River of Smoke unfolds the complex situation in China preceding the Opium War (fought between Britain and China from 1839 to 1842) in a unique way. While unfolding a historical knot Amitav Ghosh is least concerned with theories in the way most of the historian’s to arrive at the reality. In a conversation he makes his stand clear. For historians it is an abstract love of the past. Historians are interested in theories. Some theory at the start of discussing Opium War, the process usually taken up in academic history and his adventurous zeal for details that are to be excavated from different sources, Amitav Ghosh is able to supply a throbbing slice of life from the past. The west was fascinated by the tea and silk of China and such exports from China developed slowly with an increase of the supply of silver in Chinese coffers much to the satisfaction of the Qing state. Initially, opium was imported in China mainly because of its medicinal use, but its misuse by drag-addicts grew alarming in the beginning of 19th century.

Anxiety for individuals physical well-being as well as the financial crisis faced by the government, it was found that during the first three decades of 19th century import of opium increased more than tenfold amounting to an alarming impact on China’s silver reserves, led the Chinese government take steps against the import of opium which was mostly being brought to China through illegal ways.

The British traders, who had been interested in gaining more profits from opium without bothering about the moral and even the legal aspects of the trade, took the matter to the British government which was aware that without opium Britain would
slide into deficit characters who are either directly involved in smuggling opium like Bahram Modi or are mere spectators like Robin.

A detail of the route of smuggling is for example, displayed by Ah Fatt who wants Neel to be a clerk under his father Bahram Modi. Drawing a sketch in his own way Ah Fatt shows Neel the mouth of Pearl River leading to Canton and some small islands like teeth rising from the sea.

“Teeth very useful to pirates, he says, also to foreign merchants like father. Because foreign ship cannot bring opium to Canton Forbidden so they pretend they do not bring to China. They go to Lintin Island. There they sell opium. When price is settled, dealer sends out boat, quick boat, with thirty oar-fast-crabs” (RS 92).

The Chinese government against smuggling comes out from a friendly conversation between Bahram and Zadig Bey who informs Bahram of the recent developments including the rumour that the most influential British trader in China, William Jardine had decided to leave for England to avoid extradition in China. “The Chinese authorities have come to know that his company has been sending ships to the northern ports of China, looking for new outlets for opium. The rumour is that they are planning to throw Jardine out of the country. Rather than face extradition he will leave on his own.” (99).

Jardine is found in Robin’s letter to Paulette. Robin saw Jardine in the flesh as he came to Robin’s father who painted a portrait of him. Robin found in his gaze a certainly of power and self-satisfaction. He also gathered the information that Jardine had come to Canton as doctor and going into the Trade earned millions.
Zadig Bey shares his concern with Bahram in regard to the future of trade in China: “The Angrezes and he mean by that the Americans as well as the British are not all of one mind right now. There is a lot of confusion about what has been happening here these last few months. Jardine and his party have been pushing for a show of force from the British government. But there are other views too: there are some who think this is just a passing phase and the opium trade will soon be back to what it was” (200). Then also comes out from their friendly talk that the Chinese did not usually interfere with the foreigners. Instead their own men who were dealing with the foreigners helping them in the process of smuggling were arrested and their speed boats confiscated. But when the foreigner’s activity went beyond tolerance an Englishman’s boat containing opium was confiscated and he was ordered to be expelled from China.

The Chinese officer did not even meet the British representative exhibiting China’s determination to stop opium trade. This firmness along with the general attitude of non interference with the foreigners is a proof that China’s way of governance is better than that of India.

As Zadig Bey says to Bahram, “The power of the Europeans we have seen at work, in Egypt and in India, where it could not be withstood. But we know also you and I that China is not Egypt or India: if you compare Chinese methods of ruling with those of our Sultans, Shahs and Maharajas, it is clear that the Chinese ways are incomparable better government is indeed their religion” (200).

Zadig Bey also raises the question of right and wrong this question is never asked by a historian who deals with hard facts and not with man’s conscience, when he asks Bahram if it is right to carry on trading in opium in China. This ethical question is
later raised by the American Charles King who argues against the British traders and supports China. After long and repeated discussion among themselves the foreign traders decided to oppose the order of the Chinese governor Lin Zexu who asked the foreigners to submit the packets of opium loaded in their ships. As a result of this opposition Lin called off all trade and the foreign traders were forced to remain confined to their factories.

