

Tracing the Postcolonial Ecocritical Aspects of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

This research article examines Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* in the theories of Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism. It provides a new perspective by interrelating postcolonial and ecological issues of indigenous people in the novel. The research article addresses the harsh realities of the protagonist in Sundarbans Island and reflects on the power of colonialization and the degradation of ecological wealth. The research article also traces the postcolonial elements and ecological aspects through various episodes, anecdotes, and experiences narrated in the novel. It focuses on the Sundarbans (Island) and investigates the link between the postcolonial geographies and identities. The research article highlights the problems of indigenous people in the novel. The research examines how the British colonization of India affected the local people and the environment. It mainly examines how the indigenous people play a role in safeguarding their environment. The article also interrelates the aspects of Postcolonial and Ecocriticism to highlight other social issues that the book raises.

Keywords: postcolonialism, characteristics, ecocriticism, sundarbans, indigenous people

1. Introduction

The form of art that reflects reality in all facets of literature. The literary world has been awash with works examining nature's magnificence, grandeur, and intensity that have examined nature's magnificence, grandeur, and earnestness ever since Shakespeare's time. The relationship between the physical universe and the human environment is vital in this discussion. Recently, writers have become more aware of ecological issues and the threat of open abuse and ongoing exploitation of the ecological background and earth's sources' location to civilization. As the same Amitav Ghosh creates awareness in his writings, The book *The Hungry Tide* gained traction in India in the nineteenth century, when its author, the reformed man who sparked the revitalization, was penning works of current Indian literature. Using documented history as a background, Ghosh depicts the ecocide deeds that destroy the earth, illustrating the devastation people willfully bring to the environment and humankind. The natural world and the lives of humans are only two sides of a single coin. Ever since the emergence of man, there has always been a deep psychological and physiological connection between them. Since the beginning of human history, people have considered agriculture the foundation of their society. Since ancient times, people have been researching man, resulting in a significant relationship between man and nature. This connection may be evident via the study of ecology, defined as "a biological investigation of the link among creatures that live and their environment." In 1866, German scientist Ernest Hackel coined the word "ecology". The word *ecology* is a neologism from the Greek words *oikos*, which means home, and *logos*, which means study. The study of creatures in the environments naturally found is what we mean when we talk about the environment. Ecology focuses mainly on studying the interdependent biological interactions and processes between living things, air, water, and soil.

2. Literature Review

Saurabh Kumar and Dr. Subhash Verma (2019) have focused on elements of postcolonialism, and ecocritical theory is equally essential throughout the article. Shalini Pathayad and Shiva Chaudhary (2022) investigate how the literature does that and turns the Marichjhapi massacre into historiographic metafiction and also evaluate postmodernism and postcolonialism as a result. Shafiqur Rahman (2016) addresses the Sundarbans' ecology, climate change, land rights, conservation efforts, resettlements, and governmental environmental laws, as well as the conflict among individuals, animals, the discovery, history, abundance, and extinction of many species. Moumita Pal (2021) examines how an ecocritical perspective illuminates this selected novel. A. Thiyaagu (2018) Examines how the postcolonial Sundarbans experienced increased human activity, a decline in biodiversity, and the credit and marketing of the Sundarbans' individuality. Malcolm Sen (2009) The research article suggests that while problems such as universal warming and climate change motivate the global environmentalist movement, the ecological challenges of developing frugality are far extra, urgent, and closer to regular life. Fulswange Sunil Uttam (2016) The research article focuses on the cultural aspects of humanity's position in the ecological framework.

