

A portrait of Amitav Ghosh, an older man with grey hair, a beard, and glasses, looking slightly to the left. The background is dark and textured.

AMITAV GHOSH

A
CRITICAL
SPECTRUM

Edited by
Dr Bijender Singh
Subrata Ray

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Dr Bijender Singh and Subrata Ray

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RACISM, SUBALTERNITY AND MARGINALISATION IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *FLOOD OF FIRE*

DR SURUCHI SHARMA

"It is yourself you must thank, Mrs Burnham," said Zachary. "It was all your own doing, wasn't it? It was you who decided that I needed to be re-made in a more enlightened mould. It might have been better for both of us if you had left me to languish where you found me. But you chose instead to rescue me from that dark, unnameable continent-and now it's too late."
(Ghosh, *Flood of Fire* 582)

Amitav Ghosh's *Flood of Fire* (2015) is the third novel of the *Ibis* trilogy. The previous two novels are *Sea of Poppies* (2008) and *River of Smoke* (2011). It is set during the First Opium War fought between British India and China during 1839 to 1842. This novel was shortlisted for the Hindu Literary Prize and the Crossword Book Jury Award. The novel *Sea of Poppies* narrates the production of opium in Bihar and *River of Smoke* is based on Canton, China where opium was sold but *Flood of Fire* has its wide range and it also deals with the opium trade across the Indian Ocean. Ambarish Sen postulates, "With the Flood of Fire Ghosh puts a seal to his decade-long project of great intensity and sweeping enormity" (317). The novel has been written in twenty-two chapters followed by an epilogue. It is a wonderful novel of *Ibis* trilogy. Carlotta Berettawrites about the *Ibis* trilogy:

The focus of the *Trilogy* encompasses the whole Indian Ocean, from India, to China and the Mauritius, involving all sorts of different people and nationalities. In addition, no reference is ever made to a collectivity which may resemble or represent the Indian nation at its embryo stage. (250)

AMITAV GHOSH

A CRITICAL SPECTRUM

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While relentlessly interrogating and challenging the established facets of human understanding of the historical, societal, political, geographical, cultural, psychological and, of course, climatic realities of today's world, and powerfully denying the hegemonic Eurocentric historiography, Amitav Ghosh makes us almost forcibly run into some of the most disturbing issues which, as far as human consciousness is concerned, stand as exigent demand for social and human justice. As recorded in Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional oeuvre, how the highly unstable and rapidly evolving relationship between human beings and the human societies works and how this relationship is conditioned by various volatile value-systems across time and space in human civilisation and how all through the civilisational journey human beings have learnt to ignore and even unrecognise some of the most uncomfortable truths, strongly ask for fresh critical attention and incisive inquiry. It is hoped and believed too that this anthology, with its deeply penetrative and strikingly diverse range of 45 provocative papers containing some of the most pressing issues that Ghosh tirelessly warns us of, shall do justice somewhat towards these urgent needs.



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