The historians both British and Chinese, the British representative Charles Elliot did two things three days after the blockade. First he agreed to hand over to Lin 20,283 chests of British opium and second he promised the horrified merchant community that the crown would take responsibility for the confiscated property. Thanks to these two moves, a private economic quarrel turned out to be a matter of grave political concern a confrontation between the queen of England and the Emperor of China leading to war.

Historians differ on their assessments of Eliot’s character and his role and also on the role of the Chinese officers. Amitav Ghosh in his novel presents these historical facts from as many perspectives as possible. Most of the facts preceding the war are presented in the novel as facts confronted by Bahram. For example discussion among the Chinese intellectuals of how to put an end to the opium trade is read out by Neel from the register in front of Bahram.

The readers of the novel have the privilege to know the reaction of an Indian trader in China who being colonized and thus recognized as the Queen’s subject, played a role akin to that of the British traders and supported the British policy in the Chamber of Commerce. Having read out the reaction of the Chinese elite against the use of
opium, Neel comes to the different proposals suggested by the elite for stopping the opium trade in China.

One suggestion was to blockade all Chinese ports to prevent foreign ships from entering and doing business. This suggestion was cancelled because China’s coast being too long, it was impossible to close it off completely. It was again a matter of great concern that the foreigners had established close connection with Chinese traders and officials, who being corrupt and greedy must have found out novel ways of bringing opium inside China.

Then another suggestion was to stop all trade and all interactions with the foreigners. This too was considered invalid because the foreign ships would merely gather offshore and their Chinese associates would send out fast-boats to smuggle in the opium.

**A Diasporic Study in *River of Smoke***

Diasporic discourse is generally about the position of culture. This newly growing literary study describes an ongoing process of identity loss and identity recovery for non-Westerners. In the domain of postcolonial literature, different tribal groups, based on their different new cultural heritages, have their tribal, cultural and historical specificities.

Indian Diaspora writers during their work of arts present their experience. Their works throw light on all the possible pros and cons of wandering in the alien land creating compromise and reconciliation with the different culture. *River of Smoke* is one of the representative works on this aspect, has been culminated by a great Diasporic
author Amitav Ghosh. Diasporic literature involves a scheme of homeland, a place because where the dislocation occurs and narratives of cruel journeys undertaken on account of economic compulsions. Fundamentally Diaspora is minority community living in exile. In the tradition of Indo-Christian the fall of Satan from the heaven and humankind’s division from the Garden of Eden, metaphorically the partition from God, constitute Diasporic situations. Etymologically, Diaspora with its connotative political heaviness is drawn from Greek, meaning to dissolve and signifies a voluntary or aggressive movement of the people from the homeland into new regions.

The Indian Diaspora has come out of the shadows in current years and its largely forgotten history, which encompasses narratives of displacement, migration, the cross-fertilization of ideas and the emergence of new cultural forms and practices, its gradually more being viewed as an significant and intrinsic part of the story of late modernity and humanity’s drift towards globalizations, traditional economic and cultural exchanges and hybrid forms of political, cultural and social identity.

Under colonialism Diaspora is a multifarious movement which involves the momentary or permanent movement of Europeans all over the world, most important to colonial settlement. Accordingly the ensuing economic exploitation of the settled areas necessitated large amounts of labour that could not be fulfilled by local populace. This leads to the Diaspora resulting from the enslavement of Africans and their relocation to place like the British colonies. After slavery was outlawed the continued demand for workers created indenturement labour. This produces large bodies of the people from poor areas of India, China and others to the West Indies, Malaya, Fiji, Eastern and Southern Africa, etc.
Diaspora can be applied to expatriate minority communities, whose members share some of the common characteristics given here under,

“They or their ancestor have been dispersed from a special original centre or two or more peripheral of foreign regions; they retain a collective memory vision or myth about their original homeland –its physical location, history and achievements; they believe they are not – and perhaps cannot be – fully accepted by their lost society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulted from it; they regard their ancestral homeland and their true ideal home and as the place to which they are their descendants would eventually return – when conditions are appropriate; they believe they should collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their homeland and its safety and prosperity; and they continue to relate, personally and vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another and their ethno–communal consciousness, solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship” (Safren 53).

Amitav Ghosh alters the flow of history by mining out a typhoon of characters and their multicultural experiences left out of the histories. The novel appears to have neo-Victorian aspects of this 19th century story by introducing issues of contemporary importance like drug-trafficking, globalization and linguistic hybridity. The novel has received some awards and appreciations as it is shortlisted for the 2011 The Hindu Literary Prize and the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize.

