



**POSTCOLONIAL ECOCRITICAL PERSPECTIVE OF AMITAV
GHOSH'S "THE HUNGRY TIDE"**

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Abstract:

This research paper examines Amitav Ghosh's novel *"The Hungry Tide"* from a postcolonial ecocritical perspective. The two perspectives of "Postcolonialism" and "Ecocriticism" are well combined in this book. Finding the fine line where the two angles connect is the study's main goal. The characteristics of postcolonialism and ecocritical theory practices are equally significant in this novel and have been highlighted throughout this paper. In a nation like India, where ecosystems stretch from the Himalayas in the north to the Indian Ocean in the south and from the Sundarban in the east to the arid Thar in the west, the interdependence of nature and society is crucial. Human culture is linked to the environment that both distresses and exaggerates it. The purpose of this paper is to examine Amitav Ghosh's book *"The Hungry Tide"* and determine the extent to which an ecocritical viewpoint sheds light on this particular work. In this paper, I will examine how ecocriticism helps readers comprehend the intricacies of the interaction between humans and the natural world as it is depicted in literature. This interaction highlights the traits of both nature and humans and differs from species to species. One such location that is intricately linked to the planet's environment is the Sundarbans. In his work, Amitav Ghosh has highlighted the area's beauty and discussed the way of life there. In an eco-centric world, he has highlighted both man and environment from his point of view. In the book *"The Hungry Tide,"* he depicts the area and discusses the protagonist's relationship with nature. Their complete reliance on nature is emphasized despite the numerous challenges they face. The author highlights how age is relevant and unchanging since nature strives to stay the same.

Key words: Postcolonialism, Ecocriticism, Environment, Human culture, Protagonist

Introduction:

Amitav Ghosh has documented history and expressed many worries regarding human life. The main characteristic of postcolonialism is the elimination of the pyramid's dichotomies, which represent Western resources meant to subjugate and suppress the colonies' residents. Ghosh has consistently raised his voice in opposition to such methods in his writings. According to him, political and cultural differences shatter not just nations but also our genuine humanity. Amitav Ghosh's books frequently deal with the predicament of the exiled. The author's ecological sensitivity is evident in *"The Hungry Tide,"* which combines myth, history, and fiction to investigate the Sundarbans' liminal region, where the ebb and flow of water shapes and



organizes human fortunes. Keeping in mind the methods of ecocritical theory, I will be examining these ideas in "*The Hungry Tide*," an uncommon construct that explains the core of postcolonialism, in this analytical study. This book is a wonderful illustration of how postcolonial and ecocritical literature may coexist. In terms of respective fields, ecocriticism looks at how the literature has demonstrated the connection between nature and humanity. Postcolonialism, on the other hand, focuses on the repercussions of imperialism—whether terrible or beneficial—on its colonies, which continue to be used long after winning independence. In "*The Hungry Tide*," Ghosh attempts to depict the delicate situation of a country that was once colonized and is now demeaning the direct or indirect effects of adopting Western practices. The novel gives way to both of these melodies throughout its story and leaves the students open to many clarifications.

As a philosophy, postcolonialism focuses on the enduring impact of imperialism, which is seen in structures, languages, artistic creations, lifestyles, clothing, and even governmental structures. Western nations have always believed that it is their natural right to treat them as superior, leaving everyone else as inferior and in dire need of advancement for the good of civilization. Consequently, they have destroyed the culture, which was already lovely and comprehensive, in their endeavors to ensure civilization. "*The Hungry Tide*" is an idealistic book with remarkable empathy, beauty, and wisdom. Without nature, human life is unimaginable. Man understands how important the abundant flora and fauna are to him. The abundance of the magnificent earth is inspired by more than only the artistic and visual facets of life. It is necessary for life itself. In the current context of environmental concerns, ecological literary critique is gaining traction, just like any other fictional trend. This paper's title refers to the reading of Amitav Ghosh's "*The Hungry Tide*," which is set in the Sundarbans, the world's most common mangrove habitat, which is made up of both water and earth as well as the intersection of landscape, water, people, and their ethos. The tide, which is constantly hungry, comes in twice a day, causing the soil to constantly change and anything permanent to be uprooted. Thousands of acres of forest are submerged daily by the tides in the Sundarbans, which extend almost three hundred kilometers inland. Periods later, it reappears. Strong tides reorganize the continent almost every day.

