



Ecology unveiled: interpreting nature in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

Postcolonial works examine a range of ecological challenges that arise as a consequence of colonialism, encompassing shifts in social and cultural dynamics that subsequently influence the representation of nature. Ecocriticism encompasses a wide array of inquiries, specifically focusing on the interconnection between humanity and the natural world. The translations can facilitate the integration of eccentric perspectives into both creative and non-abstract literature. It is an interdisciplinary field of study where scholars analyse work that elucidate environmental challenges and explore the many literary approaches to the subject of nature. Ecocriticism is the examination and resolution of environmental problems that arise in nature. This pertains to environmental concerns such as emissions, climatic hazards, environmental degradation, depletion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, and other ecological transgressions. Amitav Ghosh is a renowned postcolonial novelist known for his remarkable works of fiction. Upon careful examination, it becomes evident that there is a consistent theme of eco-criticism present in all of his publications. His dedication to preserving the environment is apparent in his ability to raise awareness about the condition of our biosphere indirectly via engaging narratives. He is an exceptional Indian novelist who adeptly incorporates elements of nature into his many writings, encompassing fantasy, history, and human connections. The objective of this paper is to examine Ghosh's research on Ecocriticism, specifically focusing on Deep Ecology, Environmental Justice, Social Biology, Ecological Imperialism, and Ecocide.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, ecology, afforestation, nature, ecocide, Post-colonial

Introduction

India exhibits a varied topography, with mountainous regions in the northern part, mangroves and lowlands in the eastern part, oceans to the south, and a desert in the western part. The burgeoning population and relentless human consumption have begun to have a detrimental impact on this flourishing ecology. These matters are addressed in written form. Living organisms interact and adapt to the natural environment. The text delves into the correlation among plants, animals, and people, and how their mutual reliance establishes the ecosystem. The interaction between these three entities is so interconnected that any negative effect on one of them instantly influences the other two. There are myriad instances of how human advancements have impacted the natural world, thus influencing human existence. This underscores the necessity for eco-criticism. Every nation is concerned with replenishing the diminishing elements of biodiversity that pose the greatest threat to individuals. The concept of 'Ecocriticism' has existed in the Indian setting for a considerable while, but without being properly labelled as such. Indian history contains several treatises advocating eco-criticism. Indira Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India, expressed her views on this matter during a United Nations convention in 1972.

Eco-criticism has garnered the attention of various scholars over the past three decades. The analysis explores how the author gives expression to both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric aspects of the natural world. In the article "Nature Writing and Environmental Psychology," Glotfelty cites, "it is the responsibility of critics and teachers to point out the environmental implications of literary texts, to engage in ecocriticism" (364).

Ghosh is a highly esteemed artist in the realm of Indian Literature in English. He has explored a variety of subjects, with a particular emphasis on two important tasks: transforming historical material into fiction and expressing concern for physical well-being. Ghosh's books contain several eco-critical topics related to wealth. Whether intentional or unintentional, this occurrence is likely due to his regular visits to many locations, including India and other nations. Ghosh endeavours to transcend reality and articulate the repercussions of colonisation on the natural world. Ghosh frequently delves into the repercussions of colonisation on both human and non-human beings in his literary works. Ghosh's literary repertoire encompasses themes like diaspora, travel, politics, love, and history. Ghosh's writings have a remarkable ability to blend fiction and history, while also showcasing his exceptional talent for vividly describing the beauty of nature in all its splendour.

The Hungry Tide takes place in the Sundarbans, a treacherous and fluid region where the boundaries between land and sea are in perpetual harmony. In the Sundarbans, a region located in the Ganges Delta islands to the south of Kolkata and east of West Bengal/Bangladesh, Ghosh focuses intensely on a tiny population, emphasizing their significance. The delta, spanning 335 kilometers, is the world's biggest expanse of mangrove forest located at the mouth of the Ganges River. It stretches over the provinces of Bangladesh and West Bengal.

