

He is of the opinion that he would opt to move on wherever he could find his fortune. He does not show any trait of patriotism towards the country he lived. He does not belong anywhere. He could adapt himself to any place where fortune is found he says, ...it doesn't matter whether I think of Burma as home or not. What matters is what people think of us. And it's plain enough that men like me are now seen as enemy – on all sides. This is the reality and I have to acknowledge it. (TGP 310).

He then opts to move to Malaya by choice to stamp his name in rubber trade.

Rajkumar who till then decided his destiny, became a victim of his destiny in no time. The Second World War has transformed him into a refugee. He was forced to join the refugee group and returned to India in search for shelter. He finally secludes as a refugee in Uma's flat in Calcutta and spent his remaining life.

Dolly like Rajkumar represent the group of transnationalist. She who grew up in India from the age of ten had adapted to the Indian lifestyle. Her stay in India had gifted her with Ums'a friendship. Uma shares a unique bond with Dolly that she prefers spending hours together than with her dominant husband. She becomes a life-long friend of Dolly, whose future is determined by her. The theme of friendship is brought between Dolly and Uma. They both are bound up with a strong bond of friendship.

Dolly is the representation of victims of transnational group. She had accepted what her destiny had offered. She was born in a poor family in the northern

coast of Burma and was sent as an orphan to be the maid for the Queen at a very young age of ten. She suffered exile along with the Royal family as a transnationalist. She became so Indian that she could not think of Burma as her motherland. Mansing G. Kadam in *Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace: A Postcolonial Novel* writes,

For Dolly Sein, the past is recast in transformed patterns in Ratnagiri. Formerly, she was a slave in the erstwhile kingdom...she feels that the Burma she has left behind is lost to her forever and this displacement creates in her a crisis of identity. (47)

Her Indian-ness is rooted into her that she could not accept Rajkumar's offer for marriage, as she had already lost her chastity to Sawant, the guard whom the first Princesses marries. It is also here in India she is gifted with the lifelong friendship of Uma, who is the cause of her marriage with Rajkumar. She reveals her view to Uma thus:

If I went to Burma now I would be a foreigner – they would call me a *Kaala* 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 had to leave before. (TGP 113)

Their marriage is the culmination of two extremes; Rajkumar being born in India becomes a Brumese whereas Dolly being born in Burma becomes an Indian.

Dolly finds solace from the scriptures. She embraces religion as her assets and tried to inherit all its teachings. This is revealed as she often reads out passages from the Buddhist scriptures to Manju. She read:

Develop the state of mind like the earth, Rahula, for on the earth all manner of things are thrown, clean and unclean, dung and urine,

spittle, pus and blood, and the earth is not troubled or repelled or disgusted...

...develop a state of mind like water, for in the water many things are thrown, clean and unclean, and the water is not troubled or repelled or disgusted. And so too with fire, which burns all things, clean and unclean, and with air, which blows upon them all, and with space, which is nowhere established... (TGP 343).

The concept of this passage abides with the Hindu concept of Pancha boothas. These words have transformed Dolly to inherit the characteristics of the Pancha boothas.

Dolly's transformation dawned on her when she witnesses her husband's inhuman act of war profiteering. Her understanding of Rajkumar's selfish ambitions did not break her hope on life instead she developed the characteristic of the Pancha bhootas and retired her life in a Buddhist nunnery. Their life of togetherness was shattered when her transformation intersected their life separating one from the other as a transnationalist; Dolly to Burma and Rajkumar in India. Her transformation led her to be separated from her husband to lead a life of seclusion.

Rajkumar and Dolly represent the unfortunate lot to whom survival is a hard nut to crack. Both the characters are denied of their patriotic feeling towards their country, though Dolly always had her place in her mind. Adaptation to a new place was possible as they were destined to grow up in a land of not theirs from an early age. In fact Dolly is more Indian than Burmese. In such circumstances there arises a question that to these characters for whom survival itself is difficult, from where then would their sense of patriotism come? Their belief is neither rooted on country nor on politics but on humanism of people like Ma Cho and Saya John to Rajkumar; Uma and Ben Prasad Dey to Dolly and the royal family. Humanism was the guardian spirit

to Dolly and Rajkumar. Rajkumar's life began as *kaala* on the ground of Ma Cho's humanism. They as a married couple sought refuge with Saya John. If not for their humanistic concern then their life would have been the other way.