Furthermore, Amitav Ghosh's book "*The Hungry Tide*" highlights both the fury of the natural world and the vulnerability of those who are at its mercy. He reinterprets and connects the novel's subjects, which span from history to current events. The main focus of the book is the brutal suppression and slaughter of East Pakistani immigrants who fled the Dandakaranya refugee camps to Morichjhampi, believing that the latter would provide them with familiar visions and, consequently, a healthier life. However, the novel also deals with the dangers of the Sundarbans, including the lurking tiger in the jungle and the deadly crocodiles in the water, the fishermen who earn a living, and the study of dolphins by Piya, a translator. This is an almost-elapsed reality. "*The Hungry Tide*" tells the story from the perspectives of two well-educated, upwardly mobile people who believe they are visiting the tidal state. Bengali-born and Delhi-based businessman Kanai Dutt travels to Lusibari to reside with his aunt Nilima to get the parcel his uncle Nirmal left for him. He concludes that the set explains his uncle's final days, revolving on Kusum and her son Fokir, who are portrayed as the victims of the island of Morichjhapi's eviction.



Ghosh weaves together two successive stories: the first tells the story of the Morichjhapi incident that occurred 28 years ago via Nirmal's magazines, and the second tells the story of Piya's quest to research the critically endangered Gangetic river dolphins. The combination of these two tales draws attention to the challenges and problems associated with wilderness preservation and the associated societal costs in places that have historically and now been inhabited by the economically and socially disadvantaged. One such piece is *"The Hungry Tide,"* which draws attention to the issue of environmental deterioration in the Sundarbans, which is a result of western agitation.

"The Hungry Tide" is praised by many critics as a remarkable work that highlights the concepts of eco-friendly behaviors. Ecocriticism is a critical philosophy that focuses on illustrating environmental issues caused by human activity. Numerous states handle these issues in their own peculiar methods, and they have numerous ramifications. Because of the political interests involved, environmental issues have grown in importance throughout time. However, because the conversing environment was not part of their imperialistic mindset, the developed and dominant nations still view these challenges as less significant. Because of they use the environment as simply another tool to subjugate and dominate their colonists. Nevertheless, if we want the world to endure forever in the current situation, these ideas cannot be embraced.

In addition, Amitav Ghosh's sixth book explores the tensions that exist between the environment and its resilient inhabitants, as well as between those organizations which are determined to protect the Sundarbans' distinctive aquatic life and tiger population, often at the price of its inhabitants. The protagonist of the book is an American scientist named Piyali Roy of Indian descent. Therefore, the fact that expertise comes occasionally throughout the book is not shocking. Ghosh provides guidelines and limitations on how it can coexist with the natural world. Amitav Ghosh has revealed and expanded upon previously uncharted terrain, giving it a unique position based on its mythology, language, and history. The success of *"The Hungry Tide,"* however, is in its examination of the human heart—a far darker and more mysterious forest. Two individuals in Sunderban Municipality are at the core of the narrative. Set in one of the world's most interesting places, it is a tale of adventure, unlikely love, identity, and history. Amitav uses Fokir to symbolize local identity, Kanai, the resident of Delhi, and Americanized Piya with her automated GPS gadget to personify globalization. The use of language to portray Sundarban an islands encapsulate some unique features specific to the Sundarban landscape and its environment. One may argue that Ghosh's choice of language is concise and allegorical when considering the pictures of Sundarban Island, water, tides, and flora and wildlife.

