



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 3. Issue. 3., 2016 (July-Sept.)



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

SEXUALITY THROUGH CONNUBIALITY AND PROGENY INTERTWINED WITH POWER-
DISCOURSE IN THE NOVEL *THE GLASS PALACE* BY AMITAV GHOSH

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ABSTRACT

The present paper tries to analyse sexuality within the framework of marriage, procreation and power relations in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Glass Palace*. Michel Foucault was a man, who made us aware of the working of power and discourse in our day-to-day life. Things that seem quite simple are not as simple as they look. The present paper traces this complicated workings of power and discourse in the area which we consider the most personal—marriage and progeny. Here we shall see that even the most personal sphere of our life is also affected by the working of power and discourse.

Keywords: Demiurgic force, *Philia*, Institutional status, local status, Mourning, Melancholia, Ischomachus' household, *Paltry Jouissance*, *Aphrodisia*.

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The Glass Palace was published in 2000. It has been described as a 'family saga' by John Thieme. It was mainly set in India, Burma and Malaya, disclosing "the undercurrents of power discourse in everyday existence of human life" (Choudhury 115). The title of novel is derived from the *Glass Palace Chronicle*, an old Burmese historical work commissioned by King Bagyidaw in 1829.

It has won several prizes: Grand Prize for Fiction, the International e-Book Award at the Frankfurt book fair in 2001, New York Times Notable Books Award in 2001; its Burmese translation by Nay Win Myint has won the Myanmar National Literature Award in 2012. It is the Eurasian regional winner in the 'Best Book' category for the 2001 Commonwealth Writers' Prize but Ghosh declined his nomination. *The Glass Palace* was translated and published into over 25 languages.

The novel traces marriage and progeny in close connection with power and discourse. How individual life as well as identity are shaped and mould by power discourse. The way we perceive sexuality and the way we apply it in our life, highly depend on the network of power, commerce and politics. In the novel sexuality is traced through marriage, socio-economic circumstances and political displacement. We have several couples or relationships in the novel—Rajkumar/Dolly, Uma/Beni Prasad Dey, Neel/Manju, Ma Cho/Saya John,

Alison/Dinu, Arjun/Alison, Kishan Singh/Bela. We can analyse the different modes of *aphrodisiac* engagement through these couples.

Rajkumar is the pivot around which the novel revolves. He was a brave man, who was made and marred by the life itself. It is the Britisher's colonial policies that made Rajkumar's fortune; at the same time, it is the war that ruined him. He is the best example of how events directed by political authority influence our life. Rajkumar soon became orphan, left alone to face life, which is both cruel as well as kind to him. He initiated his sexual odyssey as a 'peeping tom.' His first glimpse of aphrodisiac ecstasy came from the opening slit of Ma Cho's floor. Once he also had a direct physical contact with Ma Cho, which is abruptly terminated by Ma Cho's sanity, leaving Rajkumar bewildered and stunned. Soon realising her mistake Ma Cho cried with disgust "'What am I doing with this boy, this child, this half-wit kalaa?'" (Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* 57). Leaving him alone she vanished into her room.

This episode shows how power works in sexual relations. In this episode, Rajkumar is a passive agent—'feminine or passive principle' despite of being a man. He neither resists nor persists his will on Ma Cho because he was subordinate to her in power hierarchy. That proves that man's superiority in sexual matters primarily depends on his superior status as a patriarch, as a holder of economic power. The same Rajkumar was able to extract what he wants from Ilango's mother, as his status has changed from a dependent to provider, from poor helpless needy to a rich timber-wood businessman. Thus, active and passive roles in sexual matters largely depend on our economic and social status, which decide our place in power hierarchy. The one who stands on lower rungs of the ladder always has other's will to follow.

