



## An Eco-Critical Concepts in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*

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## ABSTRACT

Nature has been taken as the main concern in many literary works. With the changing perceptions of human mind, the depiction of environment in literature also changed in style and technique. The modern writers mainly focus on the exploitation of the environment by the humans and its effect. This sense of concern has given rise to a new branch of literary theory, called Ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is an area of research that studies the relation between man and nature. The present paper is an eco-critical reading of Amitav Ghosh's novel, *The Glass Palace* published in 2000 which shows how the British intervention in the South Asia has caused the environmental damages which resulted into the destruction and dislocation triggered by it and the approach which deals with the study of representations of nature in literary works and of the relationship between literature and the environment termed as "Ecocriticism".

**Key Words:** Eco-criticism, Ecology, Colonialism, Environmental Degradation, Amitav Ghosh



## **Ecology and Ecocriticism:**

Man is a part of this earth as the plants and animals are. Man is considered to be the only literary creature on the earth and here the superiority of human minds arises and forget that he is the only part of this physical surrounding. It has no doubt that we, Human Beings, depend on Nature for our survival. The human culture directly or indirectly connected to the physical world. This intimate relationship between human and non-human worlds has been vividly and minutely presented in the literary texts. The physical environment and Man, both in art and literature, have been a continuous practice since long back. Though the approach of illustration of the physical environment has gone through the many changes in its style and exposure with the changing perceptions of human mind. In this context and to understand this concept more clearly two terms become very imperative – Ecology and Ecocriticism. Ecology is the science to study the interrelationships of living organisms to one another and with the physical surroundings. As the topic deals with the groups of living beings and their



interaction and such interacting groups called ecosystem. The term ecology has derived from Greek words. It has two words i.e. *Okios* means the earth and *Logos* which means Reason or Study. Therefore, it studies how human interrelates with the home i.e, the earth; with its treasure le resources like water, land, mineral resources, soil etc. William Rueckert in “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” mentions the first law of ecology, “Everything is connected to everything else.”(108)

### **An Eco-critical Concepts in *The Glass Palace*:**

*The Glass Palace* is a genuinely guide to legitimize the expression "Ecocriticism" which spotlights on one of the significant worries of ecocriticism, the ecological debasement or the corruption of the green culture. The epic has a sufficient of occurrences of ecocidal harms which happen during the colonialization in Mandalay. The prime expectation of British attack over Mandalay is the teak timberlands which they need to change over into the timber yards for their business purposes. Subsequently the logs of wood are the reason for the war and the British mediation in the South Asia results into an irregular emission of deforestation where the enormous types of verdure were fixed to make for economically cash turning estates, timber production lines and enterprises. Such green decimation has been seen by one of the significant characters of the novel, Dolly, while wandering around the elastic ranch, watches the adjustments in scene and says:

They headed through the rubber trees... The ground underfoot had a soft, cushioned feel, because of the carpet of dead leaves shed by the tress. It was like being in wilderness, but not yet. . . But this was like neither city nor farm nor forest: there was something eerie about its uniformity; about the fact that such sameness could be imposed upon a landscape of such natural exuberance. ‘It’s like stepping into a labyrinth,’ she said to Elsa.

(*The Glass of Palace*, 199)



Here Amitav Ghosh goes for the disintegration of the entropy for the individuals by people itself. As William Rueckert says, “Green plants, for example, are among the most creative organisms. They are nature’s poets” (111). We are simply the destroyer which will prompt the eradication of the two universes, human and non-human. Ghosh has demonstrated this unpleasant and horrible sight of the colonialization. Lynn White, JR. portrays this image in his paper “Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” and notices that the Europeans turned out to be relentless before the finish of the fifteenth century, “By the end of the fifteenth century the technological superiority of Europe was such that its small, mutually hostile nations could spill out over all the rest of the world, conquering, looting, and colonizing” (7). *The Glass Palace* incites how the colonization of individuals crushed the human and non-human world for their business purposes and abuses the wild. Amitav Ghosh indicates out this business of nature on account of the British colonialists. Christopher Manes in his paper “Nature and Silence” opines, “Nature is silent in our culture.” (15) This is simply the explanation. Man consistently considers better than nature as he is the main animal on this planet that is gave with the capacity to talk and is wrecking the physical condition for its satisfaction. This announcement can be obviously found in the novel where the author serves the heartless conduct of timber vendors towards our condition. This episode demonstrates to be the best case of corruption of green culture by Amitav Ghosh as he depicts the cleaving of the trees as death and killing of the trees, which likewise mirrors his environmental vision and his anxiety for the non-human structures that are debased step by step.

