



# The Glass Palace: A Novel

By Amitav Ghosh

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Brilliant and impassioned, **The Glass Palace** is a masterly novel by Amitav Ghosh, the gifted novelist Peter Matthiessen has called an exceptional writer. This superb story of love and war begins with the shattering of the kingdom of Burma and the igniting of a great and passionate love, and it goes on to tell the story of a people, a fortune, and a family and its fate.

**The Glass Palace** tells of Rajkumar, a poor boy lifted on the tides of political and social chaos, who creates an empire in the Burmese teak forest. During the British invasion of 1885, when soldiers force the royal family out of the Glass Palace and into exile, Rajkumar befriends Dolly, the woman whose love will shape his life. He cannot forget her, and years later, as a rich man, he goes in search of her.

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## The Glass Palace: A Novel By Amitav Ghosh Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Ghosh's epic novel of Burma and Malaya over a span of 115 years is the kind of "sweep of history" that readers can appreciate despite its demands. There is almost too much here for one book, as over the years the lives and deaths of principal characters go flying by. Yet Ghosh (*The Calcutta Chromosome*; *Shadow Lines*) is a beguiling and endlessly resourceful storyteller, and he boasts one of the most arresting openings in recent fiction: in the marketplace of Mandalay, only the 11-year-old Indian boy Rajkumar recognizes the booming sounds beyond the curve of the river as English cannon fire. The year is 1885, and the British have used a trade dispute to justify the invasion and seizure of Burma's capital. As a crowd of looters pours into the fabled Glass Palace, the dazzling throne room of the nine-roofed golden spire that was the great hti of Burma's kings, Rajkumar catches sight of Dolly, then only 10, nursemaid to the Second Princess. Rajkumar carries the memory of their brief meeting through the years to come, while he rises to fame and riches in the teak trade and Dolly travels into exile to India with King Thebaw, Burma's last king; Queen Supayalat; and their three daughters. The story of the exiled king and his family in Ratnagiri, a sleepy port town south of Bombay, is worth a novel in itself, and the first two of the story's seven parts, which relate that history and Rajkumar's rise to wealth in Burma's teak forests, are marvelously told. Inspired by tales handed down to him by his father and uncle, Ghosh vividly brings to life the history of Burma and Malaya over a century of momentous change in this teeming, multigenerational saga. (Feb. 6) Forecast: Novels by Indian authors continue to surge in popularity here, and this title not only ranks among the best but differs from the pack for its setting of Burma rather than India. Backed by a 6-city author tour, advance blurbs from Peter Mathiessen and the British reviews of the novel, plus a Fiction at Random promotion, this book should be read widely and with enthusiasm stateside. Rights have been sold in Germany, the U.K., France, Denmark, Holland, Italy, Spain, India and Latin America.

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From Library Journal

In an industry not known for risk-taking, the publisher is to be congratulated for offering Ghosh (*The Calcutta Chromosome*) a contract on his as-yet-unwritten novel. Set primarily in Burma, Malaya, and India, this work spans from 1885, when the British sent the King of Burma into exile, to the present. While it does offer brief glimpses into the history of the region, it is more the tale of a family and how historical events influenced real lives. As a young boy, Rajkumar, an Indian temporarily stranded in Mandalay, finds himself caught up in the British invasion that led to the exile of Burma's last king. In the chaos, he spies Dolly, a household maid in the royal palace, for whom he develops a consuming passion and whom years later he tracks down in India and marries. As their family grows and their lives intersect with others, the tangled web of local and international politics is brought to bear, changing lives as well as nations. Ghosh ranges from the condescension of the British colonialists to the repression of the current Myanmar (Burmese) regime in a style that suggests E.M. Forster as well as James Michener. Highly recommended, especially for public libraries.

-David W. Henderson, *Eckerd Coll. Lib., St. Petersburg, FL*

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From [The New Yorker](#)

This sprawling narrative, inspired by stories passed down in the author's family, stretches from the British invasion of Burma, in 1885, through the country's independence, to the uneasy military rule of the present day. The novel is presided over by the Indian-born Rajkumar, a poor orphan, who falls for Dolly, a servant of the exiled queen. Ghosh renders the polite imprisonment of the Burmese royal family in India and the lush,

dangerous atmosphere of teak camps in the Burmese forest with fine detail— a perfect balance for the broad strokes of romance and serendipity that drive the story forward. The book's memorial power is so strong that, near the end, when Rajkumar, an old man, reflects, "Ah, Burma—now Burma was a golden land," the reader catches himself nodding in recognition of what was lost.

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## **Users Review**

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