



An Ecocritical Reading of Amitav Ghosh's Fiction

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DECLARATIONS

To the best of my knowledge, the thesis does not contain any content that has been approved for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. The thesis does not include any previously published or written work by another author, with the exception of passages where appropriate citations are provided.

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SUPERVISOR'S ENDORSEMENT

This is to certify that Aliya Shahnoor Ameen has submitted her dissertation to me, and I find it acceptable and ready for a technical review.

I, therefore, recommend that the dissertation be taken into account for further necessary action.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the fiction of Amitav Ghosh through the lens of ecocriticism and detect issues such as the Anthropocene, anthropogenic activities, anthropomorphism, Actor Network theory (ANT), and deep time in his work. It argues that Ghosh's fiction gives agency to both humans and nonhumans, making both entities susceptible to planetary crises. His fiction reveals the emergence and pervasiveness of anthropogenic activities that are wreaking havoc on the entire ecosystem. There is a recurring reference to anthropomorphism, which gives rise to Ghosh's concept of the 'uncanny', in which nonhuman entities adopt human characteristics to support their shared interests on the planet. The uncanniness also lies in the ability of nonhumans to wield their agency to confront the anthropogenic activities of humans. Therefore, the ecocritical analysis of Ghosh's narratives lays bare the notion that nature is not inert or inactive. Centuries-long human enterprises, motivated by greed and power, systematically disrupt the harmony between humans and nonhumans. This thesis argues that the onslaught of capitalism, free trade, consumerism, and globalization under the guise of anthropogenic activities is responsible for the massive destruction of the ecosystem, resulting in the repercussions of repressed nature. Ghosh fictionalizes historical events and reveals the unheard stories that are deliberately concealed to perpetuate the crime against nature.

Through archival research, the thesis investigates the direct and indirect effects of the Western colonial enterprise of capitalism, imperialism, and free trade on humans and nonhumans, causing widespread damage to the environment and resulting in the loss of biodiversity, climate change, and global warming as depicted in Ghosh's fiction. It locates Ghosh's textual advocacy for an equitable, sustainable, and fair world by fostering empathy, increasing awareness, and encouraging

group action. The arguments are forwarded by critically examining five novels: *The Hungry Tide*, The Ibis Trilogy (*Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire*), and *Gun Island*.

CHAPTER I

Introduction: The Dawn of Cli-Fi

Any critical engagement with Amitav Ghosh's work is a constant reminder of the issues of environmental degradation and climate change that concern our time. Ghosh, through his fiction and nonfiction, walks us through the mysterious terrain of environmental crises to bring home that climate change and environmental degradation should no longer be considered a fantasy but rather a reality that should not be treated as a local concern but a global phenomenon with an apocalyptic magnitude. Our recorded human history is shaped during this holocene epoch, following the ice age, when various changes in the physical form of the environment are taking place. However, with the advent of the Industrial Revolution, man-made interventions and exploitations of nature have led to a transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. Different Industrial Revolutions are held responsible for the onset of climate change and the environmental crisis. Humankind, considered the most significant entity, ravages the entire ecosystem for its self-interest to such an extent that the environment, in turn, poses a major threat to the sustenance of human lives. This onslaught of the environment shows how vulnerable and fragile humans are (Chakrabarty 342). Humanities, the branches of knowledge that appreciate human values and the unique qualities of the human spirit to express itself, somehow fail to detect the destruction caused by the supremacy of the human attitude (Hiltner xii). The fictional work of Amitav Ghosh is a clarion call to the smugness of the humanities at the planetary crisis. Ecology has received reasonable attention in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh as most of his novels clearly deal with the issues of the environment. It is not a coincidence that Amitav Ghosh's fiction is replete his ecological concerns.

His recent nonfiction, *The Great Derangement*, amply demonstrates how serious he is about the issue of climate change and the failure of fiction writers to reflect the problem in their writing (7).

He focuses our attention on how the environment is threatened in the name of development and civilization. He delves into both causal and consequent issues such as drug and human trafficking, refugee crisis, mass migration, destruction of flora and fauna, wilderness and wildlife, imperialism, and deforestation. Mapping the mysterious trajectory of environmental crises, this thesis locates the disparity of relationships between humans and nonhumans, stemming from the ever-increasing desire of humans to satisfy consumerism and capitalism. It underpins the reality that the non-humans gather agency to strike back as a grave repercussion of century-old exploitation of humans against non-humans.

