



AN ECOLOGICAL STUDY OF AMITAV GHOSH'S THE HUNGRY TIDE

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ABSTRACT:

*Since prehistory, literature and the arts have been drawn to portrayals of physical environments and human-environment interactions. In adopting a new ecological worldview, it is necessary to generate environmentalist social change in response to ecological crisis. The geopolitical map is in the midst of rapid change. The ecological crisis sends us back to a general crisis of society, politics, and existentialism. In the age of the environmental crisis, Heed has been paid towards global climate change. This is now-a-days affecting every country in the world. Humans changing relationship to the natural world have become a matter of big concern to focus on nature. Published in 2004, **The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh** is a world-wide undefeated novel. The ecological issues are closely examined. A hostile environment is reflected by setting the novel in Sunderbans. All the characters keep struggling to survive. The present paper is set to undertake ecological issues highlighted in the novel.*

Keynotes: literature, environment, ecological, climate change, hostile, crisis, survive

1. INTRODUCTION:

In an age of environmental crisis, we should re-think over nature and take the best shot to keep the earth in better order. The modern environmentalist movement emerged first in the late-nineteen century. Ecocriticism is foregrounded in man-nature relationship that brings both the human and non-human world together. It an umbrella term used to analyze the intimacy between literature and the environment. It highlights ecological concerns detected in the environment.

Ecocriticism comes after structuralism. So, It can be read with post-structuralism. William Rueckert, an American critic first used the term Ecocriticism in 1978. But after 1990, this term developed as a school of criticism in America with the foundation of an organization called the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992. Richard Corridge in an article titled "Environmentalism and Ecocriticism" defines Ecocriticism in the following words:

Ecocriticism is Literary and cultural criticism from an Environmentalist view point. Texts are evaluated in terms of their environmentally helpful or harmful effects. Ecocritics analyze the history of



concepts such as 'nature' in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that have led to the present global ecological crisis (Waugh, 530).

Two important texts of ecocriticism in recent times are *Ecocriticism* by Greg Garrard and *The Ecocriticism Reader Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. Ecocritics deny the binary opposition between nature and culture but seek to establish the intimate relationship between man and nature. Jonathan Bate is the first British critic to use the term ecocriticism in *Romantic Ecology* in 1991. Bate treats ecocriticism as a theory that moves away from the Marxist and New Historicist criticism for their lack of interest in nature.

Literature responds to global climate change. The environmental awareness becomes the main agenda to reflect on excessive modification of the earth by humans. To put back the environmental condition and think of finding the solution should be the strong united voice of human beings. Now the moral duty of human society is to stand against such unexpected crisis of the earth. The future generation will suffer a lot in view of our reckless activities for gaining our targets. This is the belief of Ecologists that we have failed to reinstate the face of the climatic condition.

From the point of view of eco-criticism, Several creative steps to highlight the power of nature are attempted by John Keats, S.T. Coleridge, William Wordsworth, P. B. Shelley, Toru Dutt, A.D. Hope, Robert Frost and so on .

Indian writers in English willingly accept canonical English writers, but their ingenuity cannot be ignored. They have craving for global visibility but they are not crammers or mere imitators. They have their own ideals and ideas. They write with an artist's ambition, but never get recognition in their own land. They get recognition from the west. Then India identifies them as creative artists. Writers like Vikram Seth, Rohinton Mistry and Amitav Ghosh started writing about India as a country which is globally interlinked with other nations and activities of the world. Amitav Ghosh is a writer whose style of writing effectively combines the rigours of social research with the masterly ability of spinning a yarn. We all recognize that the story element has been a strong part of Amitav Ghosh's writings. Amitav Ghosh has earned his recognition for his first fiction *The Circle of Reason* from the west. Then Sahitya Academy of India recognizes him as a fictionalist. His body of writing includes seven full fledged novels and some non-fictions.

In the contemporary Indian English fiction writing, Amitav Ghosh's position ranks high. He is unquestionably one of the pioneers in crafting fiction and non-fictions in English today. Amitav Ghosh certainly occupies an important place among them. He is highly acclaimed for his literary style and content. He has written consistently good novels and non-fictional prose works. His works have earned considerable critical acclaim in the Indian sub-continent, Europe, America and indeed much of the world. His novels have



been translated into a number of languages and rewarded with literary prizes. He puts forth realistic platform in every character.

