



Detrimental Impacts of Poppy Monoculture on Indigenous Subjects, Plants and Animals:

An Ecocritical Reading of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*

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Abstract

Critically reading Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, the present paper attempts to explore the impacts of colonization on indigenous subjects, plants and animals. To trace the detrimental effects of colonialism on both environment and people in *Sea of Poppies*, this study foregrounds the reflection of the obligatory cultivation of poppy under the rule of British colonizers in India. *Sea of Poppies* is indeed a portrayal of the catastrophic policies enforced in India by British colonizers in the nineteenth century. In his seminal novel Ghosh deals with the changes brought about by the lucrative cultivation of poppy in the exacerbation of the financial status of indigenous subjects. Environmental devastation and the changes in the normal behavior of animals are also dealt with. Focusing on the theoretical frameworks proposed by Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, this paper explores the convergence of postcolonialism and ecocriticism in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* to indicate that not only were native people impoverished during colonialism in India, but also the ecosystem was severely damaged.

Keywords

Colonialism, Post-colonial Approach, Ecocriticism, Poppy, Nature, Animals

1. Introduction

Amitav Ghosh is widely known as a leading Indian novelist whose works deal with various aspects of imperialism and colonialism in India. He has won various literary awards including France's Prix Médicis in 1990, the Crossword Book Prize in 2005, and the Man Booker Prize in 2008. As the first volume of the Ibis Trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* (2008) is a depiction of the adverse consequences of colonial rule in India that resulted in the destitution of indigenous people. Gosh reveals the various aspects



of colonial exploitation affecting Indian nation. Since he conducted vast researches concerning the impacts of colonial rule in India before commencing the Ibis Trilogy, Ghosh acquired a deep insight into the nature of colonization in India. His novels, then, genuinely portray the plight of Indian subjects during colonial rule.

Ghosh highlights the commercial exchange of opium between the British East India Company and China during the nineteenth century. As an economically and politically powerful institution responsible for a remarkable portion of atrocities in India, the East India Company exacerbated the indigence of colonized natives through the implementation of oppressive policies that enslaved indigenous subjects and devastated the agriculture industry in India. The British colonizers abused Indian farmers and forced them to give up the cultivation of wheat, barley, and other edible crops to cultivate opium. The significant profit obtained from opium trade enabled the colonizers to purchase luxurious Chinese goods including porcelain and silk in a large scale to meet the tremendous demands of the market for these goods. The abundant cultivation of poppy in India established the monopoly of British East India Company on opium trade in China, a country in which there was a burgeoning demand for opium.

Referring to the emergence of ecocriticism as a new approach to literary criticism and tracing its development to the first and the second waves, the first section of the paper focuses on ecocriticism and its intersections with postcolonialism to elaborate the theoretical framework upon which the argument of the article rests. Subsequently, following a concise investigation of scholarly writings on *Sea of Poppies* in literature review section, the paper examines the reflection of the negative impacts of colonialism on indigenous subjects, plants and animals in Ghosh's novel. Likewise, the dispossession and marginalization of colonized natives are foregrounded in the section that concentrates on the impoverishment of wretched Indian subjects. The detrimental consequences of poppy monoculture, as the most significant economic policy undertaken by British colonizers, for established ecosystems and animals living in the vicinity of opium factories are explored in "ecological imbalance" and "animals' disorders" sections respectively.



2. Theoretical Framework: Postcolonial Ecocriticism

Looking at the depiction of environmental issues in literary works, Ecocriticism is a roughly new approach to literary criticism. It is an interdisciplinary approach combining ecological, social and literary issues to examine the manipulation of environment by human beings as represented in the works of literature. As the founders of ecocriticism, Glotfelty and Fromm hold that “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). Ecocriticism is, then, an exploration of “the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production, from Wordsworth and Thoreau to Disney and BBC nature documentaries” (Garrard i). Accordingly, ecocriticism is an earth-centered approach to novels, plays and poems. It is an umbrella term covering various issues including, but not limited to, environmental destruction, deep ecology, environmental racism, environmental justice, and more recently ecofeminism and postcolonial ecocriticism.