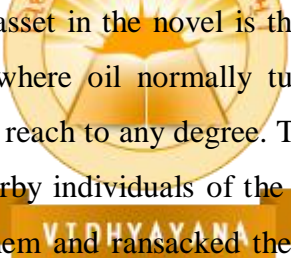
Mircea Eliade states, “All over the world learning the language of animals, especially of birds, is equivalent to knowing the secrets of nature....”(98). The human structure ought to comprehend this quiet language of nature as we are a piece of it not the ace of it. *The Glass Palace* exhibits this image in one of the episodes where the manageable elephants are utilized for the transportation as the Europeans discover them ideal for their business benefits:

Yet until the Europeans came none of them had ever thought of using elephants for the purpose of logging . . . It was the Europeans who saw that tame elephants could be made to work for human profit . . .the entire way of life is their creation . . this method of girdling trees, these ways of moving logs with elephants, this system of floating them downriver . . . (74-75)

These expressions of Saya John to Rajkumar totally center around the green dominion. Disengagement of thousands is additionally a severe face of the colonization and this face has a fine picture in the novel, when King Thebaw is en route to outcast relates the occurrences when the British has carried the Indians to Rangoon for their benefit.

He says:

Many Indians lived there. . .The British had brought them there, to work in the docks and the mills, to pull rickshaws and empty the latrines. . .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? (49-50)



Another corruption of the regular asset in the novel is the oil tanks at Yenangyaung on the Eastern banks at Irrawady. It is where oil normally turns out from the earth. Also, the outsiders need to exploit it and can reach to any degree. They have dealt with these oil pools and tanks and imperialized the nearby individuals of the town tiwn-zas. They have misused the individuals by imperializing them and ransacked the normal assets and their particular grounds. Here Amitav Ghosh depicts the unforgiving truth of the colonization that how the colonialization remains the explanation behind the corruption of the green culture. He centres on the ceaseless human avarice which isn't just dying the earth yet in addition people. This hard portrayal of the colonizers is as per the following:

Many of Yenangyaung's pools had been worked for so long that the level of oil had sunk beneath the surface, forcing their owners to dig down. In this way, some of the pools had gradually become wells, a hundred feet deep or even more- great oil- sodden pits, surrounded by excavated sand and earth. Some of these wells were so heavily worked that they looked like small volcanoes, with steep, conical slopes. At these depths the oil could no longer



be collected simply by dipping a weighted bucket: twin-zas were lowered in, on ropes, holding their breath like pearl divers. (123)

The devastation of the humankind and nature has the terrible picture in the novel. Amitav Ghosh features the demolitions like the bombardments, outflow of the harmful gases in the earth, number of losses, pulverization of water fronts and plants. The assailants have annihilated the product houses, oil tanks and the flourishing hints of assaulting; the perilous billows of smoke are the makers of air and clamour contamination and a danger to the human and non-human universes and vigorously contributing in the natural corruption. Harold Fromm in “From Transcendence to Obsolescence: A Route Map” uses a phrase for humans “man unconquerable mind” (21), which is really apparent in *The Glass Palace*:

The first bombs fell several miles away, the explosions following in evenly spaced rhythmic succession. Suddenly there was booming sound, several times louder than all the proceeding blasts. From somewhere in the eastern reaches of the city, a huge cloud of black smoke mushroomed up towards the sky, almost engulfing the bombers . . . People had been crouching along the walls of the telegraph office when the water source was hit. Many had died. Dismembered limbs could be seen in the pool that spinning around the main: there was a child’s arm, a leg . . . (461-62)

This strong and insuperable mentality of man towards nature and humankind itself is a danger to the world. In such manner, William Rueckert appropriately says, “In ecology, man’s tragic flaw is his anthropocentric (as opposed to bio centric) vision, and his compulsion to conquer, humanize, domesticate, violate, and exploit every natural thing” (112).

Consequently, the investigation of *The Glass Palace* features that the ecocritical investigation of the abstract writings would be a preventative cautioning to human world that the abuse of nature over some undefined time frame will prompt an upheaval of nature. Writing is the source which can acquire the light the field of environment and increment the mindfulness among us towards the non-human world. William Rueckert says, “We need to make some



connections between literature and the sun, between teaching literature and the health of the biosphere” (109), Amitav Ghosh regards Nature as an expressive device in his novel and clarifies the commitment of the human world with non-human world. The natural concerns mixed with the chronicled occasions are the main track of this novel. He exhibits in the novel that the colonialization isn't the main demolisher of nature yet additionally of the humanity. Amitav Ghosh has analysed the reasons for incorporation and crumbling of the different organizations of environment and concentrate the portrayal of the different biological worries in *The Glass Palace*.

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