After losing his parents, Rajkumar has no particular aim in his life. It is Dolly, who gave him aim in his life. Rajkumar and Dolly got married in a simple ceremony at Collector's house. Their marriage is marked by asymmetry. Rajkumar decided for himself whereas it is Uma and Sawant who thrust Dolly for this marriage. It is Rajkumar, who always prevails in the end. In Dolly's words: "'Does it really matter what I think, Rajkumar? If this is what you're set upon, then this is what you'll do. It is not important what I think'" (316).

Overall Rajkumar was a family man. His relationship with Saya John was like father and son. Neel, his elder son, was his favourite as he was the mirror in which Rajkumar used to see his uncritical, unsuspecting reflection. Rajkumar never shirked his family responsibilities. Even at the time of crisis, he thought about his children. He wanted to make profit just to settle down his children. At the time of air raid the only thought that came to his mind was of his family—Dolly, Manju, Jaya, and above all Neel. After Neel's death, Rajkumar shattered. For a long, he kept wearing the same suit (like Lady Havisham in *Great Expectation* by Charles Dickens) that he was wearing at the time of air raid, which was now blackened with soot. He would have died if not for keeping his mother's last words: "'Stay alive,' she whispered. '*Beche thako*, Rajkumar. Live, my prince; hold on to your life'" (14). After a brief period of 'mourning,' he slowly got back to life.

Rajkumar's *jouissance* is the case of '*paltry jouissance*.' It consistently failed him. First Ma Cho rejected him with yelp of disgust, then Dolly left him when he needs her most, Neel left him unexpectedly and even Uma died before him. Rajkumar's death by cardiac arrest is also symbolic of his broken heart.

Dolly was amazingly beautiful, a paragon of beauty. Uma rightly realized that "Miss Sein was perhaps the loveliest woman she'd ever set eyes on" (108). Dolly's first glimpse of eroticism came through her teenage innocence and unknown 'demiurgic force.' In one hot July afternoon, both Dolly and Sawant succumbed to their unknown compulsion of humour—natural fluids of their body. "They stared at the vivid cloth in silent amazement: this was their handiwork, the banner of their union" (86).

Dolly and Sawant fell in love with each other naturally. Dolly never loved Rajkumar like a lover. She is only just and caring towards him as a wife. He was just a means of escape for her from her past. Her situation is quite paradoxical to Rajkumar, who seeks his past in Dolly. She knew that she is weak in heart. Her stay at Outram House can result in future trouble, so it is best to leave. What was holding her at Outram House, was a child—Sawant's child. However, Uma finally able to convince her that it was not her child and "the birth of the child will drive you [her] out of your mind if you [she] stay on at Outram House" (163). Like Uma, Dolly never gave her soul to her husband. Dolly gave her soul to Sawant as Uma gave her soul to Dolly.

For Dolly the child of First Princess and Sawant is her own: "I feel that the child is mine, growing inside me" (118). She identifies the child with Sawant. As her claim on Sawant was thwarted by their subaltern status, she tried to transfer her claim from father to child. That is how she reinstates her claim on Sawant.

Later Dolly formed the same bond with her younger son Dinu. When Dinu became ill Dolly came closer to him, leaving Rajkumar and Neel lagging behind. Dolly's relation with Dinu is like Gertrude Moral's relation with her younger son Paul Moral in *Sons and Lover* by D. H. Lawrence. In both cases, the illness brought them together. In Dinu's case, it was Polio; whereas in Paul Morel's case, it was bronchitis. One can easily see the resemblance between the two events by infra comparison:

Paul lay against her and slept, and got better; whilst she, always a bad sleeper, fell later on into a profound sleep that seemed to give her faith. (Lawrence, 81)

Dolly took him [Dinu] into her bed, hugging his bony body to her chest, breathing in the soft, rain-washed smell of his hair. She slept better that night than she had at any time in the last several weeks. (Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* 206)

Whereas *Sons and Lovers* is the first grand example of 'Oedipus complex,' in *The Glass Palace* it is not as prominent as in the previous case. But in both cases, it is the mother who seeks her comfort from her unsatisfying marriage in her children. Thus, we can say that progeny do have a therapeutic effect on parents.

