



Cognitive dissonance in Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace*

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Abstract:

The Glass Palace is a novel about human psychology and decision-making processes that come under the broad spectrum of cognitive dissonance from a literary perspective. The term cognitive dissonance in literature explores how conflicting thoughts and emotions shape characters who are victims of displacement, exodus, clash of cultures, and rootlessness. The expatriate experience in which many families live and their connection with each other. This research article explains the pathetic and gloomy plight of estranged and fragmented human thoughts and emotions as a result of their experience. The role of Indians in the British armed forces remains significant throughout the novel. This novel is an uncomfortable mix of the consequences of the Empire and family saga. This story revolves around the dispersal and scattering of people in the process of the human psyche.

Key terms: Psychology, Cognition, Cognitive dissonance, Human Behavior and Thought process

In modern literature across the world, specifically in writing of the postwar period, expatriation has been treated as an upshot of warfare, imperialism and colonization on the literal level, and as severance from the native culture or tradition and resultant breakage or crisis of identity on the metaphorical level. cognitive dissonance and how it arises from conflicting beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors within individuals. Delve into its impact on human psychology and decision-making processes.

In the present context, the term Cognitive dissonance charts out the damage or loss that the colonizers have done to the colonized. This damage is both in the physical and the psychological form. The biggest harm is noticeable in the form of economic breakdown, social disorientation, identity crisis, ecological exploitation, and

cultural chaotic uproar. The postmodern writers have given profound psychological insights in the pain and predicament of the colonized. Expatriation in any form shatters the whole being of a person.

In *The Glass Palace* Amitav Ghosh vividly expresses the features of cognitive dissonance in terms of diasporic condition. The diasporic condition in the novel prevails due to the arrival of the colonial power. It is a saga of three generations that travel through Mandalay, to India and then finally to Malaysia. Rajkumar Raha, the protagonist of this novel, is an eleven-year-old orphan boy from Chittagong caught in an alien land of Burma by an accident. In Burma a sense of belonging develops in him and he decides to stay there. Being an Indian, he has to suffer greatly in this alien land. When Indian soldiers were marching towards, Rajkumar was caught by the local people and was attacked in their agitation. Dolly, the heroine of the novel is a faithful maid of queen Sapayalat, who too had to leave the land of her origin together with the royal family. She grew up in India and the idea of going back to Burma threatens her. She is apprehensive of being called a foreigner in her native land.

The life of the people caught in a diasporic condition get severely affected by the announcement of the war. It is also full of pain and sadness, and breaks many millions. Not only the illusions are broken, but also the heart too is broken by the harsh and cruel consequences of war. This diasporic condition involves a lot of confusion and anguish and may take a turn for the worse. This diasporic condition involves a lot of confusion and aggression which may take a turn for the worse. People, who are not able to come to terms with the adverse condition of displacement, lose their grip on life and succumb under the pressure Manju, Rajkumar's elder daughter-in-law is one such character who, unable to face the hardship of war and expatriation commits suicide.

cognitive dissonance plays in storytelling, enabling authors to create tension, drive character development, and provoke thought-provoking questions. The longing and yearnings of the expatriated people continue to haunt their lives for a long time. These longings and yearnings are satisfied in case of some characters like Dolly, who being always inclined towards spiritualism attains satisfaction in it. But in case of Rajkumar, his longings and yearnings are unsatisfied till his death. Thought out his life he yearns for one or the other thing. And when he is compelled to live in India, he strives for the place he considers to be his homeland. His longing and yearning do not end in his lifespan; it ends only with the end of his life. He mourns for life, which he and Dolly were living in Burma and remarks

My father was from Chittagong and he ended up on the Arakan; I ended up in Rangoon; you went from Mandalay to Ratnagiri and now you are here too. Why should we expect that we are going to spend the rest of the 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. (T.G.P. 310)

Expatriation in the *The Glass Palace* can be discussed for three foremost reasons: as transferable or movement or shift due to certain forced and unavoidable circumstances; as banishment or expulsion or dislocation or evacuation or denial of fundamental rights, freedom, dignity and identity due to political constraint or imposition; and as displacement of change or separation or dispossession or non-attachment owing to coercive condition of fate, which is beyond one's control. Raj Kumar Raha, the protagonist of the novel *The Glass Palace*, lands up in expatriation and witness the beauty of internal conflicts brought to life on the pages. in the city of Mandalay in Burma because by reason of his destiny "It was chance alone that was responsible for Rajkumar's presence in Mandalay." (T.G.P. 14)

Amitav Ghosh has described the whole process of expatriation with poignant pathos. As soon as the British soldiers invade the royal palace of Burma, there is a sudden chaos. The royal minister, courtiers, soldiers, servants and common masses, are disintegrated and turn disobedient and unruly and shun their loyalty towards the monarch. Ghost recounts the first betrayal "the foreigners were expected to come to Mandalay very soon to take the king and queen into captivity" (T.G.P. 25). The two ministers were now competing with one another to keep the royal family under guard. They knew the British would be grateful to whoever handed over royal couple; there would be rich rewards.

