

# ECOCRITICISM IN AMITAV GHOSH'S THE GLASS PALACE

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## Abstract

This paper is to examine the perspective of Eco criticism in Amitav Ghosh's famous novel "The Glass Palace". Amitav Ghosh is a famous Indian writer and the winner of the 54<sup>th</sup> Jnanpith award. Eco criticism is the study of literature and the environment from an Inter disciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyse text that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature. "The Glass Palace" is a historical novel, which is set in Burma, Bengal, India. During the British invasion of 1885. This novel tells the story of a poor boy lifted on the tides of political and social chaos. The boy goes on to create an empire in the Burmese teak forest. This novel depicts how the British involvement in the South Asia has caused the environmental damages. So in this paper I focus on through the concept of eco criticism by dealing with the sensitive relationship of man and nature in the novel "The Glass Palace".

**Keywords:** Eco criticism, Colonialism, Relationship between human and non-human forms, and Environmental Degradation.

## INTRODUCTION

The Novel "The Glass Palace" was written by Amitav Ghosh. He is an Indian writer famously known for his work in English fiction. He has written nine works, and received several awards for his writing. "The Glass Palace" is a historical novel, which is set in Burma, Bengal, India. During the British invasion of 1885. This novel tells the story of a poor boy lifted on the tides of political and social chaos. The boy goes on to create an empire in the Burmese teak forest. This novel depicts how the British involvement in the South Asia has caused the environmental damages. Colonialism, heartbreak and personal grit are the major themes of the novel. This novel divided into seven parts. This novel The Glass Palace has hundreds of characters, in that the character named Raj Kumar, who is eleven years old plays the important role in the novel, and he is the protagonist of the novel. He is a refugee from India with a commercial drive and a romantic heart. This novel expresses the various aspects of the colonial period, including the economic fall of Burma, the growth of timber and rubber farms, the ethical problems faced by Indians serving the British army, and the shattering effects of World War II. This novel focuses mainly on the early 20th Century, it expresses a broad range of issues ranging from the changing economic scenery of Burma and India, to pertinent questions about what

constitutes a nation and how these change as society is cleared along by the flow of modernity. This paper represents the concept of eco criticism by dealing with the sensitive relationship of man and nature in the novel “The Glass Palace”.

## **THEMES:**

In this novel *The Glass Palace*, There are many major themes, in that the theme of perseverance and separation are most important. The theme of perseverance can be seen mostly in the character of Raj Kumar in beginning of the novel, where he is running as the lone stayer. He ultimately stands in the royal palace as it is being robbed and falls in love with the handmaiden, Dolly. He also meets his mentor, Saya John. With the business help of Saya John Raj Kumar becomes rich during the Burmese empire loses its riches. During that time Raj Kumar reunites with Dolly and then they got married. The theme of separation depicts the usage of glass and mirrors as separation in *The Glass Palace*. The character of Dolly describes in the novel about the walls and the mirrors and the glass and how they are memorable. She says that, when we think about the setting of World War II and how it separates families. Even though the ‘glass palace’ originally just means a hall in the royal home in Mandalay. And then Raj Kumar says that Dolly was like the palace itself, a thing of glass, inside which you could see everything of which your imagination was capable. This novel “*The Glass Palace*” discusses the level of environmental damage affected on earth on the account of colonization and wars. The author Amitav Ghosh tries to prove that literature can make positive impact towards increasing consciousness about the environment. This novel is also gives us a sign of how British begun ecological crisis during the capitalism by winning and aggressive the Burmese natural resources such as teak, rubber and petroleum. The British has sent crowds and occupied Burma over insignificant quarrel about the tax imposed for logs on the British wooden companies. With all these we can find that the novel is also depicts the nature as a major theme, which portrays the relationship of man and nature. These are the major theme of the novel “*The Glass Palace*”.

## **ECOCRITICISM IN THE GLASS PALACE**

Eco criticism is the study of literature and the environment from an Inter disciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyse text that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature. Eco criticism plays a vigorous role in the study of human relationship with nature. Cheryll Glatfelter is one of the indications of Eco criticism. He defines Eco criticism as, “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”. One of the important features of Eco criticism is that it sees nature and human culture as intermingled rather than as separate sides of a dualistic construct. The novel extents over three generations spread over three interlinked parts of the British Empire. They are Burma, Malaya and India. It is structured around the joining relationships among four families. This paper examines the sensitive relationship of Man and Nature in the novel “*The Glass Palace*”, this novel depicts how the British involvement in the South Asia has affected the environmental damages which resulted into the demolition and displacement generated by it and the approach of the relationship between literature and the

environment termed as “Eco criticism”. This novel “The Glass Palace” points out that, how colonialization has cruelly blasted in the South Asia and grades into the environmental degradation and spoils the green culture. This novel interconnected in the different historical events like colonization of Burma by the British, the First World War, and the subjugation of Japan over Russia, the passionate changes shaped by World War II.

The environmental degradation is the major concern of Eco criticism. This novel mainly depicts the concept of environmental degradation. Because it has many incidents of ecocide damages which happened during the colonialization in Mandalay. The major intention of British attack over Mandalay is the teak forests which they want to convert into the ligneous yards for their commercial purposes. So the logs of wood is the cause of the war and the British intervention in the South Asia results into an unusual explosion of deforestation where the large type of flora and fauna were polished out to make for commercially money spinning plantations, wood factories and industries. Such green destruction has been detected by one of the major characters of the novel, Dolly, while roaming around the rubber plantation, observes the changes in countryside. And the other degradation of the natural resource in the novel is the oil tanks at Yenangyaung on the Eastern banks at Irrawaddy. It is the place where the petroleum naturally comes out from the earth. And the foreigners want to take advantage of it and can reach to any extent. They have gained the control over these oil pools and tanks and imperialized the local people of the town. They have oppressed the people by imperializing them and robbed the natural resources and their lands. In this novel Amitav Ghosh portrays the harsh reality of the colonization that how the colonialization remains the reason for the degradation of the green culture. He focuses on the never ending human greed which is not only bitters the environment but also humans. Amitav Ghosh says in this novel that the invaders have destroyed the store houses, oil tanks and the successful sounds of attacking. The dangerous clouds of smoke are the creators of air and noise pollution and a warning to the human and non-human worlds and passionately contributing in the environmental degradation. This unbeatable and impossible attitude of man towards nature and mankind itself is a warning to the world. This how the British involvement in the South Asia has caused the environmental damages. These environmental damages in the novel depicts the concept of eco criticism.

## CONCLUSION

Eco criticism plays a vigorous role in the study of human relationship with nature. Amitav Ghosh treats the nature as a sensitive tool in his novel and explains the commitment of the human world with non-human world. The environmental distresses blended with the historical events are the leading track of this novel. He demonstrates through novel that the colonialization is not the only killer of the environment but also of the mankind. So this novel “The Glass Palace” would be a warning to human world that the misuse of nature over a period of time will lead to an outburst of nature. This how the author brings out the concept of eco criticism by dealing with the sensitive relationship of man and nature in the novel “The Glass Palace”.

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