The other cause of Dolly's pain was her subaltern status. Dolly was a subaltern by her circumstances. Burma is a country who is quite liberal to their woman. As Dolly herself admitted to Uma: "Dolly flicked her wrist in a gesture of disgust. 'Oh you Indians,' she said, 'You're all the same, all obsessed with your castes and your arranged marriages. In Burma when a woman likes a man, she is free to do what she wants'" (117-18). However, the same Dolly succumbed and forfeited her claim on Sawant to First Princess, as both Sawant and Dolly are economically servile to their masters. All choices of ours, including sexual and marital are always affected by our economic circumstances. If Dolly and Sawant would have been economically independent, they surely were married and lived happily.

Dolly's withdrawal from her married life and her inclination towards Sageing and nunnery largely affected by these early incidents of suppression of her wishes. That confirms the claims of psychoanalysis that if our desires (particularly sexual) are suppressed or distorted in the early stage, we never able to enjoy our life in a wholesome way. Our physical and emotional happiness largely decide our inclusive well-being. Dolly's memory lane is full of pain. She was never able to get over from her painful memories, which resulted in her withdrawal from life. Dolly and Rajkumar's relation is the best example of mechanical togetherness. They mixed but not fused. Their body unified leaving their soul apart. Dolly neither sought Rajkumar's soul nor gave him her own. Whereas being a man of reality and soma, Rajkumar never able to see Dolly beyond her frame.

Uma and Beni Prasad Dey is the other couple, who also have this same incompatibility in their relationship. Uma was fifteen years junior to her husband. She was a tall, vigorous-looking woman with thick, curly hair. Uma always wants to be an ordinary woman, but she has to carry the burden of being Collector's wife.

Uma's love for Dolly is much deeper than her love for her husband. Uma told Dolly that "Dolly, will you believe me if I tell you that I love you like I've never loved anyone before?" (163). But her love for Dolly was not sexual at all. That shows that love has nothing to do with sexuality. It is an independent emotion, which is merged with sexuality for some political and social reasons. Because it is love not lust that last for long. We cannot bind people in family and political ties, on the bases of sexual desires; these feelings are fleeting and evasive. However, stability is needed for society and country, which can only be provided on the strong foundation of love.

Uma's relationship with her husband Beni Prasad Day is far more mechanical than Dolly's with Rajkumar. Dolly and Rajkumar achieved their marital bliss at least for the short period. Still they never reached the compatibility that is reflected in Fokir/Piya (in *The Hungry Tide*) and Kalua/Deeti's (in *Sea of Poppies*) relationship. On the contrary, Uma and Beni Prasad Dey are beyond the scope of this synergy:

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 woman's soul with the coin of kindness and patience. The thought of this terrified her. This was a subjection beyond her imagining. She could not bring herself to think of it. Anything would be better than to submit. (153)

Beni's expectations from Uma were based on his fanciful thought of ideal companionship: "I used to dream about the kind of marriage I wanted.' 'To live with a woman as an equal, in spirit and intellect: this seemed to me the most wonderful thing life could offer. To discover together the world of literature, art: what could be richer, more fulfilling? But what I dream of is not yet possible, not here, in India, not for us'" (172-73).

The problem with Beni is that like his colonial master, he was trained to extract and mould his subject according to his wishes and needs, whereas Uma representing the subject-race naturally resists. After Dolly's departure, Uma felt the inanity in her life, and left Beni for ever, which led to his suicidal rowing in the sea. Beni took Uma's trust for Dolly as a betrayal of his conjugal fidelity. He asked Uma "And your promise to Dolly meant more than the bond between us, you and me?' . . . 'Look at me, Uma. Why could you not trust me? Have I ever betrayed you, in any way? Did you think I would not be discreet?'" (153).

