

Nature Conservation And Environmental Justice In Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide

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Abstract

This paper attempts to analyse Amitav Ghosh's seriousness towards environmental concerns in his novel, *The Hungry Tide*. The Sundarbans, where land and sea always respect one another, serve as the setting for the novel. Ghosh mainly concentrates on a small-scale culture in the Sundarbans, also known as the tidal country, which are the islets of the Ganges delta that lie east of the fringes of West Bengal/Bangladesh and south of Kolkata. The link between Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy, two tourists to the Sundarbans, and the tidal nation network is the central theme of the novel. Ghosh has focused more particularly on ecological topics. Kanai, a specialist located in Delhi, travels to see his aunt Nilima, an extremist NGO that operates a guest home, a medical clinic, a philanthropist, and an educational administration on the island. He wants humans to live in harmony with nature by drawing boundaries around these kinds of biologically unfair characters that result from the assaults of human instincts.

Keywords: Ecology, Sundarbans, Nature, Biology

Introduction

Amitav Ghosh is one of the leading writers in Indian Writing in English. His art mostly draws inspiration from nature and history. The human connection to the ecological backdrop is what sets his narrative apart. His deft use of historical accuracy and fiction to highlight environmental challenges as a major topic is impressive.

The Sundarbans, an archipelago of islands, are one of the world's most fascinating settings for Ghosh's 2004 novel, *The Hungry Tide*. This novel discusses the Sundarbans' ecology and biodiversity, as well as the preservation of tigers and

dolphins. He uses his nuanced characters and their worldviews to illustrate how humans fit into the natural world. The land and the environments in which the characters reside are remarkably authentic. It is demonstrated that Sundarbans residents coexist peacefully with the environment. Wild animals and other harmful natural forces are a constant threat to their way of life. Nature has the capacity to both create and destroy. The people who live on the island believe that nature is both a giving source and a fierce person. A few examples of how nature is benevolent are mangroves, dolphins, streams, and crustaceans. Ghosh provides a detailed description of the Sundarbans' lush vegetation.

The protagonists, who are from Bangladesh, America, and India, each provide unique perspectives to the discussion of nature and how it is treated. The narrative is supported by nature throughout. The novel also discusses India's division and the effects it had on its citizens' lives. It talks about the conflict that exists between environmental campaigners and people who are just attempting to survive in the wild. Materialistic folks show utter contempt for the natural world. The novel by Ghosh addresses the pertinent subject of how people, wild animals, and the plant kingdom must coexist on Earth. He offers us a peek at how inhabitants, visitors, and nature itself interact.

The tale opens with a comparison between a visitor and a guide to the Sundarbans. The cooperation between the two Sundarban guests, Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy (Piya), and the network of maid nations. Expert in Delhi, Kanai visited his aunt Nilima, an extremist NGO that runs a medical clinic, a visiting home, an instructional authority, and philanthropy on Lusibari Island for the benefit of Badabon Trust. The focus of Nilima's mission is on youth education, women's health, and providing the indigenous people living in the tidal area with basic medical services. Nirmal, his late uncle, left Kanai in search of a parcel. Usually, the box contains a diary with passages from it that are scattered across the entire novel. The bundle he found contains a record of his uncle's final days, in which he spins around Kusum and her infant Fokir, who are shown as individuals plunging off the edge of Morichjhapi Island.

With this bundle, Ghosh unveils the story of Sundarbans Island, including its course, cause, scene, skyscape, waterscape, and the stories of the people whose lives are engulfed by a Sundarban setting. Nirmal is shown by Ghosh as someone who understands geography, history, and topography. Everything considered. This is the outcome of

Ghosh's compositions never really drawing a boundary between reality and fiction. He has consistently worked as a historian, academic, and blogger. "Eco-critics are researching artistic messages as despite the art factual features and mediation of textual representation through ideological or socio-historical factors, refractions from physical and human interactions in those environments," (30) according to Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh provides readers with more than just a perspective or a breakable platform - rather, he serves as a tool that inspires people and connects and estimates their lives. Despite her Bengali origins, the Indo-American researcher Piya from Seattle arrives in Sundarban as an American. Piya is an ecologist who focuses on mature marine animals. Although she was conceived in Kolkata, she was raised in Seattle, Washington, USA, starting at a young age. She returns to India because of her clinical love for animals with warm blood. One facet of her advanced dolphin studies involves her visitation to the tide country.