Diaspora is a complex phenomenon where cultures intersect and identities emerge, classes collide and languages melt into each other. Thus it brings a sense of
harmony and diversity in unity and alienation, suffering and emigration as well. The author unlike his own voluntary migration goes back to nineteenth century Opium Wars, depicting the East India Company’s imperial designs and its worse consequence. The result is forced migration to Mauritius, Africa, Fiji or the Caribbean’s on account of slavery or indentured labour.

Robin Cohen classifies Diaspora as;

Victim Diasporas, labour Diasporas, imperial Diasporas, trade Diasporas, and cultural Diasporas. But the common element of Diaspora is that these are people who live outside their ‘natal (or imagined natal) territories’ (Cohen ix) and show their love to the homeland, tradition, religion, culture and language.

According to Ghosh, “the Indian Diaspora is one of the most important demographic dislocations of Modern Time” each day is increasing and assuming the form of representative of the important force in global culture.

River of Smoke re-invents the cultural phenomenon of Asian Diasporic multiculturalism and multiracialism in one of its very critical and original moments in the Asian subcontinent. It is an investigation of communication across linguistic and cultural barriers. The term hybridity can be seen in different ways. The foremost outcome of hybridity is the use of different languages. River of Smoke makes rich use of Asian-influenced English. The weaving of Indian terms into an English syntactic matrix is manly notable in the novel in certain especially culture-specific registers.
Indian Diaspora offers some reliable insight through narrative. In the past the migration of Indian was probably the significance economic slavery or imperialism. However today crossing one’s boundary to other nations implies many bases. The author has rendered in a fictional work set nearly 200 years ago, there are significant parallels to many of the attitudes and situations in the modern world we inhabit that are directly linked to the earlier milieu depicted by him and make this work relevant even today. There are many people who for economic growth are migration their motherland causing trouble for themselves and nation too. The author point is here to emphasize the central role literature style plays not only in recording and reminding of history’s lessons, but also awakening and sharpening our responses to the power relations at play every day in our immediate environment.

Amitav Ghosh clearly would like his cosmopolitan readers to see these current scenarios as a disturbing legacy of the past, which continues to haunt in political, economic and social spheres today. The author advocates globalization thus which is allowing software engineers bringing Indians into the top echelons of the American corporate world and graduates of the Indian institutes of Technology being courted the world over.

The much-awaited River of Smoke displayed various impulses by exposing the intricacies, contradictions and complexities British oppression in Victorian India, economic plunder re-enforced by the foreign powers, poverty, gender hierarchy and the notorious opium trade.
Cosmopolitanism in A Pre-Modern World in *River of Smoke*

In the geography of human history, affirms Amitav Ghosh no culture is an island. The author emphatically points to heteroglossia as a fundamental characteristic of Indian culture:

“India exported with her population, not a language, as other civilizations have done, but a linguistic process- the process of adaptation to heteroglossia”

(The Imam and the Indian 246).

Amitav Ghosh rejects the prescribed anthropological assumptions about cultural coherence and authenticity. It is the statesmen who draw borders, but people leave the human imprint by creating a melting pot of sub-cultures to subvert these borders.

For the author, this dynamic human activity is centuries old:

“In the 12th century people developed a much more sophisticated language of cultural negotiation than may know today. They were able to include different cultures in their lives, while maintaining what was distinct about themselves” (Lushsinger 52).

Granted a privileged point of vantage and thereby serving as the narrator’s alter ego, Robinson’s letters to Paulette vividly represent Canton’s multicultural world. The pre-colonial that Robin creates in his letters challenges the contemporary notions about cosmopolitanism being a post modern phenomenon.
Robin discovers a nuanced world when thousands of Achhas (the Cantonese word for Hindustanis), Arabs, Persians and Africans lived together in Canton. The guardian deity of the city is goddess Kuan-yin, a bhikkuni from Hindustan. Buddhist from Hindustan had lived in Canton for centuries, the most famous of them being a Kashmiri monk called Dharamyasa. The most famous of Buddhist missionaries, the Bodhidharma came to Canton from south India. The syncretism of this rich medieval culture is embodied in the architecture of a mosque, one of the oldest in the world built in the life time of Prophet Muhammad himself. It is:

“A most remarkable structure, no different, in outward appearance from a Chinese temple- all except for the minaret, which is like that of any dargah in Bengal” (377).

Robin journeys forward in space but backwards in time. The new rules of ascendancy and autonomy, which the British brought with them to Canton through the Opium trade failed to alter the older structures of cultural solidarity. The narrator’s observations on this issue corroborate Robin’s views on medieval multiculturalism:

“the ties of trust and goodwill that bound the Hongists to the fanquis were all the stronger for having been forget across apparently unbridgeable gaps of language, loyalty and belonging” (346).

