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The Bitter Harvest: Power, Resistance, and the Opium Trade in Amitav Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy

Babu Ram Khanal¹, Dr. Preeti Pankaj Gupta²

¹Ph.D Scholar, Department of Arts, Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, India

²Assoc. Prof. and Head, Department of Arts, Mangalayatan University, Aligarh, India

*Corresponding email: baburamji54@gmail.com

*ORCID: 0009-0002-0297-9024

Abstract

This study delves into the complex power dynamics surrounding the 19th-century opium trade, employing a postcolonial lens informed by Edward Said's seminal works, "Orientalism" and "Culture and Imperialism." Through a close reading of Amitav Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy, the research unpacks the multifaceted control mechanisms employed by the British Empire. These mechanisms, fueled by the lucrative opium trade, included brutal economic exploitation, manipulative cultural intervention, and deliberate social destabilization of colonized societies.

The analysis sheds light on the devastating impact of the opium trade on indigenous populations. By utilizing a contrapuntal approach, the research juxtaposes the narratives of the colonizers with the silenced experiences of those most affected by the trade. This approach exposes the self-serving justifications employed by the colonizers to legitimize their actions, while simultaneously revealing the struggles and acts of resistance undertaken by the colonized. These acts encompass acts of defiance, subversion of colonial systems, and the development of alternative economic activities, all undertaken in a desperate attempt to counter the suffocating grip of colonial control.

By examining the intricate relationship between the opium trade and its role in consolidating colonial power, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the era. It highlights the multifaceted forms of resistance undertaken by the colonized, underscoring their agency and resilience in the face of oppression. Ultimately, the study reveals the lasting impact of colonialism on both colonizers and colonized populations, exposing the enduring legacy of the bitter harvest sown by the opium trade.

Keywords: *contrapuntal analysis, opium trade, post colonialism, power dynamics, resistance*