The narrative's visuals depict the island's actual state as well as the conflict among its residents over the political and environmental ignorance that followed separation. Instead of celebrating biological and cultural variety, the photos depict a sociopolitical divide between the indigenous' way of life and the Europeans' protective attitude toward the predicament of locals and migrants. The Sundarbans are used as a third place to demonstrate the gravity of the problem and to make the case that the ecosystem there needs care. In an interview that was published in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, Jonathan Rutherford makes the case that Bhabha distinguishes between culture difference and culture diversity and explains how the "third



space" questions a presumptive cultural identity and challenges cultural code enshrouded in language.

The Sundarban forest acts as a magnificent and uncontrollable force even though it doesn't communicate. Her emphasis on the Sundarbans' aquatic fauna drew my attention. It is indisputable that the Sundarbans' ecosystem is constantly evolving. In the book, water is a powerful element both literally and figuratively. Both people and animals are impacted by water. In Hindu mythology, water is very significant. Fruitfulness, immortality, location, formation, and femininity are the main associations with water. In Indian mythology, flowing water is revered. The river is a continuation of the sacred waters that flow from heaven to earth, according to the Rig Veda. According to mythology, the Ganges' immense torrents caused the earth to sink when it fell from the skies. Shiva grabbed the river in his dreadlocks to prevent the deluge. Only as the river gets closer to the ocean does it split into a thousand pieces, creating the enormous Sundarbans archipelago. In addition to supporting mangrove trees and providing habitat for tigers, crocodiles, and snakes, the water protects the region from widespread deforestation and even frequent natural calamities like hurricanes and typhoons.

In contrast, the postcolonial Sundarban saw a rise in human activity, a decline in biodiversity and acknowledgment, and marketing of the Sundarbans' distinctiveness. The Sundarban bio network is currently seeing the transition from an imposing ecosystem to an endangered ecosystem. Every day, thousands of acres of mangrove forest disappear, only to reappear hours later, and the waves travel more than two hundred miles inland. For hundreds of years, only the world's really destitute and forlorn dreamers have dared to escape the crocodiles and man-eaters who control it in order to survive in the unstable mud. But the people that settled here were refugees from Bangladesh like Kusum, Fokir, and Moyna, as well as uncommon individuals like Nirmal, Nilima, and the cetologist Piya who wanted to save mankind. This is a very dangerous place for settlers to live. Deadly tigers frequently attack. Ejection and discontent are ongoing dangers. Tidal overflows can surge and spill over the land at any time without warning, causing havoc in the process. The island has seen several difficulties, including starvation, poverty, tragedies, and dashed hopes. Death is a harsh fact.

To put it another way, because human occupancy in the Sundarbans is so recent, all of its residents—whether from Bangladesh or India—are refugees. Ghosh balances the dual themes of Wasteland and Utopia, which both resulted from colonial interactions with landscapes, while examining the comparatively recent history of human existence in the "treacherous" mangrove environment. Early in the 20th century, Sir Daniel Hamilton urged the Sundarbans to be repopulated. In the novel, he is depicted on the prow of a liner during a reconnaissance of the

Mangroves asking, *"Why is this valuable soil allowed to lie fallow?"* (Ghosh, 51), thereby representing the colonial ethos where 'the existence of vacated landscapes, new lands and a frontier between them and settled, sown and the developed country was important to the national psyche. The land became a wasteland when it did not serve the colonial motivations of profit, and this idea is reflected in Hamilton's logic and rhetoric in the novel. *"Look how much this mud is worth,"* he said, *"a single acre of Bengal's sludge harvests fifteen maunds of rice. What does a square mile of gold yield? Nothing"* (Ghosh, 50)



Hamilton wasn't the first person to enter the Sundarbans. There were indications that the islands had formerly been inhabited by people who had left because of the threat posed by both weather and animals. The new "owner" of the land writes a new history on it by rewarding individuals who kill tigers and crocodiles and encourages people to return and utilize the natural resources. The romantic notion of a virginal landscape has been created by the colonizer's entrance in a lovely setting, opening itself to the identity and goals of the newcomer.