The opium trade despite it is vicious nature, erased boundaries between people and enforced cultural diversity. Indians from Sindh and Goa, Bombay and Malabar, Madras and the Coringa hills, Calcutta and Sylhet, flocked together to create the Achha community of Canton. Muslims, Christian, Hindus and Parsis from India, whose paths
never crossed in the subcontinent enjoyed an inexplicable mysterious commonality, which was thrust upon them. They stood united against ‘every variety of foreign Devil’.

The British are scoffed as the I-says and the French jeered at the Merdes. Neel is quite correct in his observation that “Fungtai Hong was a world in itself with its own foods and words, rituals and routines: it was as if the inmates were the first inhabitants of a new country, a yet unmade Achhasthan” (192).

The erasure of the boundaries of language, class, and caste among these migrants, they replaced the notion of authentic, discrete national cultures with a shared openness to the world, espousing a utopian belief in a trans-racial human collectivity. The intertwined syncretic histories of Indians and Egyptians, Indians and Chinese, Muslims and Jewish, Hindus and Muslims torn apart by political forces are a bulwark against segregationist strategies that promote the cause of religious separatism, disregarding their shared common past.

Amitav Ghosh observes, the Laskari language is more like a technical and specialized jargon. The study linguistic flow of this unseen net of words is the prime reason for the efficient functioning of the ship to work a sail ship efficiently dozens of men must respond simultaneously to a single command. The remarkable vibrancy of the Laskari language, the narrative celebrates the unsung lives of this mobile community and their lingua franca.

The Laskars were the first Afro-Asians to participate freely in a globalised workspace, the first extensive travelers emergent new technologies. The Laskars were
thus in every sense the forerunners of today’s migratory computer technicians, nurses, high-tech workers, and so on.

Amitav Ghosh linguistic virtuosity takes a kaleidoscopic dimension in River of Smoke. The narrative opens in Mauritius and its first few pages are peppered with words from Mauritian creole and the Bhojpuri dialect of the Indian settler girmitiyas: bonoys, salas, belsers, etc. by investing his narrative with native unfamiliar words and expressions, Amitav Ghosh imparts a sense of time and place to the multilingual universe of the Indian Ocean.

River of Smoke explores ways of constructing the world based on connections that dismantle the rigid binaries and empiricism of Western modernity. It interrogates both the grounds and the production of historical knowledge and emerges as an alternative discourse for expressing the subaltern past. Amitav Ghosh novel transforms the discourses of Western modernity, be it scientific or novelistic, by producing an ethically informed narrative that subverts the discursive knowledge production strategies that originally produced them.

Radhakrishnan, who like Ghosh’s occupied in a project of dismantling the hegemonic position of a western-originated discourse, maintains that for authentic transcultural readings to become probable, other realities will have to be renowned not merely as other histories, but as other knowledge’s. The incommensurability in worldviews to transcend the participants would have to imagine their own discursive-epistemic spaces as a form of openness to one another’s persuasion.
Amitav Ghosh’s narratives consistently explore this ethical imperative to keep the channels of communication between the self and its other open, so that one might hear that which not already understand. This accounts for the difficulty and messiness of literature, the way in which it encourages and engages a moral sensibility, particularly through the cultivation of empathy rather than simply embodying eternal verities.

**Postmodernist History in River of Smoke**

Historical events do not mean things in themselves but rather their meanings are generated by the ways in which they are described and linked together to form a historical narrative and the resonance produced by that narrative depend on the recognition by its audience of the familiar story-telling devices it employs.

Linda Hutcheon in her Poetics of Postmodernism labels postmodern historical novels as historiographic metafictions, since they thematize the theory of contemporary historiography and problematize the distinction between history and fiction. Linda explains her reason for such a label thus, Historiographic metafiction puts into question at the same time as it exploits the grounding of historical knowledge in the past real. This is why she has been calling this historiographic metafiction.

Linda Hutcheon’s definition puts stress especially on postmodernist historical novels and governed by the paradox created by the intermingling of metafictional self-reflexivity and historical reality in novels, which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages. A postmodernist theory of history helps may to understand that history invents stories about past events and it foregrounds certain events while suppressing some others for ideological reasons.
Such as official history is seen as a monologist discourse representing only the viewpoints of the dominant ideology which in turn creates history as a monolithic discourse.

