



River of Smoke: A Novel (The Ibis Trilogy Book 2)

Amitav Ghosh

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A *Washington Post* Notable Fiction Book for 2011

The *Ibis*, loaded to its gunwales with a cargo of indentured servants, is in the grip of a cyclone in the Bay of Bengal; among the dozens flailing for survival are Neel, the pampered raja who has been convicted of embezzlement; Paulette, the French orphan masquerading as a deck-hand; and Deeti, the widowed poppy grower fleeing her homeland with her lover, Kalua.

The storm also threatens the clipper ship *Anahita*, groaning with the largest consignment of opium ever to leave India for Canton. And the *Redruth*, a nursery ship, carries Frederick "Fitcher" Penrose, a horticulturist determined to track down the priceless treasures of China that are hidden in plain sight: its plants that have the power to heal, or beautify, or intoxicate. All will converge in Canton's Fanqui-town, or Foreign Enclave: a tumultuous world unto itself where civilizations clash and sometimes fuse. It is a powder keg awaiting a spark to ignite the Opium Wars.

Spectacular coincidences, startling reversals of fortune, and tender love stories abound. But this is much more than an irresistible page-turner. The blind quest for money, the primacy of the drug trade, the concealment of base impulses behind the rhetoric of freedom: in *River of Smoke* the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries converge, and the result is a consuming historical novel with powerful contemporary resonance. Critics praised *Sea of Poppies* for its vibrant storytelling, antic humor, and rich narrative scope; now Amitav Ghosh continues the epic that has charmed and compelled readers all over the globe.

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