The astounding diversity of aquatic life frames that exist in this smaller region of the earth are produced and sustained by the multiplication of the mixed state. Piya asks Fokir, an ignorant angler, to serve as a guide throughout the district's rivers, streams, and columns. When Fokir brings her to Garjontola, she finds an entire beach with dolphins. Ghosh provides Fokir with multiple benefits through its communality with the Tide nation and its creatures. With joy, his mother Kusum remarks, "See saar: the river in his veins" (245). In fact, Piya even praised his skills when he was outside in the water. He seems to be staring at the ocean nonstop without tracking. She does, however, assert that she has never met someone with such an incredible impulsion, even among many skilled fishers. It seems to her that Fokir could gaze directly into the river's core. He has exceptional abilities as a natural eyewitness. The surrounding natural patterns have adapted him.

Fokir is shown in water by Ghosh. Piya recognises and appreciates Fakir's learning. His thorough understanding of waterways appears as a map on Priya's GPS device. Fakir's knowledge and fortitude in the narrative help her in her journey to Orcella. This ruling run counter to the opinions of Fakir's wife Moyna and Kanai, who saw him as a holdover from a time when they did not understand the modern economics. Ghosh provides readers with an alternative viewpoint on Fokir, enabling them to comprehend that this rejection by big

epistemology comprises an ecological disaster whereby local knowledge is undermined. It has a place in the state's ecologically friendly territory with an underappreciated network. Piya dies and is occasionally hit by strong winds throughout the time he is securely travelling through the trees. He fits the stereotype of a filthy, ignorant, and crocodile-eating local who consumes animals during typhoons, tides, lions, and hippies. The violent storm that is killing Fokir reveals a lethal combination between the wind and the sea.

The difficulty of creating a natural testing environment for humans and non-humans is explained in *The Hungry Tide*. The novel emphasises the difficulties of preserving endangered creatures and ecological systems while putting the lives and livelihoods of the locals in jeopardy. The epic is examined in relation to social character, genetics, ecological biases, ecological equity, and ecocide. Ghosh depicts nature as both yearning for human blood and a place of friendly splendour. Compared to the Romantic equivalent, his depiction of the novel's typical and topographical setting is significantly different. Nature was reversed by the magnificent nostalgic artists for its exquisite architecture.

In the novel, Ghosh takes readers back to 1903, the year that English idealist Sir Daniel Hamilton purchased 10,000 sections of the tide lands from the English government. Hamilton-Abad, Rangabelia, Satjelia, and Lusibari were a few of these islands. Numerous predators made these assumptions possible. Predators like sharks, crocodiles, panthers, and snakes did not thrive in those days' jungles. In Nilima's words, there was only forest here. No people, no fields, no terrain. Not a single person. Only mud, mangroves, and Kada ar bada (51).

The destructive and hostile aspects of nature are reflected in *The Hungry Tide*. Attacks by tigers are not uncommon, and many people suffer from drowning. In-depth reference is made of Kusum's father's passing throughout the novel. This scene highlights the strength of nature over human authority, leaving human impotence in its wake. Therapists are researching the relationship between ecological settings and psychological well-being in the field of eco-criticism. Ghosh unearths a similar fact in the novel. He demonstrates how fear robs people of their physical structure and renders them numb. When Kanai finally reaches Lusibari after a considerable amount of time, he discovers that the Matla stream has shifted.