Uma and Beni's relationship proves that sexual relationship does not guarantee emotional bonding or *philia*. In India or in the world, we can find many couple, who share their body but not their soul. They were like two lines of railway track that remain together but never meet, not even at single point. That is why the relationship between Kalua/Deeti and Fokir/Piya are idyllic, as they represent synergy, which cannot be found easily.

Men often want women, who can reflect their own self like a mirror. Zindi was right in her declaration to Jeevanbhai that "you're like all men; what you loved the reflection you saw of yourself in my eyes" (Ghosh, *The Circle of Reason* 344). Same is the case with Beni Prasad Dey. He married Uma, who is fifteen years younger than him, just because he thought she can adapt his life style and emotional level without any fuss. As he believes, young woman can be easily moulded.

Their relationship lacks symmetry; it is inharmonious, more like a master-slave or ruler-ruled kind of relationship. Every time when she fails to oblige her master, she was subjected to punishment in the form of derision. Once at dinner, hosted in the honour of Rajkumar, Uma flung the fork by mistakes. For that, she was subjected to derision and inflection of Mr. Dey: "Ah Madam . . .' The Collector's voice was expansive and loud, filled with mirthful irony" (Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* 144). "She knew the incident would be mentioned many times that evening; there would be innumerable jokes, references, arch asides: these would constitute her punishment" (145). The failure of their relationship shows that too much intellectual expectation in love relationships is detrimental. Love can succeed only when it is directed to love alone, which I call - love for the love's sake.

Mr. Dey was prejudiced against poor and low birth. When he came to know that First Princess is pregnant with lowly coachman's son, he filled with disgust. He visualized Sawant as a cheap lustful fuck who took the advantage of these girls' confinement. Mr. Dey thinks that love is also subjected to social hierarchy. He thinks of it as an exclusive right of few elite. Though his definition of elite is personal—people who are Western educated and sophisticated. Applying this criterion on Sawant and Queen Supayalat he found them unfit of loving.

The Queen Supayalat is a strange character. She is capable of both love and hate at extreme. She decided to live a life of an exile only because of her love for Thebaw; but she is the same queen who killed seventy-nine claimant princes, to secure throne for her husband. Mr. Day was amazed with this paradoxical combination:

But what could they possibly know of love, of any of the finer sentiments, these bloodthirsty aristocrats, these semi-illiterates who had never read a book in all their lives, never looked with pleasure upon a painting? What could love mean to this woman, this murderer, responsible for the slaughter of scores of her own relatives? And yet it was the fact that she

had chosen captivity over freedom for the sake of her husband, condemned her own daughters to twenty years of exile. Would Uma do the same for him? Would anyone? He shivered . . . (152)

The other relationship that we come across in the novel was of Dinu and Alison's, which I shall term— a relationship in a process; as it grew from mere physical attachment to soul-satisfying union. They started as a 'mixer' but ended in a 'fusion.' Dinu and Alison were quite opposite to each other. Dinu was reclusive and introvert, while "Alison was a bit of an enigma, sometimes quiet and moody, but on occasion, wildly exuberant, full of laughter and sharp, intelligent conversation" (226). Dinu was infatuated by Alison from his childhood. But being an introvert he never expressed it. Dinu made a visit to Morningside after the death of Alison's parents and decided to stay there as he had little interest in Rajkumar and his teakwood business. After few months of initial reclusiveness, he suddenly drawn towards Alison in a bizarre incident. Afterwards it became ritual for them to meet in the ruins to indulge in their erotic odyssey.