According to ethnohistoric theory, the pre-colonial landscape is essentially unaltered, "*a wild nature that shaped the traits of the indigenous people and was only brought under control by European settlers.*" Although there is no denying the veracity of this approach in dissecting colonial impacts, it runs the risk of ignoring personal compulsions. Ghosh goes to great lengths to explain that Sir Daniel Hamilton's motivations in the Sundarbans are not wholly commercial; rather, they stem from a fervent conviction in an ideal society in which people may be liberated from the inflexible caste divisions and social injustices that are firmly ingrained in Indian culture.

While Ghosh may be critiqued for being insufficiently critical of the benign paternalism of the Scottish entrepreneur, the more significant point to be gained may be that the novel, by giving historical depth, allows the reader to nuance the demoralization of colonialism. For, far from being demonized by the natives, "*the visionary Scotsman was, if not quite a deity, then certainly a venerated ancestral spirit*" (Ghosh, 77), and this is acknowledged by characters like Nirmal and Nilima. They are familiar with both the burden of colonialism as well as the discourses of nationhood. People like Kusum felt at home in these islands despite these risks, and even during her exile in Bihar, she had fantasized of coming back to experience these shaking seas and lush mud farms. In the book, Fokri is a forest guide who leads woodcutters and predators into the bush. Because they are so unreasonable, the woodcutters and predators won't venture into the forest by themselves.

Piya and Kanai follow Fokir through the creeks. When it comes to securely crossing the woods with the strangers, he fails miserably. He embodies the stereotype of the unlucky and illiterate indigenous person, vulnerable to bribery by state authorities who pose a continual threat to his life as well as man-eating tigers, sharks, crocodiles, and snakes that inhabit the tide nation. Ghosh gives him permission to comprehend the tide nation, its inhabitants, and the oral traditions of centuries-old civilizations. The strangers rely on a fakir to navigate the seas despite the advances in technology and academic background. According to Ghosh, Fakir is the embodiment of an ecological innovator. The expanding tourist sector in India is another cause for concern. For the sake of preservation, Ghosh vehemently opposes the large hotel idea. Nature is a great way to remember how fleeting the divisions between people of all socioeconomic classes are.

However, "*The Hungry Tide*" takes into account not only the question of ecological conservation and how it might be achieved, but also how we might begin to acknowledge human diversity as a modification between various human civilizations and values, the rich and the poor, the developed and the undeveloped, the articulate and the silenced. But it also calls for a reevaluation of the definition of the human and how it must take into account the



more general categories of life across species and even the concept of the entire interconnected pattern of living forces that make up the planet. The book becomes a journey of self-discovery for both Piya and Kanai.

Piya is very comfortable with Fokir, whose early recollections are equally focused on his mother, despite her linguistic and cultural barriers. They can see beyond human life because, like animals, they are not constrained by verbal totalities. Still, home has different connotations for each of them, embodying different aspects of their selves. Fokir is an unfettered man in his boat, but he seems like a caged bird in the company of his ambitious wife Moyna and is nearly silenced by the author. Although Piya's cultural and ethnic origins are still in the Sundarbans, his idea of home is more ephemeral, much like the dolphins' fleeting nature. The other subaltern, Fokir, is naturally muted if governmental action destroys Kusum. Fokir, the Local who gives his life for Piya, the Global, is also killed by the cyclone that puts people, birds, and tigers on an equal footing. As Piya loses the majority of her study material and the water reclaims Nirmal's journal, the island's transient character is emphasized. However, the latter's impact as mediated through Kanai is visible when Piya refuses to place the *"burden of conservation on those who can least afford it"* (Ghosh, 344) and decides to engage with the fisherman for her idealistic project in the tide country –her new home. Kanai, on his part, must rely on his memory as a secondary witness to write the testimony of the subalterns.