3. Background of the Novel

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is the Fourth novel, published in 2004 and set in Sunderbans. Contemporary environmental concerns are interwoven throughout the book's narrative, featuring tales of love, adventure, and the search for identity. The story takes place in a region of India with the densest forest cover and is located on the Bay of Bengal, India's eastern coastline. Ghosh (2004) describes in detail the breathtaking natural scenery of the mangrove-covered Sunderbans. The Sunderbans comprise a vast network of islands dispersed over a considerable area between the sea and the Bengal plains. The story focuses mainly on the Tide country's environment, which comprises several little villages such as Lusibari, Gajrontala, Canning, Gosaba, Satjelia, Morichjhapi, and Emilybari. The two main characters, Piyali Roy and Kanai go to the Sunderbans for their reasons during the narrative. Kanai, a middle-aged man in his forties and a businessman residing in Delhi, travels to Lusibari at his aunt Nilima's urging. Kanai's arrival in Lusibari was at Nilima's request. Nilima, who founded the hospital, asks him to study the documents (diary) left by her late husband, Nirmal, a school principal. Piyali Roy, a cytologist working in Seattle who is originally from the Diaspora, travels to the Sunderbans to do a study on the critically endangered Irrawaddy Dolphin. Ghosh exposes the avarice of humans for lands in the name of progress and modernity in his book *The Hungry Tide*.

4. Theoretical Framework

In his book titled *Ecocriticism*, Garrard (2004) said that the concept of Ecocriticism is an investigation of the interaction between humans and non-humans, as well as the study of cultural history, and it also involves critical examination of the word "human." Ecocriticism is the study of the link between culture and the natural world, mainly as it manifests itself in cultural artifacts such as language and literature; from a theoretical point of view, Ecocriticism connects human beings with non-human animals (Glofelty, 2001). Ecocriticism is defined as the interaction between nature and culture. Therefore, Ecocriticism expands the notion of "the world" to encompass not just the human population but also the whole of the biosphere. Eco is an abbreviation for the field of study known as ecology, which studies the interactions of living things with the natural environments in which they exist and those living things with the environment. On the other hand, they were told about these occurrences in a manner that was so intense and emotional that it gave the impression that they were memories in their own right. Therefore, remembrance is not the fundamental process by which post-memory relates to the past; it is imagination investment, projection, and creation that play a role in this connection. If an individual carried out with dominating genetic memories or dominated by tales that happened beforehand, they were congenital or before they initially converted aware, then the individual's own life stories may be replaced by those of their ancestors if not entirely forced to leave. Despite this, traumatic slices of time that keep defying narrative construction and beyond cognition will continue to impact it indirectly. Even if these actions took place in the past, we are still dealing with their repercussions now. The book *The Hungry Tide* serves as the lens through which this research study investigates the harrowing experience of ecocritical memory brought on by years of war and strife spanning over seven decades.

As a result of their anthropomorphic nature, postcolonial theories examine only human practices and their current state as significant subjects, rather than non-human entities. Postcolonialism analyzes and responds to colonialism's cultural and ideological legacy. It combats centuries of subjugation and commercial and physical mistreatment of indigenous people and their resources and land. It dismantles the social system of hierarchy based on Western thought and ideology and gives colonized and marginalized individuals the ability to communicate for themselves. Postcolonialism is aware of changing environmental conditions and reoccurring issues caused by people's indifference and disregard for the environment. When one region is colonized, the entire ecosystem is colonized. The prevailing power begins to manipulate the environment. Moreover, land provides individuals with a sense of identity. Therefore, any form of power politics intrusion is detrimental to the culture and environment. The environment is imbued with history; every characteristic (land, animals, vegetation, animals, etc.) reflects the past.

5. Methodology

Contemporary research uses an analytical procedure while including postcolonial Ecocriticism in its practice. Postcolonial Ecocriticism is a literary criticism that examines the degree of upheaval within a general population due to transmitting traumatic events via memory from one generation to the next. The story's lead character is the focus of this thesis, which discusses several occurrences that have left him with ecological memories. *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh's text served as the primary data source, followed by the secondary data gathering, which included reviewing the relevant research as critically analyzed by several other authors and environmentalists. Numerous papers addressing ecocritical theory were pulled from various academic websites and observed for the paper's goals.

6. Discussion

The Hungry Tide combines postcolonialism and ecocritical philosophy in a stunning story. This work demonstrates how postcolonial and ecocritical writing may coexist. Ecocriticism examines how English literature has recognized the relationship between people and the environment, while postcolonialism examines the effects of Imperialism, positive or negative, on their colonies after liberation. *The Hungry Tide*, an ecological novel by Amitav Ghosh, explores these themes throughout the story and leaves people open to various explanations as Ghosh tries to capture the painful challenges of a hometown that once had a population but now suffers due to Western customs.

