

**EXISTENTIAL CRISIS IN AMITAV GHOSH'S NOVEL
'THE GLASS PALACE'**

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Abstract

*Existentialism is a system of ideas made famous by Jean-Paul Sartre in which the world has no meaning and each person is alone. In existentialist philosophy, the term existential crisis specifically relates to the crisis of the individual when they realize that they must always define their own lives through the choice they make. Amitav Ghosh is one of the most important novelists of our time. He explores the existential crisis at different levels as personal, social, economic, and political. It is an attempt to analyze the existential crisis in his novel *The Glass Palace*, 2000.*

Keywords: *Existentialism, existential crisis, Amitav Ghosh, alienation, quest, identity.*

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Introduction

Amitav Ghosh is a well-known name in the contemporary literature. He is the first youngest Indian writer in English, to have been chosen for the 54th Jnanpith Award honor. Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956 to a Bengali Hindu family. His father was in the Indian Army because of this reason he got the chance to visit a number of countries including Srilanka, Iran, Bangladesh, Dhaka, and Colombo. Ghosh says that his personal life and traveling within and with the country contributed to his development as a creative writer, Ghosh has received a number of the award for his works. His books include *The Circle of Reason*, *The Shadow line*, *In An Antique Land*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide*, *Ibis Trilogy*. He now divides her time between Harvard University, where he is a visiting professor, and his homes in India and New York.

Ghosh's aim is that nothing human should remain alien to his imagination. He always thinks in terms of human relations and in each novel, he writes about new dimensions of human experience. He treats subjects such as emigration, exile, cultural displacement in a realistic manner.

The present novel *The Glass Palace* 2000, is a historical novel. This novel is concerned with the impact of the colonial encounter and the political and social existence of human beings. This novel is set in Burma and India and catalogs the evolving history of those regions before and during the fraught years of the second world war and India's Independence struggle.

We find the existential crisis at the very core of this novel. Every event and every character are entangled in crisis at a different level. There is an existential threat to Burma by the invasion of the British. Burmese people also find themselves into an existential threat as their king was defeated and sent into in exile. In this way, we explore existential crises through characters in this novel to fulfill our aim.

The Glass Palace is a saga of many families, their lives, and their connection with each other. The story begins with Raj Kumar Raha, the chief protagonist of the novel who creates an empire in Burma. He was an Indian orphan transported to Burma by accident. Raj Kumar is remarkable for his exploring spirit. Once he lands in Mandalay, his life long search for places and people begins. He finds a job with some MaCho who used to run a food stall there. MaCho was a half Indian woman. Like most of Ghosh's character's in this novel MaCho is the woman who is fighting and doing her bit of struggle for her existence. She provides work to the stray Indians like Raj Kumar who needed a job in Mandalay.

Then we meet Saya John, who comes very close to Raj Kumar very soon.

Raj Kumar could have called him as his father, Saya John is a fine example of the breed of hybridist. His face looked like Chinese and he can speak English, Hindustani, and Burmese. He is a contractor for the Burmese teak camps. It is in the teak camps that Raj Kumar leans to work with timber and through timber that he ultimately finds wealth and success.

On the eve of the British invasion and then the departure of the royal family into exile. Raj Kumar met his future wife name, Dolly. She is an orphan like Raj Kumar. She is a maid who looks after the princess. Raj Kumar falls in love with her and made a promise to himself to marry her.

Ghosh shows the pathetic condition of Indian soldiers in this novel. When the city is gone berserk by the British, it is the Indian soldiers who come on the orders of their colonial masters. They fighting for their British masters from neither enmity nor anger, but in submission to orders from superiors without protest and without conscious. Poverty became one of the reasons for the existential crisis in the lives of Indian soldiers. They have to work for Britishers to sustain their existence as a human being. In this way, Indian soldiers became a threat to the very existence of Indians in Burma.

Arjun is one of the main characters who caught in a dilemma between colonialism and nationalism. He takes the latter after realizing with a bitter experience of discriminatory policies of British. Arjun's story reveals us about the struggle of Indians for independence and the struggle of freedom fighters to exist. Initially, Arjun was a British Indian officer later he joins hands with freedom fighters.

The royal family has been exiled to remote India. They have to leave their roots in Burma and migrated to India in Ratnagiri. After the royal family's departure, the economic condition of Burma is also changed. The British take over the teak industry of Burma fully. Britishers exploited the natural resources of Burma for their own profit.

In Ratnagiri, the Royal family is left to live with and amongst commoners. Dolly continued to care for the daughters of the king. Dolly does not want to go back to Burma because for Dolly her life in Ratnagiri is the only life she knows, when Rajkumari met her after twenty years she is not ready to leave the Royal family and marry to him. She was very loyal to the Rajae family.

Here is another important character named Uma, wife of Beni Prasad, new District Collector of Ratnagiri. She is childless. Instead of worrying about her own failures as a wife. She worried about the marriage of the princess and Dolly. It was she who made Dolly to marry Rajkumar and settled in Burma. Beni becomes the

victim of an existential crisis. He commits suicide because he could not bear the loneliness and strain of his job. Uma was twenty-eight when she becomes a widow. She can not pass her days like this so she became a revolutionary and joins hands with freedom fighters. Later she had joined the Congress party and had started working with the women's wing. Uma is a fine example of a strong woman who faced many difficult situations but sustains her existence.

Dolly and Rajkumar faced many problems due to the second world war. Their family life is disturbed. They lost their elder son in the bombardment of Japanese invaders. Rajkumar's timber business is also ruined. They were forced to move from Burma. They have to join the exodus of about thirty thousand refugees moving to India. During this exodus from Burma to India. Dolly and Rajkumar show their struggle for life and for existence.

Earlier Rajkumar leaves India to Burma to make his fortune and to search for his new identity. Now he had to leave Burma to India to save his family's life. Same case is with Dolly. She has to leave for Burma with the exiled Royal family to India in Ratnagiri . After marriage, she had to leave India for Burma and again Burma to India. This migration shows their existential crisis and struggle.

Through these stories, Amitabh Ghosh shows us that war became an existential threat to human beings. Because of war and political unrest, common people suffer a lot. Ghosh humanizes history to make it a part of the existential grammar of the living. This novel is very true to life in it encompasses all the various shades of life.

To conclude we can say that the present story shows never giving a struggle for life and existence which is lying in front of us in the form of this novel.

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