The exiled King Thebaw is known for his humanistic feeling. He ruminates the power and inhuman act of the British to transport and transfer the natives of a land as transnationalist to a nation or state which is totally new and alien to them. The King ponders over his present state as:

The King raised his glasses and spotted several Indian faces, along the waterfront. What vast, what incomprehensible power, to move people in such huge 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 blind in exile? And where would his own people go, now that they were a part of this empire? It wouldn't suit them, all this moving about. They were not a portable people, the Burmese; he knew this, very well, for himself. He had ever wanted to go anywhere. Yet here he was, on his way to India. (TGP 50)

This king who had never been out of the palace for the past seven years is now exiled to a remote place in India, they settled in their allotted "Outram House" in Ratnagiri.

The King Thebaw becomes the king and a guardian for the local people. The people respect him for his humanistic concern on the locals. He spends much of his time looking at the coast and the vicinity through his binoculars and will be the first one to know of any information. Lata Chaturvedi in *The Glass Palace: A Critical Assessment* writes: "Surprisingly enough, in Ratnagiri, The King and the Queen

becomes guardians of these alien people though they never were among their own”

(115). His Kingship in the new place is explained thus:

In Ratnagiri there were many who believed that King Thebaw was always the first to know when the sea has claimed a victim. He spent hours on his balcony everyday, gazing out to the sea with his gold-rimmed glasses.

...Nothing happened in Ratnagiri, people said, but the king was the first to know of it. Thebaw became the town’s guardian spirit, a king again. (TGP 80)

It is the king who knows of any news or information that happens first and then informs his people too. Therefore, Thebaw remains as a passive king under the guard of the colonizers throughout his lifetime.

Rajkumar proved to be the dominant force in connecting the lives of other characters. The story takes a different strand with the young characters of the next generation. Ghosh who has so far filled the plot with colonization now enriches his canvas painting with painful truths of the Second World War by the second generation of his fictional characters. He knits and binds the bond among the family through friendship, love and marriage.

Dolly and Uma’s friendship is renewed after twenty-three long years. Dolly invites Uma to their new Morningside House at Malaya. Uma who has transformed herself into a significant political activist happily retorts with her friend after a long period of about years. Uma now a revolutionary and a nationalist accuse Rajkumar for war-profiteering and departs Malaya to join her brother, Arjun, her nephew and niece Manju and Bela. Arjun joins the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun and holds a significant identity there, and deems it the most prestigious issue. However, the

family is united by the marriage of Manju and Neel. Manju who wanted to become an actress coincidentally falls in love with her producer who is none other than Neel. Dinu, on the other hand develops a special interest in photography. Arjun and Dinu are bounded with the bond of friendship until Alison crossed their way. They develop a triangular love, whereas Alison chooses Dinu, for his independent view of life.

She saw that despite the largeness and authority of his presence, he was a man without resources, a man whose awareness of himself was very slight and very fragile; she saw that Dinu was much stronger and more resourceful, and she understood that that was why she'd been tempted to be cruel to him (Arjun); that that was why she had had to take the risk of losing him. (TGP 376-377)

It is this rejection from Alison and Uma's accusation on him for severing the colonizers triggers his self-realization which serves his platform for transformation.

The lives of these characters are caught up in the whirlpool of the Second World War with unexpected twists and turns that left them blindfolded towards their future. Neel meets his untimely death and Manju after giving birth to Jaya finds her own fate by drowning. Dolly is shocked to understand the selfish intentions of her husband and accuses him of war-profiteering. Rajkumar's selfish ambition was shattered to pieces, he loses his business, money and his son. At this time Alison also receives the news of the sad demise of her parents, Matthew and Elsa, in a car accident in the Cameron Highlands.

Colonialism and Second World War has chiselled and shaped the lives of every character in the novel. Rajkumar who is one of the central characters from whom the novel begins is purely a character representing the group of transnationalist. He is born in Bengal but finds his fortune in Burma through trade. Rajkumar hailing

from Chittagong in the coast of Bengal becomes the sole survivor in his family from the deadly plague that affected his town opts to serve as a sampan in the boat that carried him to his hometown. His destiny brought him to Mandalay in Burma as a transnationalist.