The expatriation of king and his family and dependents has been due to political compulsions. It is an enforced displacement. This has been the worst time for the king and is shorn of all majesty, power, dignity, respect, freedom and will. This is certainly the worst consequentiality of expatriation in the colonial period-displacement, crisis of identity, hybridization and utter helplessness. It is like one belonging anywhere or belonging nowhere.

Gosh depicts numerous instances of expatriation intensify the overall impact of colonization on the masses of the colonies which have tough bearing on their psyches, lives, cultures, livelihoods, economic conditions,

power-positions and identities. The totalitarian military regimes exist in a relationship with other texts, be they fictional or non-fictional.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* presents and exhaustively details the causes and consequences of colonization with the colonial politics and particularly of the critical circumstances of colonization with the colonial politics and particularly of the critical circumstances of expatriation. The author quite deftly lays bare the commercial and imperialist aims of the Britons, for the accomplishment of which they have waged unlawful, barbaric, evil and inhumane wars and exploited, pillaged, damaged and destroyed the colonies. "We were told; they did not put King and Princes to death; they rule through laws. If that is so, why has King Thebaw never been brought to trial?" (T.G.P. 150)

Ghosh depicts how unjustified and inhumane were the British in pushing the indigenous people to the extent of displacement, captivity, loot, expatriation and capitalist exploitation. The author accentuates the economic, ecological, moral, cultural and socio-political disintegration wreaked by the British colonizers in the colonies. The novel brings to the fore the questions of the displaced, implicitly indicting the colonizers for dislodging the innocent natives from their homeland. Hence, the characters are traced with the effects of cognitive dissonance within a totalitarian regime, diving deep into the exploration of control and individuality.

Expatriation remains the leitmotif in the novel. In varying forms, it shifts from the anguish of the dislocated and homeless people in the colonial times and milieu to the confusion of relocation, alienation and belongingness in the postcolonial situation. It brings in the crisis of identities from the personal identity of an individual to the collective identities of a nation. In this novel, Ghosh has portrayed his contrast of emotions through the character Rajkumar, Rajkumar though deeply in love with his wife Dolly, betrays her just to satisfy his physical needs. As an individual he is a study in contrast emotionally. One could examine the profound struggle between good and evil within the same person, exemplifying cognitive dissonance as Rajkumar with his dual nature. His emotions play within his mind and soul, affecting his life and decisions.

The Glass Palace is based on transnational interaction and displacements. *The Glass Palace* examines the individual's psychology dilemmas posed by colonialism and consequence outcomes. *The Glass Palace* relates to a multiplicity of experiences and tells the story of diverse individual existence. The frustrated attempts to shape them into neat and definable identities, thereby reducing the possibilities of their being historically generalized.

National history always ignores the existence of individual pasts in its records. Consequently, the people having or sharing a sense of history can be appropriated and fitted into the contemporary narrativization of their own specific pasts. Monolithic history does not recognize the local or the individual. It defines the nations, cultures and people only in terms of totalities. Ghosh has managed to invent a form of writing which repeatedly returns to individual lives that frustrate appropriation into specific subjectivities.

Identities are generally accomplished through a kind of eternal struggle but they are never complete because there is no closure of meaning. The construction of identities and subjectivity then involves the creation of boundary which makes sense only when one considers the relation between the inside and outside of that identity. Self- Alienation is apparent in the characters of the soldier Arjun, who has been molded into a war machine in the hands of British military discourse and in the characters of the Collector, a British trained colonial administrator. Both these characters are destroyed: they end up in a dead end in their existential moorings and kill themselves. These characters are examined how cognitive dissonance experienced as they navigate societal expectations, love, and personal biases.

Arjun the more prominent figure can initially express himself only within the discourse of the military culture. Delve into the internal turmoil of Hamlet as he battles conflicting thoughts and emotions, driving his actions and decisions. Thus, this novel is an evidently uncover how cognitive dissonance shapes characters' behavior and decision-making processes. It also explores the link between conflicting thoughts and actions, driving the narrative's twists and turns then and there. It also delves into the profound impact of cognitive dissonance on readers, as they connect with and experience the tensions and contradictions faced by the characters. Explore the power of this literary technique to provoke reflection and emotional engagement.

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