Amitav Ghosh's fiction, therefore, invites analysis from the perspective of eco-criticism. Ghosh's concern for ecological conservation and its reflection in his works give him immediate success in the literary arena. Ghosh posits an alarming effect of the anthropocentric attitude of humans towards non-humans by laying bare the unsurmountable human greed and cruelty against nature. Through his narratives, he becomes a strong advocate against environmental degradation. This research attempts to explore through Ghosh's fiction that massive economic growth and development led by petty self-interests and the insatiable greed of humans are responsible for climate change and environmental disasters. The present study, therefore, looks into how Ghosh, through his fiction, demonstrates that free trade, capitalism and globalization are responsible for environmental degradation over the centuries. This study, in other words, focuses on Ghosh's narratives, which foreground that anthropogenic activities stemming from anthropocentric or, more precisely, eurocentric attitudes cause present-day planetary crises. Although colonial and post-colonial eras play a catalyst role in his fiction, Ghosh does not want him to be considered a postcolonial author because his ecological concerns go beyond the political boundary and become

global issues. Under the guise of colonialism and post-colonialism, Ghosh, in reality, presents matters of universal concern.

1.1 From Sci-fi to Cli-fi

In his collection of essays, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), Ghosh discusses how modern fiction hinges upon probability, leaving the exceptional, extraordinary things aside (Ghosh 22). Ghosh asserts, “It is as though in the literary imagination climate change were somehow akin to extraterrestrials or interplanetary travel” (Ghosh 13). On the other hand, fiction used to take an interest in unlikely, unheard-of storytelling before the emergence of modern novels. According to Ghosh, the concealment of the exceptional moments in modern novels banishes the improbable and inserts everyday events (Ghosh 23). In the first section called “Stories,” Ghosh exposes the shortcomings of many “literary novels”, which focus on the moral trajectory of the characters treating climate issues as a stable background. To his surprise, some of the contemporary novels treat cyclones, tornadoes, wildfires, degrading habitats, and endangered animals as improbable events categorised as fantasy or sci-fi. But today, because of the extreme weather conditions, burning forests, melting glaciers, flooding areas, and extinct species have brought the unimaginable into our daily lives and literature. As a result, there is an inevitable rise of a new fiction genre from the ashes of premodern storytelling improbabilities, which is twining fiction and ecology and creating a new trend known as cli-fi. A few writers, including Ghosh, became the avant-garde of the new narrative form. In so doing, there is an element of unexpected unease stemming from the pairing together of fiction, a type of narrative untrue, with the unprecedented, sudden onslaught of the ecological catastrophe, an inescapable environmental reality that is true. As Cli-fi, Ghosh’s narratives offer political and ecological

violence of our time on the one hand and, on the other hand, establish nonhumans as the protagonists and storytellers. Therefore, the Sundarbans, storm, dolphins, Bonbibí or Manasa Devi take turns to become powerful characters in his fiction and create awe and wonder.

1.2 The Tale of an Ecological Refugee

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh writes, “My ancestors were ecological refugees long before the term was invented” (4). This personal background explains why, in practically all of his fictional stories, Ghosh is especially sensitive to the forcibly displaced populations and refugees. The fact that Ghosh referred to his ancestors’ migration from the British Indian province of Bengal to Bihar in the nineteenth century as “ecological refugees” highlights the fact that human migration brought on by natural disasters is just as important as the millions of people who were uprooted following the turbulent political and historical events in the Indian subcontinent after Partition (De 100).

Born in Calcutta in July 1956, Amitav Ghosh had the rare opportunity to travel extensively in his early childhood with his diplomat parents to their postings in Bangladesh (then East Pakistan), Sri Lanka and Iran. This has whetted his sensibility to the merit of traveling and the prospect of a writer taking a keen interest in looking at the world from the perspective of a migrant. Migration is thus one of the common phenomena in many of his writings. Somehow, migration is attuned to the volatility in nature. Taking his mobility into consideration Ghosh, therefore, applies the figure of ‘refugee’ (Mondal 2) in *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988) and *The Glass Palace* (2000). In *The Hungry Tide*, refugees from Bangladesh encounter a precarious future once they are temporarily settled in Morichjhapi. This refugee crisis is juxtaposed with environmental

degradation, causing the biodiversity in Sunderbans, one of the largest mangrove forests in the world, to be extremely threatened and vulnerable. Ghosh, however, in many of his writings seems to underpin the notion that this movement or migration or even human settlement brings a significant change in the ecological system triggering severe exploitation of nature.

