



Sea of Poppies: A Novel (The Ibis Trilogy Book 1)

By Amitav Ghosh

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Sea of Poppies: A Novel (The Ibis Trilogy Book 1) By Amitav Ghosh

At the heart of this vibrant saga is a vast ship, the *Ibis*. Its destiny is a tumultuous voyage across the Indian Ocean; its purpose, to fight China's vicious nineteenth-century Opium Wars. As for the crew, they are a motley array of sailors and stowaways, coolies and convicts.

In a time of colonial upheaval, fate has thrown together a diverse cast of Indians and Westerners, from a bankrupt raja to a widowed tribeswoman, from a mulatto American freedman to a freespirited French orphan. As their old family ties are washed away, they, like their historical counterparts, come to view themselves as *jahaj-bhais*, or ship-brothers. An unlikely dynasty is born, which will span continents, races, and generations.

The vast sweep of this historical adventure spans the lush poppy fields of the Ganges, the rolling high seas, the exotic backstreets of Canton. But it is the panorama of characters, whose diaspora encapsulates the vexed colonial history of the East itself, that makes *Sea of Poppies* so breathtakingly alive—a masterpiece from one of the world's finest novelists.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Diaspora, myth and a fascinating language mashup propel the Rubik's cube of plots in Ghosh's picaresque epic of the voyage of the *Ibis*, a ship transporting Indian girmityas (coolies) to Mauritius in 1838. The first two-thirds of the book chronicles how the crew and the human cargo come to the vessel, now owned by rising opium merchant Benjamin Burnham. Mulatto second mate Zachary Reid, a 20-year-old of Lord Jim–like innocence, is passing for white and doesn't realize his secret is known to the gomusta (overseer) of the coolies, Baboo Nob Kissin, an educated Falstaffian figure who believes Zachary is the key to realizing his lifelong mission. Among the human cargo, there are three fugitives in disguise, two on the run from a vengeful family and one hoping to escape from Benjamin. Also on board is a formerly high caste raj who was brought down by Benjamin and is now on his way to a penal colony. The cast is marvelous and the plot majestically serpentine, but the real hero is the English language, which has rarely felt so alive and vibrant. (Oct.)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

Ghosh's best and most ambitious work yet is an adventure story set in nineteenth-century Calcutta against the backdrop of the Opium Wars. On the *Ibis*, a ship engaged in transporting opium across the Bay of Bengal, varied life stories converge. A fallen raja, a half-Chinese convict, a plucky American sailor, a widowed opium farmer, a transgendered religious visionary are all united by the "smoky paradise" of the opium seed. Ghosh writes with impeccable control, and with a vivid and sometimes surprising imagination: a woman's tooth protrudes "like a tilted gravestone"; an opium addict's writhing spasms are akin to "looking at a pack of rats squirming in a sack"; the body of a young man is "a smoking crater that had just risen from the ocean and was still waiting to be explored."

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

In his sixth novel, Amitav Ghosh observes the pervasive effects of colonialism through the daily trials and discordant inner lives of his large, diverse cast of characters. Though the reviewer from the *Wall Street Journal* objected to the overt political message and convoluted plot, most critics praised this lush and evocative novel, filled with vivid details of life in 19th-century India. Ghosh's vibrant prose radiates compassion and empathy for his characters and ingeniously recreates the Anglo-Indian pidgin they would have spoken. (Readers may find the frequent foreign words distracting, but a glossary is provided.) The first installment in a projected trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* ends just as the *Ibis*'s voyage begins, having spent most of its 500-plus pages in exposition. But Ghosh's epic, ambitious vision will keep readers riveted.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Todd Jacobs:

Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? Publication is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each book has different aim as well as goal; it means that publication has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their time to read a book. They can be reading whatever they consider because their hobby will be reading a book. Why not the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, person feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or even

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John Krumm:

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Robert Thomas:

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