The system consists of tidal water basins, marshes, and tiny islands of mangrove salt-tolerant forests. It is a habitat where the ocean, waterway, land, humans, and organisms all exist together. This competition is frequently embraced, it also engenders rivalry. The Sundarbans, known as mangroves, are capable of tolerating saline ecological conditions and consist mostly of the vegetation found in the region. It is a vast expanse dominated by Sundari trees. The novel's title alludes to the absence of materials in this desolate area that is susceptible to the destructive forces of both the rogue tsunami and the tropical winds. The topography of the Sundarbans constantly undergoes alterations due to the repetitive hydrological patterns. "terrain where the boundaries between earth and water always mutate, always unpredictable" (7) This hydrological delta has several islands that periodically emerge and submerge, as evidenced by intermittent impulses. The stream channels form an intricate global network. Only a small number of these canals are expansive waterways, with such significant width that one side cannot be seen from the other. Multiple mangrove forests consistently converge and resurface when a small number of islands surpass the tides. The extraordinary tidal currents traverse a distance of 300 km from the beach, resulting in the disappearance of numerous portions of the woods. There are no peripheral areas where freshwater can be separated from saltwater and the ocean. In this coastal region, there is no clear demarcation between the land and ocean.

The scenario of *The Hungry Tide* is limited to the Sundarbans, a geographically narrow region, in contrast to the expansive time periods and locations covered in its predecessor, *The Glass Palace*. Amitav Ghosh's depiction of the horse kingdom is intricately connected to a prior sequence in his work *Midnight's Children* titled 'In the Sundarbans,' authored by Salman Rushdie. Rushdie is captivated with intertidal zones. His imagery mostly centres on the incongruous region of the Sundarbans and is seen in his methods. His portrayal of the Sundarbans is that of a captivating pragmatist who perceives the coastal region as a vast jungle concealing extraterrestrial life and mysterious entities. In *Midnight's Children*, the narrative oscillates between the enigmatic use of symbols and the delight experienced when the nation is captivated by a meticulous and environmentally conscious duplication, similar to the events shown in *The Hungry Tide*. The meaning of the text depicts a visual representation of a pen, emphasizing its physical attributes and the dynamic relationship it has with humans.

Ghosh depicts nature not only as a pleasant and magnificent environment, but also as desiring human blood. The author's portrayal of the typical and geographical backdrop in the story diverges significantly from that of the corresponding Romantic counterpart. The nostalgic artisans skillfully used elements of nature into their gorgeous buildings. Nature has consistently served as a bountiful and nurturing entity, bestowing mankind with its plentiful resources and ensuring its omnipresence and omniscience. The Romantic era emerged as a successor to the traditional practice of producing music inspired by nature. Throughout the duration of the nature composition convention, the focus is placed on highlighting nature as a prime illustration. The experience was valued and really enjoyed. The topics covered in this session included texts about an agitated creature, a spectrum of colours, an amusing story about a forest made of wood, or a specific species. The test participants were engrossed in abundant and exceptional stimuli, characterized with beauty and overwhelming intensity. They established the consortia, conducted meetings, and appreciated nature. The focus is on appreciating nature, while technology and innovation are absent from one's thoughts. Nature was bestowed with its most extraordinary function, revered as a companion, rationalist, mentor, and curative force. It bestowed harmony and tranquilly upon the sorrowful hearts. The natural composition had an ignorant deviation throughout time. Nature has both kind and malevolent characteristics, resembling the nurturing qualities of a mother goddess, while also capable of displaying terrifying, disorderly, and devastating aspects:

A mangrove forest is unlike other woodlands or jungles, a world unto itself. There are no towering, vine-looped trees, no ferns, no wildflowers, no cockatoos or chattering monkeys. The leaves of the mangroves are rough and leathery, the branches gnarled and the leaves are also impassably thick. The visibility is brief, the air still and foetid. Human beings cannot doubt at any moment the absolute hostility of the terrain to their presence, its clever resourcefulness, its determination to kill or expel them. In the embrace of the thick foliage, killed by lions, snakes and crocodiles, hundreds of people perish each year (7-8).