Historiography thus turns real past events into facts singles out certain real events while omitting some others. To Hayden White historical writing consist of the arrangement of selected events into a story. It is actually used as quintessentially postmodern art form, which relies upon textual play, parody and historical re-conceptualization.

Gertrude Himmelfarb outlines in her article postmodernist history, the contemporary tendency that history writing follows in the postmodern age. Her observation is that postmodernism has become influential in many disciplines including history. While applied to the field of history, postmodernism which refutes both the fixity of language and text and the unspoken connection between language and actuality of the past apart from what the historian chooses to create of it and thus of any objective truth about the past, (Himmelfarb 1999:72).

Evidently postmodernist view of history argues against conventional history writing and its claims to present historical events truthfully. It is safe to say that history has become rather metafictional than fictional only for the ultimate aim of postmodernist history is to lay bare the devices whereby past reality is constructed through the writing of history. Hence the prefix of the ‘meta’ in White’s celebrated title ‘Metahistory’. The title according to Susanam Onega draws a parallelism between the metafictional awareness in fiction and the metahistorical trend in history.
Amitav Ghosh has assembled a massive array of sources on topics ranging from Chinese and Indian history to botany and the pidgin dialects spoken in Fanqui town which add real historical depth and dimension to the work. Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke* the second part of his Ibis trilogy can be treated as an opium trade chronicle. Chiefly these narratives are sagas of opium trade in the beginning of the 19th century through India to overseas. Approaching history through characters makes the novelist’s relationship to the past substantially different from the historian’s characters like Neel Ratan Halder, Raja of Raskhali, Mr.Doughty and Mr.Reid are figures from the history of the colonial period when opium as drug was a cash-crop and slave trade was a business of plantation colonies. The ship embarks on its journey and Ghosh throws himself with renewed zeal into the creation of this self-contained floating world. By the end of the book one feels as if he has journeyed from Baltimore to Bihar and Canton to Calcutta docks and knows everyone well.

Amitav Ghosh creates a full account of travel 19th century food, furniture, religion, worship, nautical commands, male and female costumes, trades, marriage and funeral rites, opium cultivation, caste, sexual practices and traditions, which adds to the metafictional traits of the novel. A measure of truth in this narrative, what is less acknowledged both inside and outside of the community is that a good portion of this wealth until the 1850s was built on opium and specifically the exportation of opium to China. The so-called China Trade was in reality largely constituted the smuggling of narcotics. History like literature is considered a human construct which can be reconstructed. The novel has remarkably conjured plotlines out of trading routes, which in his supple and compulsive imagination come magically alive as the conduits for
human history, they affect the exchange not just of silk and silver but of language and love and enmity.

The novels restore the role of India and the Indian Ocean to the largely forgotten story of the opium trade. It begins as all seafaring tales should with a raging storm. Three very different vessels have been caught up in it, the Ibis a slave ship of convicts and labourers en-route from Calcutta to Mauritius, the Anahita carrying the biggest ever shipment of raw opium west to Canton and the Redruth a Cornish brig with a crew of plant-hunters and cargo of rare flora.

Bahram business interests in Bombay most critical shipment of opium. Perhaps he is one of the few Bombay Seths to resist the British monopoly of opium in the Asian sub-continent. He is nonetheless welcomed in the Europe-dominated commercial club of Canton with respect and awe. He was as much a part of this scene as any foreigner could ever hope to be. His fortunes ultimately dwindle with the Chinese prohibition against the illegal opium trade and the ensuing Anglo-Chinese opium wars. While Bahram recedes to a private world of day dreaming about his lost lover, he allowed himself to drift along on River of Smoke and when his sleep broke he was amazed.

Amitav Ghosh paints a vivid picture of Canton and foreigners enclave Fanqui town. The perfectly pitched use of English dialect and language is being treated by the writer as one of the many byproducts of the opium trade. The author allows may to witness the birth of local variants of language in the sudden desperation to communicate of lovers and traders.
The literal Chinese whispers furnish the novel with its richness and invention and much of its comedy. The plant-hunter Fitcher Penrose on a typical journey both for wealth and knowledge brings his Cornish vowels into the mix as a way of describing the world but they complete for attention with the mix of cadences of all Ghosh’s other inventions. Sometimes Bahram Modi or his estranged son Ah Fatt seems lost for words, but circumstances force them into articulation.

The British Chamber of commerce in Canton and to pass it off as one style among many. The book, in this way engages with the broader sweep of history in particular the difficult chain of actions that led to the first Anglo-Chinese opium war of 1838, without ever allowing the readers to not remember the ways, in which these headlines particulars had countless and tragic consequences for millions of individual human lives.