Ghosh's novels have globally accessed universal appreciations for exposing the true picture of the human civilization in respect of global climate crisis. His writings comprise of eight major fictions and some non-fiction works. The six novels of him namely *The Circle of Reason*(1986), *The Shadow Lines*(1988), *The Glass Palace*(2000), *The Hungry Tide*(2004), *Sea of Poppies*(2008), *River Smoke*(2011), *Flood of Fire*(2015) are noted to cover the environmental problems at wider range with respect to different global changes that took place during that period.

"The Hungry Tide" by Amitav Ghosh has won the 2004 Hutch Crossword Book Award. The novel reflects the author's expertise as a sociologist. This novel "The Hungry Tide" is set in the atmospheric Sundarbans. It depicts the relationship between people and nature highlighting the pervasive ecological concerns. This paper examines the novel from an eco-critical perspective. This is highlighting the complex connections between people, animals, and the environment. An argument on ecological balance, cultural survival, and environmental ethics is presented against the powerful backdrop of Ghosh's depiction of the Sundarbans. It is a region where the tides control life. Ghosh beautifully observes the river dolphins, landscape, the flora, the fauna and the people who inhabit the sundarbans.

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is set in the mangrove islands of Sundarbans, West Bengal. It detects the resettlement of the refugees in the forest reserves of Marichjhapi, Sundarbans. The novel has shown the complex relationship between man and nature in the archipelagos ecosystem. It is a ongoing tension between humanity and the environment in the Sundarbans. The inhabitants keep facing unexpected problems in view of natural hazards. They are frequently warned to ensure their resettlement. Life in Sundarbans was fully challenging for them. The sundarbans went on experiencing killer waves, tigers, crocodiles and natural catastrophes. The novel highlights the spotted issues of conflict between environmentalists and humanists.

2. BACKGROUND:

The action of "The Hungry Tide" is set on the Sunderbans Island of Lusibari. The novel tells the story of Indo-American cetologist Piya Roy who comes to the tide country of the Sundarbans in Bengal to study river dolphins. She specializes in marine mammals. Kanai Dutt is a wealthy translator and businessman. He is visiting his aunt, Nilima. While journeying to Lusibari, he encounters Piyali Roy. Piyali reaches Sundarbans.

While on boat, Piyali meets Fokir's son, Tutul. He always helps his father to smoothly carry his trade. Despite a language barrier between Piya and two locals, they work well together and Fokir takes Piya to where she can observe the dolphins.

Upon the conclusion of their research, Piya and Fokir head back to the town of Lusibari, where Kanai has been staying with his aunt Nilima. After Piya explains her research plans, Kanai and his family agree to



help out, providing more boats and crew. It is noticed that Kanai is jealous of Piya's growing closeness to Fokir. He insists on coming along to serve as a translator as well. The expedition is going on well at first, but soon they encounter disaster when Fokir and piya split off from the group, taking their smaller boat to search some of the hidden cannals of the jungle. Kanai and his crew members returned from the place leaving Piya and Fokir in view of major storm. Fokir attempts to get them back to port. The storm was too powerful that forced them to take refuge in the mangrove forest.

When the storm is on the track of affecting the Sundarbans, Fokir does his best to save his life. He is killed by the flying debris. But fortunately Piya survives against the odds. She manages to return to Lusibari. She has notified to Fokir's family about his heroism. She leaves the Sundarbans to stay with her family in Calcutta. She returns a month later to support Fokir's family. She also establishes a research foundation to study the Irrawaddy dolphin, which she has named after Fokir to mark his selfless dedication to carry on her research.

3. ECO-CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE HUNGRY TIDE*:

In "The Hungry Tide" Ghosh has intricately arranged a narrative network taking Sundarbans in order to find out the relationship between humans and the fragile ecosystem of this unique delta. The study illustrates the ecological impact of human interference. This is highlighting the themes of climate crisis and biodiversity loss. The Sunder bans play a major role in the novel. It is largely covered by mangrove forests, flora and fauna. The narrative is a long river trip in search of the Irrawaddy dolphin. Amitav Ghosh's scholarship as well as reading of the hostile environment and ecology as a social anthropologist has closely examined the pros and cons of the sundarbans.