Ghosh presents in this work the tale of the Sundarbans Island, including its trajectory, origins, location, the aquatic landscape, the celestial landscape, and the stories of individuals whose lives are intertwined with the Sundarbans environment. Ghosh characterizes Nirmal as an individual with knowledge and understanding of history, topography, and geography. Taking everything into account, Ghosh's composition lacks a clear distinction between fantasy and reality. He has consistently engaged in blogging, scholarly pursuits, and historical research. In *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, Lawrence Buell contends that "eco-critics are researching artistic messages as in spite of the art factual features and mediation of textual representation through ideological or socio-history factors, refractions from physical and human interactions in those environments" (30).

The beginning of the narrative, there is a noticeable contrast between the Sundarban's guide and a traveler. Two individuals, Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy (Piya), who were visiting the Sundarban region, worked together and established connections with several indigenous communities. Kanai, a specialist from Delhi, visited his aunt Nilima on Lusibari Island. Nilima is involved in an extreme non-governmental organization that carries out philanthropic activities, manages a medical clinic, a guest home, and provides educational services. This group is known as Badabon Trust. Nilima's mission primarily focuses on promoting the well-being of women, providing

education for adolescents, and ensuring access to basic medical services for indigenous people residing in the tidal area. Nirmal, Kanai's deceased uncle, has forsaken him in exchange for a parcel. The box typically contains a journal, from which extracts are scattered across the whole story. The package he has discovered contains a chronicle of his uncle's final days, focusing on Kusum and her kid Fokir, who are portrayed as individuals descending from Morichjhapi Island.

The Hungry Tide portrays nature's cataclysmic and inhospitable aspects. A significant number of individuals have drowning incidents, and tiger attacks are prevalent. The demise of Kusum's father is extensively described throughout the novel. This landscape evokes a sense of human powerlessness and highlights the overwhelming might of nature, surpassing human control. Ghosh states, "The animal was also upwind of its prey and they could see its coat flashing as it closed in; it was skilled in dealing with the wind because of the distinctiveness of its own order and it knew that the people on the other bank were powerless against these gusts" (108). These remarkable marshland felines resemble elusive apparitions that only make their presence known by signals, noises, and scents. Ghosh illustrates the predatory behaviour of tigers and crocodiles as they engage in activities like as planning, following, stalking, and ultimately attacking their victim. It signifies experiencing remorse for the vast oceanic realm that it encompasses, "not only countless hazards and dangers to the lives of occupants there, but also a consistent fear and mistrust. For them, this was a feast. Hundreds of people have been killed" (52). These natural assailants appear to recognize the vulnerability of the people in the face of their powerful winds.

Conclusion

Ghosh's works skillfully integrate authentic historical events with fictional narratives, focusing mostly on environmental concerns. All of Amitav Ghosh's novels were released during the post-colonial era. Initiating change at a global scale should start by first implementing it inside a specific group. In order to demonstrate the relationship between literature and the environment, this perspective is in line with ecocritical theory, highlighting the necessity for humanity to take action at a local level in order to safeguard the global well-being of the future. The work offers a compelling blend of travel, anthropology, ethnography, scenery, migration, and ecology. Ghosh reveals the tale of the Sundarban Island by exploring its issues, geography, cause, scene, waterscape, skyscape, and the lives of humans intertwined with the Sundarbans' environment. Ghosh portrays Nirmal as a somebody who possesses comprehensive knowledge in the fields of history, topography, and geography. The novel explores the aspect of human vulnerability. Piya discovers the avian creatures enduring hardship in the midst of the tempest. They shiver with such intense terror that they can perceive their hearts quivering. Undoubtedly, due to their immense strength, even formidable beasts such as tigers were unable to engage in combat. The storm has a global impact. Fokir sacrifices his life in order to rescue Piya. Ghosh advocates for individuals to coexist harmoniously with environment by recognizing and addressing the inherent imbalances caused by human instinctual aggression. Eco criticism plays a crucial role in examining the connection between humans and nature. Environmental critics are deeply worried about the restoration of the natural environment. Ensuring the preservation of the environment and fostering harmonious coexistence between humans and the natural world is a fundamental aspect of Eco criticism.

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