The trade stalled by the Chinese emperor’s determination to defend the financial engine of colonialism. At one level, the novel that arises from that determining geopolitics is a amazing feat of research bringing alive the hybrid customs of food and clothes and the competing philosophies of the period with intimate accuracy at another it is a seditious act of sympathy viewing a whole panorama of world history from the wrong end of the telescope. The trade at a standstill, Bahram has much time to reflect on his life and career. He entered the business in his early twenties becoming one of the most successful Indian opium traders. He would originally hoped simply to prove himself to his in-laws and perhaps gain some distance from them, but the opium trade has offered him far more than that providing glimpses of the life he has always wanted. A shrewd businessman Bahram typically come out ahead in spite of riskd, but when the
narrative finds him he has put everything on the line at this particularly tenuous inauspicious moment. Additionally the Indian angle is also important.

Amitav Ghosh’s novel addresses a fundamental paradox in the opium trade for the Indians who were involved in it. The East India Company’s laxity with opium exports meant that a handful of Indians did grow fabulously rich in the early 1800s. But what were the costs? Both the Company and British firms of course captured Indians meanwhile suffered double humiliations in Canton.

Then the status in comparison to European and American residents as well as the glowering contempt of Cantonese who resented India’s and Indians role in the opium trade. But an even bigger humiliation was the fact that under the juggernaut of British imperialism the smuggling of narcotics was one of the only avenues open to Indians for personal and material advancement. *River of Smoke* is hopefully tackle collective historical amnesia over a significant in Indian history.

**Chinese Life and Behaviour in Early 19th Century**

Amitav Ghosh made an elaborate research not only on the muths and old stories about China, but also on China’s art, food and its relation to foreign countries since ages. The war between two countries is not sufficient without a detailed description of the land and its culture where the war is fought. The topographical details in the novel as well as details of food and other things that are apparently insignificant help the characters to be placed in the exact historical time and also in firm geographical space.
The goddess Kuan-yin was said to have been a Buddhist nun from Hindustan, “who choose not to become a Bodhisattva, as she might have done, so she could tend to the common people” (377).

There were other temples too where Buddhists from Hindustan had lived for centuries, the most famous of them being a Kashmiri monk called Dharamyasa. Robin informs that “Down by the river stands a temple that was founded by the most famous of Buddhist missionaries, the Bodhidharma who had come to Canton from Southern India and was perhaps a native of Madras!” (377).

One of the oldest mosques in the whole world, built in the lifetime of Prophet Mohammad was also situated in the walled city. In the time of the Tang dynasty the emperors had invited foreigners to settle in Canton along with their families. They were allowed their own courts and their places of worship and were permitted to come and go as and when they pleased. It was in early 18th century that the foreigners were banned from entering the city not for the whims of the emperor but for the disclosure of their own evil act. When the Portuguese came for trade, they were allowed to set up warehouses in Macau and the Dutch were also allowed to use the island known as the Dutch Folly. But it was soon found that the Dutch intended to build a fort in the name of building a hospital and the Chinese followed the tactic of boycott forcing the Dutch to abandon the island.

The Chinese being a very practical people, they set up Fanqui-town for all foreign businessmen who had since been not allowed inside the walled city. This facts throws much light on the attitude of the Chinese government towards the European traders who gave China every reason for suspicion.
Amitav Ghosh made an elaborate study of Chinese culture including the involvement of the subaltern class in their art before presenting the backdrop of the Opium War. Modern historiographers maintain that the so-called ‘facts’ recorded in history are mere verbal formations of some ideological thoughts and that representation of actual events, events that are not restricted to a certain class of people in the society, should be included in history. These ideas have developed the practice of including subaltern contribution in the history of a particular country. His research on the mass culture of China during 18th and 19th centuries helped him to offer a real picture of China of that period in his novel. Since ages Chinese painting had attracted the connoisseurs of art from different corners of the world.

Robin’s appreciation of Canton painting:

“…Canton style of painting …is utterly different from the manner that commands administration in China. Nor are the painters of Canton of the same ilk as the great Chinese artists of old: they are not from famously cultivated families and they are neither great scholars nor high-ranking officials nor illuminati. They are the kind of people whose forebears were mails and peasants and khidmatgars and labourers in workshops-humble, strong and virile… the Canton studio grew out of… porcelain kilns, the very ones that made China-ware famous around the world!… those workman became expert at creating images that appealed to Occidentals and in time they turned their hands to other things” (246-47).