Ecocriticism finds a dominant voice in the literary works of Amitav Ghosh. Ghosh, however, has a particular concern with marginal people, histories, knowledge systems and beliefs. This study attempts to focus on how Ghosh developed a substantial body of work that resonates with some of the cardinal concerns of what is now an emerging field of criticism-ecocriticism. Though Ghosh never asserted directly that his literary texts have a strong undercurrent of issues related to nature and ecology, a critical analysis of his writing thus unveils not only his predilections and concerns but also explores the scope and possibilities of ecocriticism in his fiction.

The thesis will examine how Amitav Ghosh explores the intertwined themes of ecocriticism, environmental justice, and sustainability in his fiction, shedding light on how social inequality and environmental decline are interconnected. Ghosh's narratives reveal how power dynamics, capitalist exploitation, and the historical legacy of colonialism influence human-nature relationships, resulting in environmental injustices that disproportionately impact marginalized groups. Through his writing, I shall argue, Ghosh emphasizes the urgent need to address ecological crises while highlighting the imperative of tackling social injustices inherent in environmental degradation. Consequently, Ghosh's fiction acts as a compelling platform to raise awareness, cultivate empathy, and promote collective action toward a fairer, more egalitarian, and sustainable world.

My exploration of Ghosh's fiction is guided by the following research questions; i) How does Ghosh incorporate the climate strategies in his fictional narrative? ii) How does he humanize the

crisis? iii) How does he negotiate with the Anthropocene as a planetary crisis? What are the locations of his narration? iv) How does Ghosh historicize colonialism to show the emergence and influence of capitalism and its consequent exploitation of ecology? v) How does Ghosh humanise nature or view humans as an extension of nature to create a network of response to environmental crisis? vi) What is the role of storytelling in promoting environmental justice and sustainability?

This study employs an archival methodology. To serve the purpose of the research the most recent multidisciplinary theoretical developments, especially ideas like deep time, Anthropocene and deconstructive readings of myths, folklore and history have been analyzed. In addition, the vlogs and interviews of Amitav Ghosh are also studied to understand the rational/irrational, human/non-human terrains outlined by Ghosh in his works. Amitav Ghosh's texts are the primary source of this research, while his texts and reviews, interviews, historical accounts of colonialism, folklore, and websites are secondary sources. This research has two dimensions - theoretical framework and textual analysis section. In the theoretical dimension, the history of ecocriticism and the associated ideas of ecocriticism are discussed. Apart from this, Ghosh's own articles and essays on ecocriticism and his latest book, *The Great Derangement*, are analyzed to explore his own stand on ecocriticism. In the textual analysis section, Ghosh's recent fiction is surveyed in light of ecocriticism and related theories. The secondary sources on Ghosh's fiction are analyzed to substantiate the claim on his works.

The thesis intertwines the subtleties of biosphere loss, environmental degradation, and social and environmental injustice found in Amitav Ghosh's novels to present a comprehensive picture of the interconnected destruction caused by human activity over the ages. It also demonstrates how Ghosh's fiction subtly and overtly exposes the capitalism and free market policies of Western

colonialism, which have encouraged colonial powers and their proxies to exploit the entire ecosystem and give rise to dangerous issues like climate change and global warming.

In order to investigate the epistemological gap in addressing the environmental crisis brought on by anthropogenic activities, this thesis examines the writings of the authors who focus on the issues of climate change, environmental degradation, migration, and refugee crisis in Ghosh's writings. Before I proceed with a brief survey of the texts as well as contextualization of Ghosh's fiction against the backdrop of other postcolonial writers' writing on environment, let me begin with the pertinent theoretical issues.

1.3 Theoretical Tools: Ecocriticism and Beyond

Ghosh's fiction demands application of the various lenses of ecocriticism. As an emerging field, ecocriticism is constantly evolving and espousing an array of inter-related disciplines. The thesis will apply terms like green postcolonialism, ecofeminism, capitalocene, Actor network Theory among others to explain Ghosh's fiction.

