

A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

ON

**POSTCOLONIAL THEORETICAL ASPECTS AND
SUBALTERN HISTORY IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *IBIS TRILOGY* -
SEA OF POPPIES, RIVER OF SMOKE
AND *FLOOD OF FIRE*.**

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Introduction

The dissertation entitled “Postcolonial Theoretical Aspects and Subaltern History in Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy* - *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*” is an attempt to explore the impact of postcolonialism depicted in the novels of Amitav Ghosh in specific with *Ibis Trilogy*. It also aims to focus on Amitav Ghosh’s incorporation of realistic historical events along with imaginary characters he presents in the novel.

Theoretical Basis of the Thesis

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism is a critical study focusing on colonial exploitations and imperialism of colonized people and their lands. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* created a great impact in the field of postcolonialism. The postcolonial studies become more popular after *The Empire Writes Back Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literature* by Bill Ashcroft, Gereth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. The dissertation aims to focus on various postcolonial issues like migration, exploitation suppression, displacement and resistance.

The “Other”

Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy* explores the concept of the colonizer as object of knowledge and the colonized as the “other”. The concept of the “other” is dealt in accordance with Homi K Bhabha’s “The Location of the Culture”. According to Bhabha “Hybridity” occurs due to change, flux, transformation, mixedness and interconnectedness. The loss of fixity in identity is a serious issue of the people who migrated from one homeland to the other.

Diaspora

Diasporic writings are integral part of broader category of postcolonial literature. Amitav Ghosh an Indian Bengali writer who uses complex narrative strategies in order to probe the national and personal reality. He seriously attempts

to focus on the issues of Diasporas through the lives of the characters in his novels. Amitav Ghosh's perspective on diasporic condition views various issues like war, politics, economy and other worldly affairs which happened onset of colonialism.

Writings of diasporic literatures focus on the communities of people living away from the homeland. These people are uprooted from the homeland and have great striving towards nostalgic longing for their motherland. *Ibis Trilogy* by Amitav Ghosh focus the diasporic condition due to travelling which resulted in displacement and issues of "hegemony" the term coined by Italian politician and Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. It denotes mode of exercising authority by the metropolis on the periphery. The characters in the trilogy are the people with diasporic conditions who are migrated from India to Mauritius for plantation through the ship named Ibis.

Capitalism

The metropolitan colonizer inhabited the colonies for the major source of raw materials and the availability of the manpower in the colonial peripheries. The dissertation attempts to focus on how Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis Trilogy* clearly exhibits the realistic situation which prevailed in the mid-19th century and about the trade, commerce and the mass migration of people who have travelled over the Indian Ocean. Amitav Ghosh has realistically portrayed the capitalistic attitude of British People in order to cultivate poppy seeds by making use of farmer's poverty in their native land with reference to real events in history.

Real Historical Events

There are two main historical event vividly portrayed in *Ibis Trilogy*. The first event is "great experiment". It is the transport of indentured labors from India which is under the control of British to work on the sugar plantations at Mauritius. The second historical event is trade of opium between British India and China and

the creation of markets of opium in the name of Free Trade. It ends up in 1839 I Opium war in which British waged war against China.

Subaltern

The term subaltern according to postcolonial theory is the group of people in the lower social class who are displaced to the margins of society. Antonio Gramsci used the term “Subaltern” for the first time. He mentions the term subaltern in order to identify the social group who are excluded from the socio economic institutions. Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak a Bengali activist and a literary writer elevated the term subaltern in her seminal essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” According to Spivak subalterns are the people who are unable to speak. They are subjugated because of the power equations underline the society. Subalterns are the people who are impossible to generate discourse of their problems.

Amitav Ghosh in *Ibis Trilogy* has brought out subaltern historical events which happened in the first half of the 19th Century. The discourse produced by Amitav Ghosh in order to exhibit the sufferings of subalterns creates public consciousness about injustice and thus successfully made use of subaltern history in most of his novels. Amitav Ghosh usage of real historical events in the fictions leave the readers to examine and criticize the ‘errors’ and ‘shames’ that happened due to colonial imperialism. Amitav Ghosh in his novels does not take real historical figures as characters but he adopts the historical moments and important events like riots, massacre and mass displacement of people. He inserts fictional characters in these situations as subalterns and he makes the readers to view the happenings in their point of view. Thus the novels by Amitav Ghosh clearly depict the dark underside of the subaltern’s sufferings due to various colonial interventions.

Conclusion

The dissertation aims to focus various postcolonial issues which Amitav Ghosh exhibited in Ibis Trilogy. Postcolonial theory is critically analyzed with various key figures like Edward Said, Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi K Bhabha, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe and more. The key concepts and terms related to postcolonial theories in which the dissertation aims to have its focus are diaspora, hybridity, migration, displacement, dispossession, subaltern, oppression, hegemony, loss of identity, mimicry, exile and more. The dissertation entitled “Postcolonial Theoretical Aspects and Subaltern History in Amitav Ghosh’s *Ibis Trilogy - Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke and Flood of Fire*” intends to investigate and thematically analyze the significance of postcolonial theoretical aspects in *Ibis Trilogy* by Amitav Ghosh.