Amitav Ghosh’s keen observation shows how the subaltern people were used for the comfort of the higher classes in 19th century China. Robin describes the young
porter Ah Lei, less than half his size, Robin thought would be crushed under his luggage but who hoisted it on his back with a couple of flicks of his twist and Robin followed his young Atlas.

Robin also saw that a mandarin or a merchant was carried in curtained chair by men, who were called ‘horse without tails’ and they had attendants running alongside, beating drums. Describing the places where the foreigners in Canton lived, Robin writes to Paulette, “Every were you look there are khidmatgars, daftardars, khansamas, chuprassies, peons, darwans, khazandars, khalasis, and lascars… a great number of its denizens are from India” (185).

The Chinese government towards the British after the British openly disobeyed their laws. According to the Chinese government the local traders who had helped the foreign traders were given capital punishment, the foreigners were only asked to surrender their opium.

Charles King praises the Chinese for their sympathetic attitude to the foreigners:

The prohibition of Chinese law against opium is of nearly forty years, standing and their existence and steadily increasing severity is well known to all. Need he remind you by way of comparison that British law … states that any person who is found guilty of the offence of smuggling shall suffer death as a felon?... instead of arresting the contrabandists and seizing the prohibited goods by force of arms, the Commissioner has after repeated warnings, merely demanded their surrender … he has treated the owners not as individual felons but as a community in open insubordination against a
regular government… the system of collective responsibility lies at the very heart of Chinese process of law (515-16).

In Robin’s letter also Charles King is reported to have said that Chinese behavior was exemplary: “they have made the most reasonable of requests… the foreigners, on the other hand, have conducted themselves in such a fashion as to utterly discredit their claims of belonging to a higher civilization” (458). All such comments on the Chinese character add a new dimension to the Opium War.

**Imperialism, Exile and Ethics in River of Smoke**

The explicit link between imperialistic politics and self-serving humanist discourses which resulted in conquest of culture at various level. The specious imperialist philosophy which inculcated the rhetoric of free trade and the internationalization of commerce as an ideological smokescreen to shroud their mercenary motives. Then it analyzes how the narrative re-invents the rich multicultural world created by the diverse business communities of Canton. Ghosh’s specialty lies in his deft managing of political and philosophical issues without sacrificing the graces of art. A sense of history and space his novels discover the human drama amidst the broad sweep of political and historical events.

Amitav Ghosh has a personal stance on such controversial issues as postcoloniality, post modernity, subjectivity. The author interweaves them in a complex pattern in his works which themselves are generic amalgams. This generic multiplicity stems from an inherent interdisciplinary within postmodernism which is part of its assault upon the Enlightenment.
In Amitav Ghosh’s oeuvre a self-reflexive narrator often introduces metafictional meditations on the value and purpose of his narrative. He is considered an important writer by contemporary critics is that his narratives do not occupy a ‘neutral’ zone. He seems to be intent on moving his readers beyond the aesthetic of indifference, Ghosh admits that “a writer is also a citizen not just of a country but of the world” (Hawley 11).

Karahasan’s essay “Literature and War” which touches on the relation between modern literary aestheticism, and the contemporary world is indifference to violence.

Karahasan holds: “the decision to perceive literally everything as an aesthetic phenomenon – completely sidestepping questions about goodness and truth is an artistic decision. That decision started in the realm of art, and went on to become characteristic of the contemporary world” (qtd in The Imam and the Indian 60).

Amitav Ghosh abhors Karahasan’s brand of aestheticism and plumps for moral activism:

Writers don’t join crowds – Naipaul and so many others teach us that, But what do you do when the constitutional authority fails to act? You join and in joining bear all the responsibilities and obligations And guilt that joining represents. My experience of the violence was overwhelmingly and memorably of the resistance to it (61).

Amitav Ghosh is squarely denouncing the postmodernist dogma of pan-aestheticization as enunciated by Patricia Waugh’s argument:
Post modern theory can be seen and understood as the latest version of a long-standing attempt to address social and political issues through an aestheticised view of the world, though it may be more thoroughly aestheticising than any previous body of thought (6).

Amitav Ghosh diatribe against British imperialism thus:

In this discourse Race is the unstated term through which the Gradualism of liberalism reconciles itself to the permanence of Empire Race is the category that accommodates the notion of incorrigibility, hence assuming the failure of all correctional efforts and thus of tutelage (Correspondence 4).