People are attempting to get from one spot to another as the water level has fallen. It is the outcome of the

establishment of the canning port, a dike on the Matla stream. It is imperative that the specialists in administration put up a town with hotels, promenades, parks, royal mansions, banks, and boulevards somewhere in the tide country. As a result, mangroves - which act as Bengal's real defence against the Bay - are being hacked down without warning. Mr. Piddington, a scholar, cautions against the founding of the city, although he is unknown. He claims that if mangroves are threatened, there is no chance at all that Bengal will be safe from the Bay Storms. Nature refuses to recognise human impact.

Ghosh highlights the intricate and mutually beneficial link that occurs between humans, other living things, and the natural world. Earth's greenery is frequently associated with assurances of life. Every living form in the biological system has a role that is unique to it. In the grand scheme of things, humans always survive. Piya, the cytologist, discovers how the dolphins hunt and group fish. Piya recalls an earlier incident where she saw this tendency in dolphin behaviour in the Irrawaddy waterway. In that event, two fishermen used a wooden stick to beat a school of fish towards their boat, causing the dolphins to approach. The small fish congregate when the dolphins cling to the riverbed. Consequently, an enormous number of fish is caught simply throwing a net. Meanwhile, the net forces an incredible number of fish into the canal's delicate bottom as it descends to the bottom, and dolphins are free to eat this underwater feast. "Has there been a more extraordinary example of coexistence between humans and a group of wild animals, Piya wonders in amazement?" (169).

Ghosh investigates ways to draw attention to the pressing need to conserve a variety of species. For example, Piya describes how American non-targeted mass bombardment is rapidly reducing the Mekong's roccella population. She reveals the methods used by Khmer Rouge forces to massacre dolphins to exploit their oil reserves, which are running low. According to her, "With rifles and explosives, these dolphins were hunted and their carcasses were hung up in the sun so that their fat would drip into buckets" (305). After that, this oil was used to fuel motorbikes and boats. It was later melted down and utilised as diesel fuel. Additionally, by maintaining the canal safe, Ghosh alludes to the deterioration of these species' habitat in the upper Mekong. For a whole population of dolphins, the path appears to be a complete disaster. Dolphins are also the victims of the illegal wildlife trade and the rising secrecy. They are masterpieces in

aquariums. In *Piya*, a stranded stream dolphin is helped by the protagonist, but she is later evacuated by some brokers so that the dolphin can be sold elsewhere without her knowledge.

With a focus on the unsettling effects of the biological system, Ghosh uses *Nirmal* to witness the avian changes on the Sundarbans islands. The sky that used to be filled with bird flights at dusk now seems empty and lifeless. The statement, “The birds were disappearing, the fish were declining, and the land was being reclaimed by the sea from day to day,” (215) suggests some kind of elimination. It is abrupt and empty. Ghosh worries that these unsettling forces would totally engulf and sink the nation due to changes in the ocean’s degree. This is a good indicator that the changing ocean level is causing an unnatural change in the weather. The *Hungry Tide* explores the Sundarbans’ natural environment. The local population and the environment are always at odds.

Ghosh identifies those documented incidents that never materialise. He reconstructs history to contemplate the anguish that natural individuals endure now. In a few of his publications, he illustrates how the industrialist social systems and pioneering forces compel innate individuals to be naturally uprooted. It is accurately noted by the outstanding social scientist Murray Bookchin in *Remaking Communities* that “almost all ecological problems are social problems” (24). He contends that social ties and, by extension, humanity’s willingness to live in relation to the outside environment are impacted by social hierarchy and class division. Like the upper class, the state recognises the importance of the impoverished communities that live close to the environment and are subject to many ecological dangers.

Ghosh connects the two tales: the first describes the *Morichjhapi* scenario through *Nirmal*’s diary, while the second describes *Piya*’s campaign and the people’s current situation while highlighting the Sundarbans’ diverse flora. Ghosh distributed the novel in 2004 when Sahara India Parivar, the corporate entity, was unwilling to cede control of large swathes of the Sundarbans to develop them into an ecotourism destination. Community conferences and thorough natural effect evaluations were not taken into consideration prior to the acquisition’s authorization. Huggan and Tiffin accurately point out that the novel maintains “the sensible policy of no conservation without local consultation and participation” (*Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 188) among postcolonial eco-critics. Within the project, theatres, cafes,

shops, business centres, films, and floatels were made. It also supported the preparation of drills like speedboat excursions within.