Dinu intrude into her heart through his camera, which Alison sometimes found irritating "I feel I have more of your attention when you're looking into your camera than when you're laying here with me.' . . . Sometimes it's as if you have no other interest in me but this'" (357). Then Dinu explained to Alison that it is his way of receiving and reciprocating her love, which may be different from other:

'I see more of you in this way than I would in any other,' he said. 'If I were to talk to you for hours I wouldn't know you better. I don't say this is better than talking . . . it's just my way – my way of understanding . . . (357)

Dinu seriously fell in love with Alison and wanted to marry her. But Alison being a free woman did not give it a serious thought. "Why marriage? Isn't this good enough?" (358), she suggested, "let's just be content with what we have" (359).

After realising her intimacy with Arjun, Dinu was deeply hurt and decided to leave Morningside. In the morning when he was scheduled to leave for Rangoon, he spotted Japanese plane that bombed the airstrip at Sungei Pattani. The first thought that came to his mind was of Alison and her safety. He dropped his idea of leaving Morningside and went to Sungei Pattani with Ilango to see Alison. That shows that he truly loved Alison. During this time of unrest, Alison finally realised that she also loved Dinu. She admitted to Dinu that she loves him too—" . . . I think I'm in love with you, Dinu – or something like that at any rate. I didn't know it before, but I know it now" (401).

He did not care what had happened between her and Arjun; nothing mattered but this – that she loved him and he loved her. Nothing else was of any account, not the planes, not the bombs, nothing but this. This was what happiness was - he'd never known it before; this melting away, this exaltation, your guts spilling into your head, filling your eyes – your mind transformed into your body, your body instinct with the joy in your mind; this sensation of reality having met its end. (401)

It is strange that Dinu was living with Alison physically for long, but this single sentence—"I think I'm in love with you, Dinu"—has given him the pleasure far beyond the capacity of any sexual encounter. That shows that emotional intimacy is more important than physical intimacy. This rare happiness occasioned by real love has never come in Arjun's life, whose relationships with women are always materialistic, directed by only physical need, devoid by any real emotion.

When Arjun came in their life at Morningside, Alison gradually drawn towards him. Still in this tight situation, Dinu never imposed his will on Alison. He is a true gentleman. "He'd known that Arjun could not be trusted – nor Alison, not with him. Yet what could he have done? They were adult, and he had no real claim on either of them" (371). In one of her meetings with Arjun on beach, celebrating the birth of Jaya, Arjun made advances towards her, which she did not resist initially, but soon awakened to reality. "She saw how badly he wanted her; there was something irresistible about the insistency of his desire" (374). Here they both became victims of *aphrodisia* as a 'demiurgic force':

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; . . . it was as though 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 apprehend 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. (374)

Comparing Dinu with Ajun she realised the true strength of Dinu and innate futility of Arjun's existence:

And then she realised that she had always felt sorry for him, a little, and that was why she had come with him that morning to the beach. 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; that that was why she had had to take the risk of losing him. (376-77)

Alison immediately filled with repentance. "All she could think of at that moment was of throwing herself into water, to wash off the feel of his [Arjun] touch" (375).

The End of Dinu-Alison's affair was quite tragic. Alison died in an encounter with Japanese soldiers protecting her grandfather while going to the north. But before their tragic end, they do have their love birds' movement, with promises to meet again. In their final leave taking, they refuse to say goodbye to each other. In the urgency of departure, Alison realised that her love for Dinu is far more deeper than she used to think. So, she decided to marry him to retain her claim on him in her absence.

In these last movements, they both became desperate and transformed into intense lovers: "Alison . . . what am I going to do? Without you?' 'And me, Dinu? What about me? What will I do?'" (443). Dinu has discovered the new technique of printing—a print by contact. "Dinu.' She ran her fingertips over his face. 'If only I could hold you in that way . . . so that you were imprinted on me . . . every part of me . . .'" (444). Here Alison wishes to dissolve herself in Dinu, which is the sublime of love.

Dinu and Alison's marriage is the most fulfilling and complete marriage as it was not occasioned by any materialistic need. Both Dinu and Alison decided for themselves in the solemn faith of their heart. That is how a marriage should be. It should be noted here that their blissful relationship is thwarted not by their personal incompatibility but by sudden political and social upheaval for which none of them was responsible. That shows how our life is decided by the socio-political events directed by power-discourse without least control on our part.