The researcher is conscious of the environmental problem generated in the Sunderbans due to Western civilization via the book *The Hungry Tide*. In addition, the corrupt practices and indifferent demeanor of government officials in the Sunderbans, as well as the effects of these on the people who live there, are shown in the film as well. Using postcolonial writing, literature from countries also once colonized. The countries make their condition known to the world and raise awareness of the difficulties they face on a global basis. It

narrates the narrative of dislocations, disjunctions, and destabilizations today. As a work of ecological fiction, it has received widespread acclaim. This book is one of a kind since it combines elements of anthropology, environmental consciousness, migration, travel, ethnography, photography, and landscape while maintaining its fiction-based status. *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh is incredibly lyrical about the environmental issues of the Sundarbans, the mangrove forests among the sea, and the Bengali plains, which are losing their biodiversity. This concern for ecological equilibrium is evident throughout the novel. Mashima, One of the novel's protagonists, expresses concern for the diminishing aquatic life. Moyna explains to Kanai how Nilima sought to prohibit nylon fishing netting.

The book *The Hungry Tide* has two plots: the first examines the dilemma of exiled people - a group of Bangladeshi exiles - and the second is concerned with the issue of how humans coexist with animals in a compound and perilous environment:

In between the sea and the plains of Bengal, on the easternmost coast of India, lies an immense archipelago of islands. Some of these islands are vast and some no larger than sandbars; some have lasted through recorded history while others have just washed into being. These are the Sundarbans - the beautiful lands. Here there are no borders to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea, and even land from water. The tides reach more than two hundred miles inland, and every day thousands of acres of mangrove forests disappear only to re-emerge hours later. For hundreds of years, only the truly dispossessed and the hopeless dreamers of the world have braved the man-eaters and the crocodiles who rule there, to eke a precarious existence from the unyielding mud. (Harper Collins)

Our homage to colonialism brings on the majority of the environmental issues in this book. The cooperation of individuals who would otherwise divide due to differences in outlook offers to solve these issues. *The Hungry Tide*, in a broad sense, accepts both Postcolonial thought and Ecocriticism concerns.

The person who reads this is entirely conscious of the Sundarbans' ecological crisis caused by Western values in *The Hungry Tide*. Government officials' dishonesty and indifference in the Sundarbans also affect the local populace. Previously colonized countries express their circumstances and raise the consciousness of their plight worldwide through postcolonial literature. Amitav Ghosh's fifth book, *The Hungry Tide* (2004), is a modern tale of dislocations, disjunctions, and instability. It is well predictable as an ecological story. An amalgam of anthropology, environmental consciousness, migration, travel, ethnography, photography, and landscape are combined in this one-of-a-kind book while being shrouded in fiction. "The novel abounds in information about natural history, the authenticity of which need not be questioned by a writer with a reputation for meticulous research and one who is an anthropologist by training. However, it is the movement toward a vision at the end, which is more interesting and enlightening. What Piya realizes should be realized by all proposals for a research project. Piya wants to work in consolation with the local fishermen so that the burden of conservation would not fall on those who could least afford it. She wants the project to run under the sponsorship of the Badabon Trust. It is a small gesture but significant nevertheless. She refuses to exclude the man at the grassroots from her work as a conservationist. She is aware that without Fokir's particular knowledge of his environment, she would have remained ignorant of the river dolphins in the tide country and so would the rest of the world". (Thakur. p. 70-71)