The Second World War transformed every character as a refugee. Rajkumar, Dolly with Jaya are on the move towards Calcutta to join Uma. Arjun is called to join his contingent in Malaya. Alison and Saya John depart to Singapore but meet their tragic end in the hands of the Japanese soldiers, whereas Dinu is arrested during the war. The impact and aftermath of the Second World War is revealed through Dinu whom Jaya meet in his studio “The Glass Palace” in Burma. Dinu stays behind in Burma after Rajkumar and Dolly trek to India as refugees. Dolly came to Myanmar from India to become a Buddhist nun. Dinu and Dolly meet once before Dolly’s death in 1949.

Dinu, plays an important role in connecting the family of Rajkumar and Saya John. It is through him the story takes its full form. It is through his eyes and his conversation with his niece Jaya, the end of the novel is explained. Dinu, is depicted as a “nervous and tentative” at the prospect that his progeny could be so weak and frail that he had developed a limp because of polio. It is his disability that forces him to withdraw himself from the normal life and confines himself to his own world. But for Dolly he seemed “years older in maturity in self-possession” (TGP 178). As he grows older, Dinu, who had affiliations with the socialist cause, develops ideological differences with his father and never makes contact with Rajkumar again.

Dinu makes a living as a photographer in the post war years in Rangoon, living through the assassination of Aung San in 1945 and the takeover of power by General Ne Win in 1962. He marries a student named Maung Thin Thin Aye, who

later became a famous writer known as Daw Thin Thin Aye. In the Burmese naming system younger women are addressed as “Maung” and older women are addressed as “Daw.” Maung Thin Thin Aye thus becomes Daw Thin Thin Aye when older. Both Dinu and his wife were incarcerated by the Myanmar army for a while for so-called dissident activity. While his wife died in captivity, the aged Dinu was finally released in the mid-eighties. Dinu eked out a humble existence by giving lessons in photography in his residence which he renamed “The Glass Palace Studio.”

Saya John the man who belongs ‘everywhere’ does not confine his limits to the geographical divisions and boundaries. He was born as an orphan was brought up by the Catholic priest in Malacca and moved to Singapore, as an orderly in a military hospital in search of livelihood and became a contractor. He is married to a Chinese woman and has a son named Matthew. He visits Burma to deliver supplies to the teak camps. His business has often gifted him the opportunity to traverse borders and explore new horizons. He afforded Matthew good education and sent him to America to pursue his higher studies. Matthew also opted to be a transnationalist and stayed back in America marrying Elsa Hoffman. Alison was their gift of love who suffered the loss of her parents at a car accident during the time of the Second World War. Saya John and Alison secluded their life in the Morningside Estate with the family of Rajkumar.

Alison also sets out to be a transnationalist. She was born in America but the tide of misfortune swept her ashore in Malaya under the guardianship of her grandfather Saya John. It is during her stay in the Morningside Estate that she became the cause for Arjun and Dinu to become rivals for her love. She being brought up in a cosmopolitan lifestyle never beholds sentimental attachment towards life. She in her teens naturally falls a prey to her senses and develops a relationship with Dinu. Later

on when Arjun crosses her way, she even yields to him satisfying his sensuous pleasures. Her relationship with Arjun taught her the real meaning of living. Her revelation is evident in the following passage:

It was as though he wasn't really there and nor was she; as though their bodies had been impelled more by a sense of inevitability than by conscious volition; by an inebriation of images and suggestions – memories of pictures and songs and dances; it was as if they were both absent, two strangers, whose bodies were discharging a function. She thought of what it was like with Dinu; the intensity of his focus on the moment; the sense of time holding still. It was only against the contrast of this cohabiting of absences that she could comprehend the meaning of what it meant to be fully present – eye, mind and touch united in absolute oneness, each beheld by the other, each beholding. (TGP 374)

This made her realize her true feeling for Dinu. By now Arjun and Dinu had become rivals for Alison. But at last Alison chooses Dinu dismissing Arjun. For Arjun, Alison's dismissal and her accusation on him for being a toy in the hands of the colonial masters triggers his self-realization. Alison and Dinu's union is shattered by the Japanese invasion. As the turmoil intensifies Dinu convinces Alison to escape in her car along with her grandfather. But her escape ends in a tragedy. Alison in her attempt to save her aged grandfather from the hands of the Japanese soldiers starts to fire on their direction but this triggered the soldiers' animosity and they in turn shoot the old man and head towards her direction. She successfully shoots four of the Japanese soldiers and at last invites death bravely by shooting herself. Shobha Ramaswamy in *Women as Initiators: Women in Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace* celebrates Alison's death thus: "The need for physical courage and knowledge of self-

defense is celebrated in the character of Alison who shoots down the Japanese soldiers who murdered her helpless grandfather [Saya John] and then faces death gallantly (97).” Therefore, she is a victim of cruel animosity of war where humanism is absent.