*Sea of Poppies* focuses on the transportation of Indian indentured labourers to Mauritius and exposes imperial machinations to wrest control of Indian economy. *River of Smoke* traces the difficult chain of actions foremost to the outbreak of the Opium War in 1839 between China and England.

The immoral trading practices of the West, in general and the British in particular, bred deceit, hypocrisy and exploitation. The rhetoric of the democratizing powers of Free Trade under the pretext of which they carried out their nefarious activities animates *River of Smoke* as it did in its prequel. European colonialism was a profitable politico-commercial enterprise inextricably tied with capitalism. Exploring the relationship between, the ideology of imperialism and it’s functioning through the practice of colonialism.
Denis Judd argues that “no one can doubt that the desire for profitable trade, plunder and enrichment was the primary force that led to the establishment of the imperial structure (3).

The extent to which Britain’s illicit opium trade with China served as British colonialism’s financial engine is evident from the Chamber of Commerce’s influential member John Slade’s observation that the Empire:

reaps an annual revenue of five million pounds and involves the most vital interests of the mercantile, manufacturing, shipping and maritime interests of the United Kingdom (517).

The several consecutive meetings of the foreign opium merchants, English entrepreneurs passed themselves off as “crusaders in the cause of Free Trade (244).

Like Captain Chillingworth in the first part, Mr.Charles King, one of the few true Christian, disillusioned with this vicious opium trade and exposes the Britishers duplicity. Though they endlessly affirm their intention to bring freedom and religion to China, they resort to:

“the most absurd subterfuges, which breed corruption as hundred of Chinese officials are bribed to safeguard the safe passage of opium. When he urges in a public resolution to refrain from a trade that is fraught with evils, commercial, political, social and moral, and desires to establish true Christian amelioration” (387).
The European belief that free trade and the internationalization of commerce would create wealth for all nations and produce a new peaceful world order is contested by Chinese administration which rejects the idea that trade could elevate human society. The Commissioner of Canton Lin Zexu surprises foreign merchants by announcing that the opium trade was over and orders them to surrender their stock. Consequently a good and honest Commissioner the best officer in country (267).

The unfazed Lin demands the protesting British to hand over the famous opium trader Lancelot Dent. In a deliberate move, Captain Elliot, the crown official appointed to look after British welfare in Canton, decides to give in to Lin’s emphatic ways. Than the British decides to assemble expeditionary forces on the Chinese shores to open up Chinese markets to opium trade.

The Chinese Emperor, the British attempt to conceal their greed in nicely cloaked evangelical language:

“"It is the work of another, invisible, all-powerful, it is the hand of freedom, of the market of the spirit of liberty itself, which is none other than the breath of God" (463).

The war between China and Britain that this opium trade ignites does not simply stem from cultural difference or conflicting claims over territory but from concept of justice. The British merchants argue in a circular fashion that the destruction shaped by opium among the Chinese has nothing to do with them; yet, when the Chinese government seeks to edge the entry of the drug, they cry fetid claiming impedance of their natural right to trade.
The problem of the Chinese administration is more complicated by the complicit interest of Indian and Chinese merchants profiteering from British imperialism. While British colonial expansionism couples with capitalist aggrandizement to seize political powers in Asia, it also opens up wonderful private opportunities for native entrepreneurs.

The narrative traces the dynamics of collaboration and the complicity of Parsi Bahram Modi, one such collaborator and sympathizes with his professional struggles and personal dilemmas and his sad demise. He establishes one of the largest and most consistent profitable export divisions in Bombay and resists the British monopoly of opium business in India. In the beginning of the narrative, Bahram’s ship the Anahita, financed by his in-laws, carries not only “the most expensive cargo that Bahram had ever shipped, but also possibly the single most valuable cargo that had ever been carried out of the Indian subcontinent” (45).

A businessman of exceptional ability and vision, a kind of genius, Bahram is confident that in spite of the Chinese Emperor’s edicts prohibiting opium trade the “Mandarins will not tolerate any change or else where they will get cumshaw?.... those bahn-chants are the biggest smokers of all” (230).

Bahram’s knowledge about the Chinese demand for opium makes him assert to Napoleon that although it is in principle a clandestine race, it is difficult to put an end to it for many officials, petty and grand, benefit from it, which makes them find ways around the laws.
Even the British merchants attribute the overwhelming success of the trade to the marvelous degree of imbecility, avarice, discourse smells of western arrogance is hinted at by none other than Napoleon himself when he prophetically states, “what an irony it would be if it were the opium that stirred China from her sleep” (174).