The Sundarbans, a waterscape that switches among the subject and article, sufferer and victimizer, lends each of these three personas a unique touch. The water in the Sundarbans uses its strength to change the physical world and the social order and actively participate in changes to society and the environment. Piya and Kanai can acquire an updated and more in-depth knowledge of the Sundarbans, the area, and its inhabitants thanks to the journey and the ensuing storm at the book's culmination, which maps the topography. The struggle between the characters' traditional and cultural identities intensifies when they encounter the foreboding landscape of the Sundarbans, which ultimately erodes the social distinctions between urban and rural groups of protagonists. This situation is because the novel is rife with different social changes enacted within the waterscape setting, such as those between developed and developing countries, local and worldwide, suburban and rural, ancient and modern, and those throughout linguistic, religious, and socioeconomic divides. Only in a hostile environment, where nature works as the agent that levels all social and cultural divisions, do social boundaries break down and become overcome. In the novel, water also serves as a social leveler, dismantling social hierarchies in its traditional position as a purifier that supports them. The islands of the Sundarbans are thought to be the waterway's restitution, that offering using which they return to the land what they have taken from it if the silt as dirt collected by the river on its path to the sea. The book depicts the river as a strong and intimidating force, documenting Language in India. *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh depicts Sundarbans as following their route, accumulating everything in their path, and forming and destroying the land as it makes its way to the sea.

The novel depicts a wide range of postcolonial phenomena, from the suffering of refugees returning from the Sundarbans to their native Bangladesh to the hopes and aspirations of educated young adults like Nirmal and Nilima, who have recently moved to Lusibari. British idealist Sir Daniel Hamilton bought 10,000 acres in the Sundarbans and invited the poor to live there for free, demanding no arrangement of castes or ancestral independence. Many severely impoverished people heard his appeal and came against the crocodiles, tigers, snakes, and deadly tides, even though they were employed as farmers but would now have to work as fishermen. They arrived in this community in three distinct waves: in 1971, during the Bangladesh war, and as descendants of the first immigrants who arrived in the 1920s. With their assistance, Hamilton set up a semi-communist community, where people shared resources. Several thousand individuals were able to call the little island of Lusibari home. The protagonist, Piyali Roy, a cytologist and the daughter of Bengali immigrants, and Kanai, a translator from Delhi, are interested in researching marine animals in the Sundarbans. In the post-colonial period, they have produced each of these persons.

Ghosh shows nature as more than just a gorgeous environment. It also seems to need human blood. Tides and their Surges represent all of nature's destructive forces. The Bengal language that Kanai studies in the book has the following statement on mangrove forests.

"A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself. Mangrove leaves are tough and leathery the branches gnarled and the foliage of the forest is impassably dense. Visibility is short and the air still and fetid. At no moment can human beings have any doubt of the terrain's utter hostility to their presence, of its cunning and resourcefulness of its determination to destroy or expel them. Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes, and crocodiles" (THT, 7-8).

The paragraph above depicts nature's unfriendly attitude towards humans. Due to the great expenditure of the booming mud, Kanai is dumbfounded as he witnesses the hardship of the passenger on the boat in this part, "Canning":

...on stepping off the plank, there was a long- drawn-out moment when each passenger sank slowly into the mud, like a spoon disappearing into a very thick daal. Only when they were in up to their hips did their descent end and their forward movement begin. With their legs hidden from sight all that was visible of their struggles was the twisting of their upper bodies" (THT, p.24-25).

These words precisely represent the disadvantage of technological growth, which is, to some extent, beneficial to men but harmful to biodiversity. The rich and composed natural resources of the Sunderbans of West Bengal (India) are heavily influenced by the island's illiterate poor. They believe that natural resources belong solely to them and that they may use them at any cost. As a result, the government must take decisive steps to expel them from the island to preserve nature's bounty and maintain the proper cycle of biodiversity in the Sunderbans.

Accurate depictions of tigers and the humans they prey upon are joined by similarly convincing depictions of snakes, crocodiles, storms, and catastrophic typhoons. It is tough to keep your equilibrium when you are trapped in an unsettling atmosphere with little access to the outside world. Man must contend with the elements of the sea and the land, catching his food and protecting himself with tools he has fashioned from raw materials. Fokir is not a depiction of Piya's ideal knowing and protective nature; this realization is starkly contrasted but is ultimately more truthful than her ideal relationship with the wild. She had believed that Fokir reflected her principles, therefore, his support for setting fire to the imprisoned tiger and killing it after it threatened the humans came as a great shock and loss to her. She quickly covers her ears because she does not wish to hear Fokir's perspective on the matter, which is that a tiger's admission into a human population is symptomatic of its self-destructive desire. When she runs into the same tainted protect she had met on her trip to Lusibari on his way to beat, shout, and coerce bribes from the people in exchange for their survival action, she quickly realizes that her demotion of the villagers' viewpoint regarding the tiger gives her in the same camp as the foresters.