This novel creates a hostile environment where every character is in equal struggle to survive in the unfriendly environment. Sundarbans is the largest mangrove forest in the world. It has already seen the impact of climate change. The endangered species like the Royal Bengal Tiger and Irrawaddy dolphins are the inhabitants of Sundarbans. The animals keep facing a lot of problems due to environmental issues. There is struggle between human and non-human for survival.

Jacques Derrida basing on "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" points out that the novel highlights the binary forces of man and nature. This text of nature is presented in Sunderbans, which is the milieu of the novel. The land defies human understanding.

At the beginning of the novel, Ghosh has pointed out that there is ongoing barrier taking climatic issues between man and nature, humans and non-humans. sometimes nature has been defeated and sometimes it has shown its dominance upon man. Man becomes a Helot while dealing with nature. Man has been thinking for long time as it has become a major concern for the human world. The hide and seek between man and nature becomes the prominent portrayal in the global world.



Amitav Ghosh addresses an environmental issue of the conflict of conservation of natural world and the human rights in the novel. Sundarbans stand as one third in India and two-thirds in Bangladesh. The well-known story of vibrant violence recognized on the Sundarbans is an awareness at the national and international level. The efforts to conserve the forest are marked as tragedy and hypocrisy. Nature runs to fulfill human's desire but they are exploiting Nature to accomplish their wants. For the better self living, humans forget their duty to keep the balance of nature. Nature is the destroyer and preserver of human society. Keeping this in mind, the human beings deface the harsh reality of nature.

Human lives are under threat because of hungry of the tigers. . The tigers keep attacking and killing Islanders. In the Sunderban, the environment has been changed due to frequency of tides. Hundreds of people have been dispossessed in view of tigers and tides. The tide country breaks the vision of the Islanders. **Sarat Chandra Chatterji** has rightly said in his essay "Drought" that: *In this world it is not only futile for the small to appeal to authority, it is dangerous as well. Fortunately, the tiny voice of the victims seldom reaches to big ears or who knows what might happen*".

The Earth has been changed by the climate change which is reflected in the novel. Due to climatic disorder in Sundarbans ,the species like Dolphins and other fishes are languishing. The number of tigers is reducing day by day. The ecosystem felt at Morichjhapi Island is at alarming level. The Sundarbans are running under dangerous conditions in view of ecological change. Submersion of Islands in real ecosystem are the prominent part of the environment. The people of the Sunderbans, their history, and their struggles with natural world are well focused by the novelist.

Amitav Ghosh depicts the cruel cycle of nature. The cyclone had taken place in the year 1970. All the characters keep struggling to survive in the hostile environment. The characters in the novel are Nirmal, Nilima, Kanai, Piya and Fokir. The story revolves around the said characters. The adverse situation is constantly faced by them. The nature stands against them in different situations. Life for them has become meaningless. The impact of natural disaster has been felt globally. The climatic crisis in sunderban has put the lives of humans and non-humans into hopeless condition. Fokir, Piya and other islanders have faced the severe cyclone. It has brought destruction and turmoil in Sunderbans at immense level. The extreme alarming rate of climate crisis has undergone chaos on the chest of Sunderban.

Somewhere Ghosh cautions the Islanders to carry the decorum of life. He suggests to bring change in our life style. Nature is on the way to take its revenge. It is caused by man in the name of tiger reservation for making profit. Ghosh wants the people to be well aware regarding the change of natural calamities of environment in future. It is the consequence of man's reckless decision towards nature. The inhabitants of Sunderbans keep searching for the proper place in the world. In view of frequent cyclones, the human lives are under threat.



Amitav Ghosh creates a hostile environment. The novelist has set the novel in Sundarbans where every character is in equal struggle to survive in the hostile environment. It dominates the novel from the very beginning to the very last. People in Sundarbans become the prey of tigers daily. No strong action is taken to sort out this menace. According to Ghosh, the tide raises in mind of people of the Sundarbans, the beautiful forest. Ghosh reflects the environmental issues of the conflict of conservation of natural world and human rights meant for better living in the novel.