Then comes Manju and Neel. She met Neel in film studio by accident and immediately fell for him. Neel also reciprocated in the same way. Soon they got married, uniting Raha and Roy's family, extending the bond between Uma and Dolly. "She (Manju) acknowledged how completely she was in love. He [Neel] was her present, her future, the entirety of her existence. Time and being held no meaning without him" (301). Manju enjoyed her marriage and motherhood, founding them emancipating. She has no trouble in her married life. Then suddenly destiny intervened and Neel was crushed under piles of logs. After his death, she became very disturbed. She cut off her hair with scythe and hurt her scalp, she lost interest in Jaya, her daughter and finally committed suicide while migrating to India.

She was the case of 'alienation' and 'melancholia'—a pathological version of 'mourning' which includes: "a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feeling to a degree that resulted in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment" (Freud, *Memory & Melancholia* 252, qtd. in Thurschwell 90).

After Neel's death, Manju lost interest in life, and became the victim of 'death drive.' While migrating to India Manju died by drowning. Both Manju and Arjun died in their respective depression, leaving their

younger sister Bela alone. Ghosh reached a different ground of emotion while delineating the character of Bela. Bela was the youngest child of Roy family. Uma was her aunt with whom she spent her later life.

Bela fall in love with Kishan Singh, Arjun's batman, with childish impatience, but she carried out her love for him with utmost sincerity, dedication and loyalty, almost equal to devotion. She never married to anyone; and worshiped Kishan Singh after his death: "he too was among their dead" (Ghosh, *The Glass Palace* 486). Bela kept his photograph in her shrine among the photograph of her parents, Arjun, Manju and Neel. Jaya often surprised by the presence of Kishan Singh's photo among them.

Bela and Kishan Singh's love story is one of the cutest and sweetest love stories in Indian English literature. Her love for him was so innocent, while his reception of her love was so benign. Bela's enquiries about Kishan Singh's marriage and wedding night are filled with babyish innocence. Kishan Singh answered her queries like a friend. Finally, Kishan Singh gave her a memorable moment that attached her to him for lifetime. "He pulled her to her feet and led her to the door. Just as she was about to slip out, he stopped her. 'Wait.' With a hand under her chin, he kissed her, very briefly, but full on the lips" (297). This gesture of Kishan Singh hardly seems cheap or lustful. On the contrary, it looks so noble and gracious, best suited to the situation. As a reader, one cannot imagine the better valediction for this couple. It seems as Kishan Singh would have hint of his future demise, thus giving his lady her due that she deserve the most.

The issue of inter-relationship between sexuality, power and Military is an important issue of analysis in the novel. Ghosh dealt with this issue through the character of Arjun. First he discussed women's natural infatuation for Army men. Most of Manju's friends were already in love with Arjun. Whenever they were at her house "they'd go to amazing lengths to ingratiate themselves with the family – hoping, of course, that someone would remember them when it came time to find a bride for Arjun" (260). It is a universal phenomena that women naturally drawn to Military men as they represent power, authority, domination and sovereignty. Infatuation towards them implies submission and servitude on women's part. Women being genderised from centuries as an aide, server and passive force, naturally look for their master, protector and provider in men. In Military men, they found their strongest and relentless masters. It is the result of their genderised servitude that women like Military man. That is why Arjun was a Ladies' Man. Women seek their safety in men. That is why Ma Cho left Saya John for she did not find her protector in him. She rightly said: "What is the use of a man who's never there when you need him?" (56).

