

RESEARCH ARTICLE

ECOCRITICISM IN “SEA OF POPPIES” BY AMITAV GHOSH

---

P.Tharani<sup>1</sup>,

Department of English Literature, Thiruvalluvar University, India

E.G. Hima Bindhu<sup>2</sup>

Department of English Literature, Thiruvalluvar University, India

---

**Abstract**

Amitav Ghosh is an Indian writer successfully known for his work in English fiction. Amitav Ghosh’s novel ‘Sea of Poppies’ is a narration of colonialism and its effect on the environment. Versatile point of view by analyzing the literary works with the background of environmental issues and nature. This novel “Sea of Poppies” deals with the changes that occur due to the cultivation of opium. Due to this opium trade in the nineteenth century, there was a huge destruction in the ecosystem of the country. Addiction of opium by humans and how opium affects the normal behavior of birds, animals and insects in the novel. So, through the concept of ecocriticism, Ghosh has tried to show the loss of natural habitat during the colonial rule in India. So, I focus on the changes due to the cultivation of opium, and how its addiction leads to the death in the novel “Sea of Poppies”.

**Keywords:** Addiction, Cultivation, Ecocriticism, Environment, Effects, Natural, Opium.

**Introduction**

Amitav Ghosh was a famous Indian writer he was born in Calcutta and grew up in India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. He studied in Delhi, Oxford and Alexandria. The shadow Lines, In an Antique Indian, Dancing in Cambodia, The Calcutta Chromosome, The Glass Palace, The Hungry Tide and Ibis Trilogy consisting of Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke and Flood of Fire are some of the famous novels written by Amitav Ghosh. “Sea of poppies” is a historical novel, the novel takes place during the opium war, Great Britain used India to grow Poppy seeds that were sold, as opium, to the Chinese to create a more promising balance of trade for Britain. This novel deals with the cultivation of opium and its dangerous effect on the life of people and the environment. In this novel Ghosh often portrays the poppy seeds and its growth leads to the environmental destruction and loss of human life.

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

**Ecocriticism in Sea Of Poppies**

Eco criticism is mainly deals about the relationship between literature and environment. Eco criticism takes as its subject the interrelationship between nature and culture. In sea of poppies novel, we can see the changes in ecology due to the farming of opium and its issues on human beings and animals.

Deeti, a protagonist in the novel. She lives on the outskirts of Ghazipur, she collects the poppy petals for cooking like rotis due to the lack of edible crops. The variety of crops is lost due to the cultivation of opium so People are forced to eat poppy petals as a food it shows the terrible condition of people. Hukum Singh and Deeti is an opium addict it shows the reality condition of a families in that place. People are quite addicted to opium and suffering of the people due to opium.

In the old days, the field 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. But now with the sahibs forcing everyone to grow poppy, no one had thatch to spare it had to be bought of the market, from people put off their repairs as long as the possible could (29)

In this novel, it is not only human being addicted to the opium but all living beings in the environment are affected by it. Kalua gives opium to his ox to eat so that it may relax. Deeti uses opium as to pay in kind to kalua because she has no money to give to him. Even the insect that sucks the nectar of the poppy flower addict to that opium and finally dies by struck inside the poppy flower. The effect of opium on the behavior of the monkey living near the sundur opium factory is like other monkeys they never chattered fought among themselves, stolen things or food and they behave strangely due to this opium effect.

The fishermen uses opium to catch fish, the presence of opium in the Ganga river fishermen catch the fishes easily. Ganga River is totally polluted by opium factory sewages. All this environmental issues are created due to the extreme growth of opium. All this information in this novel shows how opium affects the humans, animals, insects and nature. It shows how opium create the problems to humans and environment.

Deeti's spiritual life is related with nature because she shows her gratitude to the nature that provides for her. To give thanks to the nature, Deeti pours out the water and the offering to the Ganga river and the holy city of Benares. Sea of poppies presents the image of how British colonization in India affected the nature and natives like Deeti and everyone forced to accept the changes in the environment that also influence a numerous changes in her daily life. Ganga Holy River is polluted after the cultivation of poppy plants.

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

The waste of the opium factory does not only pollute the air, but it also contaminates the Ganga river, Ghosh compared Ganga river with Nile river the life line of the Egyptian civilization. The natural air got polluted it affects humans health and animals. It creates the ecological changes in environment.

**Conclusion**

This article deals with the ecological issues like growth of opium affects the life of humans, animals and insects. Due to opium cultivation people are leads to debt and they forced to migrated to Mauritius as a contracted workers. Many environmental issues were occurred due to opium cultivation and opium trade. Ghosh strongly notices this issues and presented in his novel “sea of poppies”.

**References**

Amitav Ghosh, (2008). Sea of poppies, Penguin books: ISBN 9780143424743