Although William Wordsworth and other British Romantic poets, as well as American Transcendentalist poets, had already dealt with nature in their poems, the rise of ecocriticism is generally attributed to the intensification of environmental crises induced by destructive policies undertaken by human beings in the twentieth century. Along with a large number of authors who found themselves committed to the portrayal of disastrous interference of man in nature, theoreticians of ecocriticism have been preoccupied with irretrievable ecological devastation since the 1970s. Hence, large-scale deforestation, thinness of the ozone layer, commercial exploitation of animals and pollution of air and water depicted in many literary works became the subjects to be examined based on the principles of ecocriticism.

Lawrence Buell divided ecocriticism in his book, *The Future of Environmental Ecocriticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination* (2005), into two waves. The first wave focuses on environmental issues, and tends to foreground the consequences of man’s interference in nature. The protection of plants and animals is the major concern of the first wave. As Buell remarks, “for first-wave ecocriticism, environment effectively meant “natural environment” (21). He maintains that the first wave “was initially understood to be synchronous with the aims of earthcare” (Buell,



2005: 21). Accordingly, this wave examines the impacts of culture over nature. The second wave, however, deals with urban and suburban environments as well. Nature is not romanticized in the second wave that foregrounds filthy urban areas. Hence, the second-wave ecocritics redefined the term environment and expanded its realm to include both wilderness and urban areas.

As a subfield of ecocriticism, postcolonial ecocriticism focuses on colonized territories. Proponents of this new critical framework hold that colonized spaces are absolutely distinct from European territories. They contend that traditional ecocriticism has failed to notice the fundamental political, economic and ecological distinctions between Europe and the third world. Moreover, postcolonial ecocriticism is a critique of postcolonial literary theory's negligence of non-anthropocentric issues, including environmental disasters, within colonized territories. Even if a prominent postcolonial theorist refers to land in his critical arguments, as Frantz Fanon does, the significance of land pertains to its potential as both a source of income and sustenance of colonized natives' lives, as well as a determinant of dignity for them. That is to say, postcolonial theorists disregard environmental and ecological aspects of imperialism and colonialism.

Apart from taking into account the plights of human beings induced by ecological changes brought about by colonization, postcolonial ecocriticism highlights the representations of nonhuman elements in literature. Huggan and Tiffin explore the correlations between postcolonial literary theory and ecocriticism to indicate how colonial and neocolonial powers have drastically changed nature in colonized lands. They assert that environmental issues were of the least concern for imperialistic powers. Huggan and Tiffin refer to the unfair exploitation of colonized countries by European colonizers who devastated whatever they came across in their colonies:

Under European colonial rule, the resources of the invaded, conquered and settled territories were exploited for imperial profit; and cash cropping and other European agricultural practices usually replaced hunting and subsistence farming, thereby damaging established ecosystems, reducing soil fertility, or even, as in the case of the Sahara, resulting in desertification. (1)



Huggan and Tiffin hold that unlike native people who used nature to sustain their lives, European colonizers exploited natural environment disregarding the horrible impacts of their destructive behavior on the imbalance of ecosystems within the conquered countries. Postcolonial ecocriticism, then, focuses on the large-scale deforestation, hunting wild animals for both entertainment and financial profit, water pollution due to oil leak as the result of the expansion of oil industry, and other destructive measures ruthlessly taken by colonizers in conquered countries as depicted in literary works.

3. Literature Review

Sea of Poppies has been examined in a variety of scholarly articles and books from different perspectives since its publication in 2008. Saeed Abdoli and Leila Baradaran Jamili read the novel from a feminist viewpoint. They maintain that colonization exacerbated the already unfavorable status of indigenous women in colonized countries. According to the authors, Deeti is a miserable Indian woman who is exposed to both racial discriminations imposed on her by British colonizers and patriarchal oppression that has marginalized her in various ways. She is expected to acquiesce to *sati* ritual which requires the immolation of a widow upon her husband's funeral pyre.

Similarly, Priyanka Maral highlights the misery of native women. Maral asserts that marginalization of indigenous women in *Sea of Poppies* is quite irrelevant to their literacy. That is to say, no woman can escape victimization regardless of the level of her education. Moreover, she looks at the wretched lives of the native women, including Sarju, Heeru, Munniah who serve as enslaved laborers in a schooner, named Ibis, that carries opium from India to China. Unlike Priyanka Maral who has examined the status of indigenous women in Ibis, Pajesh Rai and Andrea Marion Pinkney focus on the predicament of both male and female Indian indentured laborers in Ibis. They hold that Indian indentured laborers are oppressively abused by British colonizers who have enslaved them to participate in the transportation of opium from India to China. The authors highlight the corporeal punishment and torture of indigenous laborers by the British colonizers and their agents.