Since the projects and the usage of speedboats would exacerbate the delicate biological environment and jeopardise the district's endangered biodiversity, a few ecological offices and individuals opposed this move. After significant opposition, the central government intervened and rescinded the proposal. Against the backdrop of the fictionalised Morichjhapi incident, Ghosh was among the prominent and well-educated people who opposed the idea for the Sahara Project, which had been abruptly stopped, to be in the Sundarbans.

Ghosh also concentrates on home-related topics. Lusibari is a thriving village, but Morichjhapi's attempts to establish a house are brutally and mercilessly suppressed. Due to the work of Daniel Hamilton, an Englishman, Lusibari and numerous other islands are explored and produced. The interruption by an Englishman is viewed as a part of the cultivated mission; yet, when the impoverished naturally displaced people attempt to establish a community, the administration opposes and drives them out, renaming the area Morichjhapi, a preserve woods with a spare tiger undertaking. They rationalise their campaign of ruthless eviction of the poor from a remote, small island by citing natural security. The government holds the foundation of the tiger refuge accountable for successfully convincing the displaced people to leave.

Ghosh uses the voices of several characters, including Fokir, Piya, and Kanai, to express a variety of opposing philosophical stances. As a deep scientist, Piya defends her philosophy of protecting the animals at all costs, and Fokir follows suit as he too has a place in the ecological testing environment among the group of people the government minimises. According to reports from the community, Kanai is a considerate place despite having slain two persons in the city and pursuing their domesticated animals for a considerable amount of time. Governmental bodies and supporters of the natural world do not make up for any losses the community may have suffered due to the death or disappearance of farmed animals.

A tradition and belief about the goddess of the timberlands, Bon Bibi, is revealed by Ghosh, who is concerned with making the land habitable for the people of the tide country. She is said to have come from another area, which

Arabia knows will guarantee and make the innocent people tenable at the location of the eighteen tides, along with her brother, Shah Jongli. The mountains are home to Dokkhin Rai, an incredible demon lord that rules over all living things, including ghosts, phantoms, and evil spirits. Rai acknowledges the area as his realm. This tyrant is a malevolent spirit, harbouring a scornful desire combined with an insatiable thirst for human tissue.

With the intention of establishing natural ecosystems there to serve people, Bon Bibi subdues Dokkhin Rai and divides the island into equal portions, maintaining the wild and the cultivated in careful balance. Being considerate, she gives the devil one-third of the wilderness to rule over while preparing the other half for liveable human settlement. This dream is enhanced by the stories of her acting as the innocent people's rescuer and rescuing fishermen from danger while controlling a sizable portion of the territory.

By encouraging and legitimising ecological intolerance, naturalists highlight issues like the protection of endangered animals and the preservation of their natural habitats. Ghosh suggests a kind of workaround that provides a foundation for the combined operation. The epic develops the most important curiosity, which is that people should investigate ways to stop other singular species from crushing the human network and the characteristic function. Finding the conditions under which the two networks - the human and the characteristic—will coexist, communicate, and develop together is the applied, real-world problem. He wants his work to be a chronicle of the modern world, to help who and what is to come.

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* highlights the numerous forms of ecological guilt and intolerance that are observed by both human and non-human living things. The epic is still available for enlightening and hospitable readings, and future generations can tackle the task of safeguarding and securing disappearing lives with confidence and hope, viewing humans as essential components of the vast ecosystem. The way of gaining deep environmental and social biological information should have been used to better manage and settle the long-running conflict between naturalists and humanists, making rivalry possible and resolving issues related to planet sharing.

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