The novel has incredible characters. Each protagonist stands out from the crowd and is a unique individual in his own right. They are inextricably linked to the Sunderbans, yet each has a unique relationship with the islands. Fokir submerges in the old ways; his wife, Moyna, is studying to be a nurse and wants better opportunities for her kid. Nilima maintains contributions, a hospital, a visitor house, and instructive facilities under the name of Badabon Trust to benefit the island's residents. Piya and Kanai, well-educated professionals in their own right, wish to return to the Sunderbans. Nirmal Bose, a rebel turned educator and idealist, comes to life in the previous tale. We may attribute what little we know about the Sunderbans to the region to this man's knowledge, perspective, and social awareness. Universe and way of life distinct from that of the indigenous Indians who inhabit the interior of the island. His notes in his notebook on the Morichjhapi revolution reflect a genuine effort by the island's dispossessed to create for themselves a new. However, the uprising is unsuccessful, and people experiencing poverty remain impoverished. Kunai Dutt looks haughty, although he is caring and generous to his uncle and aunt. Kanai visits the island at the request of his aunt Nilima Bose to study and comprehend Nirmal's diary. In the procedure, his track crosses that of Piya, the all-American Indian researcher who travels to the tide country in pursuit of the dolphin.

Piyali Roy is a practical, experienced researcher who is enthusiastic about her research while remaining sensitive to the indigenous and the environment. Her quest for the river dolphin leads her through the twisting and labyrinthine waters of this estuary setting. She meets Fokir and other villagers along the way. Her relationship with the silent and skilled fisherman Fokir reaches a level unimaginable to Kanai. Fokir makes the ultimate sacrifice to save Piya from the climactic storm. Piya's discoveries about river dolphins result in an excellent piece of study and deductive reasoning. However, this work required the assistance of Nilima, the dedicated and pragmatic social worker. Her work has helped the island's residents and protected them against the vagaries of nature and existence. After being buffeted by their adventures and encounters, Piya and Kanai find refuge with the Badabon Foundation and the Tide Nation. Piya could look after Fokir's bereaved family, to whom she is indebted for her very existence, in addition to fulfilling her longtime dream of studying and recording the Orcaella Brevirostris.

The Sunderbans are the most engaging of the half-dozen key characters in *The Hungry Tide*. The lyrical explanation of the Sunderbans in the novel's first few pages demonstrates how important the setting is to the plot and how the work owes its attractiveness to the waterways and woods of the Sundarban islands. The novel's plot is ordered around natural acts and turns, and the volume *The Hungry Tide* has dual portions, The Ebb and The Flood. The story is also told in the slow writing that one would anticipate from a story about natural currents. Apart from several interconnecting storylines and personalities, it only has two major plots. The first is how humans share a complicated and deadly ecology with wildlife (river dolphins and tigers), and the second is the misery of displaced Morichjhapi islanders whom the government kills.

7. Conclusion

The above discussions give a new perspective on Postcolonial Ecocriticism. Ghosh's work suggests that globalization has far-reaching consequences for individuals who are considered backward and uncivilized. This research article explores Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* through the lenses of Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism, offering a novel and multifaceted perspective. By intertwining the postcolonial and ecological dimensions of the indigenous people's experiences in Sundarbans Island, the study uncovers the harsh realities they face. It also emphasizes the enduring impact of colonialization and the subsequent degradation of ecological wealth, shedding light on the intertwined fates of the local population and their environment. This article traces postcolonial elements and ecological nuances woven throughout the novel's episodes, anecdotes, and experiences, illuminating the multifaceted interplay between geographical and identity-related postcolonial dynamics. Additionally, it underscores the challenges confronted by indigenous communities as they strive to protect their environment, unraveling the involved relationship between colonization and ecological preservation. By connecting the dots between Postcolonialism and Ecocriticism, this research article not only offers a philosophical understanding of the novel but also reveals the broader social issues it raises, making a significant contribution to the field of literary analysis and cultural studies.

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