Focusing on the concept of 'subaltern,' S. Sreehas and Santosh Kumar examine the marginalization of indigenous subjects, primarily native women, in *Sea of Poppies*. They hold that indigenous subjects are outside the hegemonic power structure in India as a colony of the British Empire. They argue that 'wretched' natives, including Deeti, are voiceless and destitute. Deeti's predicament, Sreehas and Kumar contend, is the worst in that she is subject to double colonization. On the one hand, Deeti is exposed to the oppressive strategies propagated by colonizers, on the other hand, she has to tolerate patriarchal oppression affecting all indigenous women regardless of their educational status.

Gopal Vankar maintains that cultivation of poppy, as a lucrative policy undertaken by colonizers, led to their accumulation of wealth. Many native people, especially rebels, were forced to serve as indentured laborers on schooners that carried opium to China. Vankar refers to Neel Rattan Halder as a defiant *zemindar* whose land is appropriated by colonizers. Neel has to serve as a laborer on *Ibis* beside convicts and coolies. Meanwhile, he is brutally beaten by agents of British colonizers, for the East India Company's trade turns out to be a form of penal system controlling and torturing rebellious natives. Hence, according to Gopal Kumar, Ghosh indicates ruthless European usurpers exercise authority over indigenous subjects through enslaving them on cargo ships.

R. Sowmiyalatha and M. Kalaiarasan hold that Ghosh intends to depict the marginalization of "the powerless" natives in the nineteenth century, when the British Empire was the leading imperial power dominating approximately one-fifth of the earth. They refer to Ghosh as an archeologist who investigates the plights of oppressed natives. Deeti, Sowmiyalatha and Kalaiarasan assert, is the representative of disempowered indigenous subjects who are deprived of their lands to cultivate poppy for avaricious colonizers. They contend that Ghosh denounces not only colonizers but also those native agents, like Bhyro Shing, who betray their country to join the usurpers in the violent treatment of downtrodden natives. . Sowmiyalatha and Kalaiarasan refer to Bhyro Shing as the representative of traitors who are employed by colonizers to terrify their miserable compatriots.



Ravi Bhushan praises Amitav Ghosh as "a master story teller" in "Deconstructing Human Society: An Appreciation of Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*". He refers to Ghosh as one of the most competent Indian novelists. Bhushan concentrates on Ghosh's use of realism in the novel to depict the obligatory cultivation of poppy in India. He focuses on the cruelty of British colonizers who impoverished Indian farmers and factory workers during the nineteenth century. Finally, Pandole and Gupta consider the novels as "a saga of struggle by the destitute and wretches of colonial India". They examine the process of identity formation in indigenous characters and cover the aspects of identity that native characters come across in the social, political or cultural contexts of the society. Pandole and Gupta enquire into the impacts of colonial rule and the cultural hegemony propagated by colonizers on identity construction among indigenous characters.

4. Economic and Ecological Damages in *Sea of Poppies*

4.1. Impoverishment of Indigenous Subjects

As the first book of Ibis trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* recounts the lamenting story of obligatory cultivation of opium in India. Among the dozens of indigenous characters in the novel, Deeti might be the most wretched one whose life is ruined due to the oppressive policies undertaken by the British colonizers. The novel begins with Deeti looking after Hukam Singh, her moribund crippled husband whose life has been devastated by the consumption of opium. Addiction to opium has aggravated his already bad health. Hukam Singh is the representative of a lot of Indian workers who became addicted to opium in Ghazipur Opium Factory. Ghosh describes the deplorable and odious conditions of poor indigenous laborers in the factory as follows:

Now once again Deeti was taken aback by the space ahead, but this time not because of the vastness of its dimensions, but rather the opposite – it was like a dim tunnel, lit only by a few small holes in the wall. The air inside was hot and fetid, like that of a closed kitchen, except that the smell was not of spices and oil, but of liquid opium, mixed with the dull stench of sweat – a reek so powerful that she had to pinch her nose to keep herself from gagging. (*Sea of Poppies* 63)



Domination of European colonizers over eastern territories that commenced in the sixteenth century disastrously resulted in the marginalization and dispossession of indigenous subjects. They deprived indigenous people of their revenues and forced wretched natives, in some colonies including India, to work for them as low-paid or even unpaid laborers. Likewise, British colonizers are depicted in the novel as ruthless usurpers who have appropriated fertile lands to cultivate poppy. This lucrative economic policy is enforced at the cost of the impoverishment of natives. They are either compelled to work laboriously for low wages in opium factories or forced to give up their usual cultivation of edible crops to fulfill the insatiable hankering of colonizers for the accumulation of wealth. The draconian law of opium obligatory cultivation aggravates the misery and destitution of colonized natives whose country has been deprived of its natural resources since the onset of colonialism.