Arjun's attitude towards sexuality was quite materialist. He believes in pacifying his hormones. His attachment to women was not beyond that. It can be judged by his casual attitude towards sex when he was offered a night with a dancer at *kotha* near Ajmeri Gate as a birthday gift on his twenty-third birthday from his friends Hardy and Kumar in Delhi. Similarly, despite of the knowledge of Dinu's affair with Alison, Arjun made his advances towards her. In the end, Arjun found his salvation in the rejection of life. Raymond rightly said to Dinu "It was clear that he did not want to live" (527). Finally, his 'Eros' has succumbed to his 'death drive.'

Everything including marriage loses its purpose and meaning when the body is not attuned with our heart. Hardy rightly said that when our heart did not collaborate with our body than we lose purpose of our life. Uma and Beni Prasad Dey fall apart because there is no compatibility in their body and soul. Dolly left Rajkumar as her heart never yielded to him. Whereas Queen Supaylat sustained her exile with quite comfortable ease, because she has a company of a man whom she had succumbed her body as well as her soul. Same is the case with Manju and Bela, they devoted their life to their man as their heart belong to their man. This falling apart of heart and soul, most of the time leads to dejection, depression and disintegration.

Marriage works as an Institution. Marriage is an asymmetrical set up, which with the support of patriarchy, put woman in disadvantage. In almost all cultures, women leave their parental house and settle in their husband house. We are so deeply gendered for this displacement that we never wonder about its grave injustice. It is natural that newcomer or outsider is always in disadvantage. Thus marriage is a master-slave mechanism, sometimes blatant sometimes mild. Hardy was so right when he said:

' . . . There are no good masters and bad masters, Arjun – in a way the better the master, the worse the condition of the slave, because it makes him forget what he is . . .' (438).

That is the sole reason why Uma was dissatisfied in her marriage, despite the fact that Beni Prasad was quite a good person. Still a master will always be a master, and the mere presence of his whether benign or maligning is an encroachment of equality and freedom.

In the novel, marriage follows the pattern of Ischomachus' household. In marriage affair, it is the family that decides for the girl, whereas man decides for himself. Equality lacks in the institute of marriage. But at the same time, marriage also extends our ties with our friends. "Suddenly she (Uma) understood why people arranged marriages for their children: It was a way of shaping the future to the past, of cementing one's ties to one's memories and to one's friends. Dinu and Alison – if only they were better suited to each other; how wonderful it might be, the bringing together of so many stories" (230). Children extend our existence, Uma rightly observe when she met the next generation of Rahas and Martinses that "the canvas of a lifetime's connections would have acquired the patina of another generation" (225).

Marriage is also seen as the tool for political ploy. Marriage is seen as a political tool to form, maintain and extend political and cultural ties among different races and nations, e.g., Jodha-Akbar marriage. Of course, it has its vice versa effects too, which is the case with Dolly. Dolly was booed by the Burmese crowd for marrying an Indian. She was seen as a traitor by many. In an incident a crowd had surrounded her car and shook their fist on her, and start singing a political song—*Amyotha Kwe Ko Mayukya Pa Net . . .*—which means women who marry Indians are traitors to their own people.

Our identities are politically defined. We may able to change our 'local status' but we cannot change our 'institutional status.' For Rajkumar Burma was his country, but he was politically Indian. Rajkumar rightly said ". . . it doesn't matter whether I think of Burma as home or not. What matters is what people think of us" (310).

In the novel Ghosh depicts that love also can be extra-human. Like extra-personal communication which occur between human and non-human entities. The deep love between Shwe Doke (a cow elephant) and her oo-si is its proof. She killed McKay (a young assistant at teak wood camp) who is responsible for her oo-si's death, at the cost of her life.

In the novel Ghosh shows that in a close-knit socio-political structure, individual freedom and independent existence are the fancy dreams. Whether you have any knowledge of power-discourse or not, it is not easy to escape it and exercise our individuality, it is an illusion as Althusser pointed out. With our limited closet choices (as Butler puts it), we follow power's command knowingly or unknowingly, directly or indirectly. Our sexual and social identity and its choices are always decided by this power game.

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