The complex depiction of the Sundarbans in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* goes beyond only geographic and ecological details. The novelist gives readers a comprehensive understanding of the area by showing socio-cultural and historical themes. It is a testament to the ability of literature to highlight the areas like the Sundarbans, which comes to the front of current environmental and socio-political concerns in spite of being grown in natural beauty and cultural legacy. **(Roy, Bidisha., 2015)**

"The Hungry Tide" by Amitav Ghosh presents intricately the interactions between nature, and man. The novelist here exposes the real picture of so called feminist society. He makes a long conservation for the women's welfare and talks about equality with her counterpart. In a conversation with with Konai, Nilima says about the miserable condition of women. The dire poverty of tide country becomes remarkable when Kanai had chosen to dedicate his life for the betterment of the people. Kanai is owner of a successful translation business. He comes to the Island of Lusibari to visit his aunt, Nilima. He also lives in a hostile environment. Geeta Chhabra pasturizing the scene of Sunderban described in Ghosh's "The Hungry Tide" regarding losing of many species in order to protect the one particular race.

In Amitav Ghosh's fourth work of fiction, it is clear that Piyali Roy is a young marine biologist in America. She has come to study over the extinction of Irrawaddy dolphins. She arrives at Sundarbans, the archipelago of islands where the Ganges merge into the Bay of Bengal. She comes to conduct an ecological survey on dolphins. Piya is fully westernized and does not know any Bengali. She is an efficient researcher who confidently sets about her task. A drowning accident leads her to become reliant on a boatman as a guide and protector in the violent sunder bans. An interaction between them has taken place. At the end of the novel, Fakir is also killed in a cyclone, while guiding piya on one of the tide country's many remote waterways. In an odd resolution, Piya decides to continue her aquatic research in the tide country, asks Nilima to help her set up a research trust, as memorial to Fokir. She also asks Kanai to be her partner in this venture.

In this novel, Ghosh has illustrated the miserable condition of people living around the Sundarbans. The novelist shows that the people become a prey of wild animals like Tiger. Their voice is crushed under the tyranny rule of Government. The inhabitants become the prey of Tiger. Life is tremendously insecure in Sundarbans. Attacks by deadly tigers are common. Turbulence and deportation are regular intimidation. The land has been ruined by tidal waves. The lives of the people have been highly affected due to unexpected climatic disorder.



The inhabitants live in apprehension because they feel that they may be dragged and drowned by tides. The tigers will kill them at any moment.. Piya Roy takes the help of Fokir to continue her research. Fokir saves her from drowning her from the Irrawaddy dolphins as the boat overturns. Piya immediately gets rid of the guard. She decides to engage Fokir's services even though they do not share a common language. They communicate through gestures. At the end ,Fokir has lost his life on the Island of Garjontola due to severe cyclone.

Norwegian philosopher **Arne Naess in his Deep Ecology (1973)** has viewed that humans are neither the rulers nor the centre of the universe, but they are embedded in a vast living matrix. This novel focuses on man's indomitable struggle with nature. Life is precarious in the marshy land of Sunderban, an archipelago of islands. It is spread between the sea and plains of Bengal.

4.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

The main objective of the study is to focus on ecological issues pursuing to Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*. This paper will give a new insight to the readers about the untouched parts of this novel .The Study also deals with human centric nature interconnected with the environment which has completely damaged the environment. There is struggle for survival in natural struggle. due to excessive human greed. It has resulted ecological disaster. It also tries to analyze how there is a never falling bond between man and nature in the light of Deep Ecology. We have nature literature. Literature is consciously dealing with ecological environmental issues. This paper is portrayed to study ecology as a new cultural consciousness in *The Hungry Tide*.

5. CONCLUSION

The Hungry Tide considers not only the issue of environmental conservation but also the issue of diversity of the human. It is a readjustment between different kinds of human societies and values, the rich, the poor, the developed, the under developed, the articulate and the silenced. Amitav Ghosh's "The Hungry Tide" stands out in the intersection of literature and environmental discourse as a moving story. It offers profound insights into the complexities of human-nature relationships. It is particularly in the vulnerable ecosystem of the Sundarbans. The text is used as a weaving of stories about ecological, cultural, and human resilience rather than just as a storytelling tool. The novel's eco-critical examination reveals the breadth with which Ghosh examines the environmental challenges for survival of human existence.



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In recognition of the publication of the paper entitled

AN ECOLOGICAL STUDY OF AMITAV GHOSH'S THE HUNGRY TIDE

Published in Volume 02, Issue 03, June 2024.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sushanta Kumar Mahalik', is written over a horizontal line.

EDITOR IN CHIEF