Deeti is the representative of indigent natives who are unfairly exploited by western colonizers. She loses her crippled husband whose life is ruined due to the excessive consumption of opium. He passes away leaving Deeti destitute and forlorn. Deeti finds herself a penurious woman at the mercy of various unfavorable consequences of her husband's death. She asks herself what she would eat in the month a head while her small land is "in hock" to the British colonizers. With the agents of colonizers going from farm to farm to check the probable transgressions, farmers are not able to grow anything but poppy. That is to say, since she has to cultivate poppy in her land, Deeti cannot grow edible crops including vegetables and grains. Hence, she would plunge deeper and deeper into poverty.

Huggan and Tiffin hold that colonized natives are financially exploited for imperial profit. They maintain that this exploitation is not limited to the appropriation of land. (1) That is to say, urban natives are also adversely affected by economic policies undertaken by colonizers. Hence, not only peasants but also residents of cities are depicted to be dealing with poverty. Cities are stocked with thousands of poor laborers "many of whom are willing to sweat themselves half to death for a few handfuls of rice" (*Sea of Poppies* 135). A lot of these destitute natives were forced to leave rural areas following the obligatory cultivation of poppy that became a



disastrous phenomenon throughout the country. As the narrator asserts, since farmlands that had once been the source of income for indigenous farmers were now controlled by colonizers, indigence and food scarcity could be observed throughout India.

4.2. Ecological Imbalance

Ghosh exhibits, the environmental destruction induced by excessive exploitation of nature. He depicts the destructive strategy of colonizers to accumulate wealth through ecological imperialism. The anthropocentric ideology of the British colonizers results in reshaping the ecosystem of India. Hence, victimization of native subjects is accompanied by the detrimental cultivation of opium resulting in drastic changes in Indian agriculture and ecosystems. The British colonizers impoverished both the environment and Indian farmers as they forced them to give up the cultivation of essential and edible crops. They used to cultivate potato, tomato and wheat that would contribute to their sustenance. The livelihood of most farmers depended on the cultivation of wheat, for it was both the main source of income and could provide them with bread. Moreover, farmers would utilize wheat straw to repair the roof of their houses. Overwhelmed by extreme destitution, Deeti recalls the good days prior to the compulsory cultivation of poppy, when Indian farms had not been affected by colonizers:

She stopped to glance in the direction of their hut, which was just visible in the distance: it looked like a tiny raft, floating upon a river of poppies. The hut's roof was urgently in need of repairs, but in this age of flowers, thatch was not easy to come by: in the old days, the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter, and after the spring harvest, the straw would be used to repair the damage of the year before. (*Sea of Poppies* 19)

Deeti recounts the predicament of Indian farmers brought about by colonialism. Prior to the ominous arrival of colonizers, edible crops used to be cultivated in large scales to meet the needs of farmers. Opium was a luxury crop grown in small clusters adjacent to vast wheat and barley farms. Poppy seeds could be sold to oil companies or preserved at home to be cooked with meat and vegetables. As Deeti's mother



remarks, no one would grow opium in large scales for financial benefits. Furthermore, farmers would keep a little of their opium for their families to be used in the treatment of certain illnesses.