The weapon of colonization has reduced Burma to ashes. Both the natural resources and human resources were exploited. Natural resources like, petroleum, oil, gold, rare gems and stones, timber and rubber were exploited to its worst; whereas human resources were transported from place to place in the form of indentured labourers forced to work in plantations and soldiers, who were sent abroad to carry out the orders of the colonial masters. Thus the colonial masters have treaded and trampled upon the virginity of these technologically backward countries like India, Burma and Malaya. Hence, the words of Queen Supayalat are proved true. She hurls severe indictment as a colonial subject, when the British officials visit Outram House, she grumbles:

“Yes, we who ruled the richest land in Asia are now reduced to this. This is what they have done to us, this is what they will do to all Burma. They took our kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports, but take my words, this is how it will end. 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. We were the first to be imprisoned in the name of their progress; millions more will follow. This is what awaits us all: this is how we will all end—as prisoners, in shanty towns born of the plague. A hundred years hence you will read

the indictment of Europe's greed in the difference between the Kingdom of Siam and the state of our own enslaved realm. (TGP 88)

The Queen's words have proved to be true of colonialism and the enforced fate of the colonies.

The novel thus traces the effects of history on the lives of individuals from a subordinated perspective. Through the words of Mansing Kadam in, *Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace: A Postcolonial Novel* states,

The novel portrays political and cultural complexities through the author's concepts of nationalism, imperialism, and the subjugation of gender, class and caste. He believes in transgression of the frontiers of nationality, and for him, nationalism seems to be an illusion and a force of violence and destruction. He has presented a unique rendition of history in fiction from the international perspective and writes imaginatively about the process of colonization in India, Burma and Malaya". (37)

It also presents the lives of insignificant people who are transformed socially, politically, economically and historically to be transnational individuals. Ghosh himself has undergone transformative experience in writing this novel. In an interview with Tehelka.com (7th August 2000), Ghosh interacts his experience thus:

Writing this book has completely transformed me as a person and a novelist. Very few novelists get that experience. It was not just the vastness of the material, or the hundreds of different voices, or that for me writing this book was unlike anything I, or other writers I know, had written before. [...] while writing this you know, it changed my understanding of history.

Further, Ghosh, confesses to the reporter of *The Times of India* in an interview, “It is just a family story, really, that triggered *The Glass Palace*, my father and my uncle, both were in Burma. But then, the book ended up as something quite different. It showed me a way of living that really had a transforming impact” (44). In conclusion, Mansing G. Kadam *Amitav Ghosh’s The Glass Palace: A Postcolonial Novel* writes: Ghosh himself says, “It’s coming together of the many themes of my earlier novels. Writing this novel is like fighting a war (98).” Furthermore, he says that he attempts in it “to humanize history, to make it a part of the existential grammar of the living (98).” Thus Ghosh interest is rooted on humanism that eases all differences in making survival possible.

The novel emphasises the need for a humanitarian concern towards human life. It substantiates that the lack of humanistic concern towards the colonies catalyzes the transformation of the characters as a transnationalist. It also claims the death of the numerous lives on account of war and partition as martyrdom and acclaims every soul as an epitome of transhumanization in his attempt to promote universal humanism. N.K. Rajalakshmi in her article *Nation and Violence: A View from the Glass Palace* writes,

Ghosh shows how the precise imagination of the nation based in modern ideology can lead to hatred and violence within and outside the nation. He illustrates nation as a site for the political power to prove its image and strength in the global setting. Ghosh points at the capacity of the state to enable violence with the sole purpose of its survival” (52).

Therefore Ghosh states that the existing rigidity of the division of ‘borders’ and ‘boundaries that separates into nations on the basis of religion only breeds violence

and hatred. He is of the view that though these demarcations cannot be nullified, it could be relaxed to certain extent that survival could be possible everywhere with the existence of humanity and humanism.