Consequently, a post-colonial meaning of home or territory with regard to people and animals is shown by the fight between the species in the book. A house is a place of conflicting emotions. Here's a quick look at Sundarbans Island. The links between human activities and the environment are proposed in the novel. The two have an ethical connection; as humans, we need to care about the environment. Only until humankind's anthropocentric mindset becomes "eco-centric" and mature enough to address the problem via cooperative efforts will the dilemma in *"The Hungry Tide"* be resolved. We see that in order to protect their own identity and geographic location, people have a hostile connection with animals. This animosity between people and animals leads to a dysfunctional atmosphere and society. Additionally, we discovered that literature encourages ecocritical inquiry and forces us to see ecocriticism as an interdisciplinary literary movement. Ghosh makes a substantial contribution by problematizing the Sundarban community's environment and people.

This gives us the praxis to consider how humans and nonhumans can coexist peacefully and offers an ideal framework for reconsidering the viewpoints presented by the characters. Ghosh highlights the ethical obligation on the part of mainstream culture to comprehend the emerging third world/space influenced by tidal forces and landscape and to take part in their crisis to resolve their environmental issues by drawing attention to the conflicts between the mainstream generation and the third world. As a work of fiction, *The Hungry Tide* contributes significantly to post-colonial ecocriticism studies by offering a viewpoint via characters. It offers insightful information about the struggles for survival faced by residents of Third Space, a third world. The third wave readers, who are more interested in ethnic perspectives and characteristics and offer a practice to think in relative terms: cultural and historical context, and the first wave academics, who are conservation-oriented, are engaged in an ecocritical debate. The tension



and conflict between the environment and the human-centered world are balanced by post-colonial ecocritical studies.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this study makes the case that literature has a lot to offer the theoretical work of island studies, and not simply because literary works show how islands are imagined in various historical and cultural settings. In order to do this, it actively theorizes important ideas in island studies and explores Amitav Ghosh's *"The Hungry Tide."* *"The Hungry Tide"* narrates the narrative of the mostly forgotten forcible evacuation of refugees from the island of Morichjhapi in 1979 and is set in the Sundarbans, a vast archipelago in the Ganges delta. An exceptional location for a literary investigation of the connection between postcolonial island geographies and identities is the Sundarbans. Ghosh's portrayal of the Sundarbans' storm-tossed islands and watery labyrinth poses and answers issues that need to be central to the critical meta-discourse of island studies. The all-pervasive natural world is understanding of humanity. It serves as man's teacher, mentor, protector, and anchor in addition to providing comfort. So why should man ruin it? Among all the other material hues, green, which represents humility and freshness, quickly disappears. A man can only be human if he lives in the natural world. Man is quickly becoming into an animal as nature gradually loses its identity.

"The Hungry Tide" offers a variety of perspectives of the Sundarbans ecosystem of mangrove-forested islands and mudflats, illustrating the ongoing changes it experiences due to regular tidal movements, which cause portions of the island to be momentarily buried in seawater. Ghosh's mastery of location may be his greatest literary talent. When we are separated from his works in recollection, we are drawn to images of a landscape, a city, and a settlement on the edge of a desert. According to his book, the mangrove is referred to locally as the Sundari tree, which is a probable source of the region's name. The environmental imagination serves as a catalyst to reconsider conflicts between bioregionalism and cosmopolitanism, transcendentalism and transnationalism, and ethics of place and the experience of displacement in *The Hungry Tide*, which deliberately addresses colonial impact and ecological consciousness. According to Ghosh, the book is a historical narrative that portrays developing logic as the prevailing colonial force over nature, with no location being so far away as to avoid the deluge of history. Therefore, the fruitful reciprocity of historical narratives and environmental imaginaries is the only way to access, recount, and decolonize nature.

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