A few clumps of poppy would be sufficient to meet the needs of a family. Nevertheless, the East India Company disturbed the conventional farming patterns in a significant section of farms in India through the enforcement of poppy cultivation, for opium was a lucrative product that could be exported to China where it was much in demand. Likewise, Deeti says “the (Ghazipur) factory's appetite for opium seemed never to be sated” (*Sea of Poppies* 20). Mr. Burnham, a major British trader in India, informs an American colleague concerning the significance of opium for colonizers in India:

'For the simple reason, Reid,' said Mr. Burnham patiently, 'that British rule in India could not be sustained without opium – that is all there is to it, and let us not pretend otherwise. You are no doubt aware that in some years, the Company's annual gains from opium are almost equal to the entire revenue of your own country, the United States? Do you imagine that British rule would be possible in this impoverished land if it were not for this source of wealth?' (*Sea of Poppies* 77)

Mr. Burnham frankly confirms the commercial advantages of poppy cultivation imposed on indigenous farmers by the whites. They ruthlessly disregarded the economic and environmental consequences of this deleterious policy to secure their financial gain. Apart from peasants and minor *zemindars*, or landholders, major landholders had to succumb to the obligatory alteration of farming patterns too. Neel Rattan Halder is the sole influential landholder who attempts to withstand the colonial policies. Since he finds Neel a defiant and courageous native, Mr. Burnham resorts to coercion to disempower him.

Neel pursues his resistance and reminds Mr. Burnham of his difference with the majority of natives when he asserts “You must not imagine that I am an ignorant native, to be spoken to like a child” (*Sea of Poppies* 79). Nonetheless, he is eventually deprived of his land and imprisoned by the British colonizers who do not tolerate any opposition. As he does not give up his resistance even in prison, Neel is enslaved to



labor on Ibis schooner. He is severely beaten by colonizers' agents, and is enraged by every kind of humiliation. Likewise, Ah Fatt, a deceived native, urinates at Neel.

Ghosh adequately depicts the unquenchable thirst of colonizers for land in *Sea of Poppies*. Neel's farmland is the representative of usurped lands in the novel. He is preoccupied, from the very beginning of the novel, with the British colonizers' manipulation in farming patterns that interrupted the ecological balance in India during the colonial rule. Likewise, pondering over the vast poppy farms, the omniscient narrator of the novel observes that "the poppies were strangely slow to shed their petals: for mile after mile, from Benares onwards, the Ganga seemed to be flowing between twin glaciers, both its banks being blanketed by thick drifts of white – petalled flowers" (2). The large-scale production of poppies is indeed a kind of exploitation and abuse imposed on the land, for hardly one can find a crop being planted other than poppy. Consequently, apart from the fact that lack of edible crops led to a dramatic inflation in prices and impoverished the already poor farmers who no longer were able to provide their household with sufficient food, ecological collapse is a major issue in the novel.

Lucrative economic policies imposed on colonized subjects under colonial rule resulted in irretrievable damages to established ecosystems. The damages included, though not limited to, desertification, water shortage and reduction of soil fertility. Reading literary works through a combined ecocritical and postcolonial approach, postcolonial ecocriticism highlights the detrimental impacts of colonization on nature in conquered countries. Ghosh adequately reflects the harmful manipulation of nature by British colonizers in *Sea of Poppies*.

Reflecting upon the gloomy environment devastated by colonizers, Deeti recalls her sweet childhood days when merely watching the landscape on the Ganges River's shore was an appeasing experience. No longer can she observe the diverse flora of her childhood days when lush vegetation would cover the ground. Regretting that "except for the foliage of a few mango and jackfruit trees, nowhere was there anything green to relieve the eye", Deeti asks herself "where were the vegetables, the grains? She had only to look around to know that here, as in the village she had left, everyone's land was in hock to the agents of the opium factory" (*Sea of Poppies* 129).



Working in poppy farms to make a living, Deeti gains a deep insight into the consequences of poppy cultivation. That is to say, her relationship with nature enables her to notice the difference between the status of nature before and after the enforcement of opium production. The excessive production of poppies has transformed the landscape depriving the nature of its biodiversity of plants. The disadvantageous widespread cultivation of poppy has resulted in imbalance in the ecosystem in Indai. Ecosystems are characterized by diversity of wild animals and plants. That is to say, an ecosystem is ruined in the absence of various distinct species every one of which contributes to the maintenance of a wild ecosystem. Ghosh seems to be a speaker for nature that has been silenced by the British colonizers and their agents.

The deplorable pollution of the Ganges, referred to by Ghosh as “the holy Ganga” is a major environmental concern in *Sea of Poppies*. Along with people, animals and plants, the Ganges has been negatively affected by the monoculture of poppy. The flow of sewage of opium factories contaminates the Ganga that serves as the habitat of various species of fish. Moreover, since this river is used for drinking by all surrounding creatures, the entrance of sewage deprives these living beings of drinking water. The release of effluents of opium factories both denies the Ganges its beauty and makes its water unfit for drinking. Hence, the exploitation of nature goes hand in hand with the commercial exploitation of people.

4.3. Animals' Disorders

Victimization of animals in colonized territories is a major concern for proponents of postcolonial ecocriticism. Excessive hunting of animals for their meat, bones, skin and fur was a widespread practice within colonies. Hunting was even a recreational activity for white colonizers. Neglecting the horrible outcome of their adventures, these ruthless hunters killed large numbers of animals. Nevertheless, animals suffer milder damages in *Sea of Poppies*. Although they are not directly killed by colonizers, animals are victimized in various ways as the result of the insistence of British colonizers on the cultivation of opium.



Apart from the environment, animals are negatively affected by opium too. Moving towards an opium factory to visit her husband, Deeti comes across a lot of creatures that suffer from poppy cultivation. Pacifying the animals and insects, opium and its odor deprive them of their vivacity and leave them lethargic and sluggish. Cows, monkeys, wasps, butterflies and bees are intoxicated and potentially killed by the direct and indirect consequences of poppy production. Large numbers of insects that attempt to suck the sap of poppy flowers are caught in the sticky liquid flowing out of opium pods. Subsequently, their dead bodies merge with the juice and are lost in poppy flower. Moreover, erratically flapping their wings, butterflies seems to have forgotten how to fly accurately. Monkeys are also adversely affected by opium:

... a miasma of lethargy seemed always to hang over the factory's surroundings. The monkeys that lived around it, for instance: Deeti pointed a few of these out to Kabutri as the ox-cart trundled towards the walls ... they never chattered or fought or stole from passers-by; when they came down from the trees it was to lap at the open sewers that drained the factory's effluents; after having sated their cravings, they would climb back into the branches to resume their stupefied scrutiny of the Ganga and its currents. (Sea of Poppies 61)

Monkeys make loud noises, fight each other, climb trees, jump, and abruptly move to various directions. The monkeys Deeti witnesses in the vicinity of opium factory, though, are dull and torpid. They descend the trees only to find something to eat and then climb again to watch the Ganges while a mass of dirty and malodorous air causes them to sneeze repeatedly. Rarely is any passer-by able to breathe easily. Likewise, Deeti begins to sneeze as she approaches the factory. She confronts a group of indigenous laborers who are disposing the pungent wastes of opium factory that she refers to as "poppy trash." Deeti holds that these foul remains produce "a fine dust that hung in the air like a fog of snuff" (ibid 61). The intoxicating effect of opium, and the pollution induced by processing poppy flowers directly influence animals. Ghosh indicates the entrapment of animals through his depiction of the death of a lot of insects, passivity of drowsy monkeys and the runny noses of cows living close to opium factories.



5. Conclusion

Examining the representations of environment in literature, ecocriticism is a recent approach to literary criticism that seeks to indicate the destructive consequences of human beings' activities in nature in particular moments of history. This article examined Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* through postcolonial ecocriticism, an interdisciplinary approach that finds the convergence between postcolonialism and ecocriticism. Apart from highlighting the predicaments of indigenous characters in the novel, the ways in which imperial policies adversely alter and reshape natural landscapes and ecosystem in *Sea of Poppies* were discussed. The burgeoning demand of the British colonizers for the accumulation of wealth require the natives to give up the cultivation of edible crops to grow poppy. Meanwhile, the financial status of indigenous colonized subjects exacerbates due to the shortage of edible crops that normally became more expensive.

The novel presents a deplorable image of ecological imbalance in India during the nineteenth century, when monopoly of East India Company resulted in the monoculture of poppy in colonial India. Many factories were constructed to process papaver somniferum in India. The new farming pattern imposed by colonizers affects natural landscapes, animals, and native characters like Deeti and Hukam Singh. The cultivation of ominous poppy flowers is depicted in the novel as one of the most detrimental impacts of colonialism in India. Deeti loses her husband and finds herself in much worse financial crises. The ruthless appropriation of indigenous lands, though, does not devastate merely native people in *Sea of Poppies*. Air and water pollution, especially contamination of the Ganges, intoxication of wild and domestic animals, and environmental devastation are all induced by the compulsory cultivation of poppy. Ghosh indicates that environmental crises are the results of colonial policies concerning the utilization of fertile lands to accumulate wealth. These policies turn out, then, to be highly destructive of the ecosystem.



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