The most influential definition of ecocriticism is given by Cheryll Glotfelty, who identifies it as "a study of the relationship between the literature and the physical environment" (xviii), adding, "Ecocriticism takes an earth-centred approach to literary studies" (xvii). Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin agree with the idea as environmental imagination, as proposed by American ecocritic Lawrence Buell, involves a set of aesthetic preferences for ecocriticism that go beyond environmental realism or nature writing. It pays particular attention to nonfictional and fictional writing forms that emphasize nature and natural elements (landscape, flora and fauna, etc.) as independent agents in the world rather than as structures that support human action (186). One

underlying concern of ecological critiques is the fact that human culture is connected with the physical world in a mutually influential way. This is true despite the wide range of interests and varying degrees of complexity. Language and literature, in particular, are examples of the cultural objects that ecocriticism examines in relation to the environment. It is a theoretical discourse that negotiates between the human and the nonhuman, while, as a critical notion, “it has one foot in literature and the other on land” (Glotfelty xix). Early ecocriticism was greatly influenced by deep ecology, which is frequently linked to the value of wild and rural places, self-sufficiency, a sense of place, local knowledge, and occasionally an alternative spirituality (Heise 167). Heise further says:

Ecological issues are situated at a complex intersection of politics, economy, technology, and culture; envisioning them in their global implications requires an engagement with a variety of theoretical approaches to globalization, especially for ecocritics, those that focus on its cultural dimensions. With such a theoretical framework to link together the pieces of its international and interdisciplinary mosaic, ecocriticism promises to become one of the most intellectually exciting and politically urgent ventures in current literary and cultural studies. (173)

There were arguments as to what would be the precise name of environmentally conscious criticism. The term *ecocriticism* is liked by some scholars because it is short. Moreover, they prefer *eco* to *enviro* because ecocriticism analyzes the relationship between human culture and the physical world. Connotatively *enviro* is anthropocentric and dualistic. So it gives us the impression that humans are at the centre and surrounded by none but the environment. On the other hand, *eco*, Glotfelty observes, “implies interdependent communities, integrated systems, and strong connections among constituent parts” (123). An ecocritical study tries to address the connection

between the domination, pollution and threatened destruction of the planet and the oppression of human beings. Most ecocritical work demonstrates the same objective: “the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequences of human actions are damaging the planet’s basic life support systems.... Either we change our ways or face global catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse” (Glotfelty 123).

Considering the emergence and evolution of the ecocritical concepts, it becomes evident that there are two waves of ecocriticism: the first wave and the second wave. The first wave focuses on romanticizing nature while, in the second wave of ecocriticism, a range of issues have been taken into consideration. Environmental justice is one of the most important issues of the latter wave of eco-criticism. Here Robert D. Bullard argues that issues like race, class, gender, colonialism and sexual preference have to be brought under the purview of ecocriticism. While the first wave of ecocritics pays much attention to local and place, the second wave of ecocritics focuses on global issues. Ken Hiltner says, “It seems likely that future ecocriticism will move in the direction second-wave critics are now charting, rather than looking back in a sentimental way to overly romanticized accounts of the environment” (133). The contribution of the environmental justice movement to ecocriticism is immense because literary critics now explore issues like gender, class, race and colonialism (133).

Postcolonial ecocriticism is also known as ‘Green post-colonialism.’ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in their paper called *Green Post-colonialism*, regard the environment as “The incursion of European into other areas of the world from the fifteenth century onwards catastrophically resulted in genocide or the dispossession and marginalization of indigenous people across the globe. It also caused drastic changes in extra-European temperature as well as tropical environments.” Huggan

and Tiffin further showed that under this European colonial rule ‘the invaded, conquered and settled territories’ faced severe environmental disaster causing widespread damage to the ecosystem. They exploited the land of these areas for their own benefit and imperial profit. Soil lost fertility and the worst case was Shahara, which turned into a desert. The natives of these regions have soon become dispossessed facing poverty and starvation. So ‘the original accommodated relations between environment, humans and animals were fractured, sometimes beyond repair’ (Huggan and Tiffin).

One of the major functions of green post-colonialism or postcolonial ecocriticism is to counter Western ideologies of development. So, as an emergent field, postcolonial ecocriticism is trying to provide sustainable alternatives to Western ideologies of development. Many radical Third-World critics tend to look at this development as little more than a disguised form of neo-colonialism, a massive instrument to satisfy the economic and political interests of the West (Huggan and Tiffin 29). After analyzing several critiques Huggan and Tiffin infer that development is a myth promulgated by the West. Under the pretext of supporting modernization, they are actually enhancing the gap (social, political, economic) between the First and Third Worlds.

The gendered nature of environmental concerns brings us to ecofeminism, which is equally applicable to Ghosh. According to cultural ecofeminism, “there is an innate connection between women and nature. By positing an inherent tendency of women to be attuned to nature - to care for it, to recognize their interrelationship with it - cultural ecofeminists recognize the value of actions and characteristics typically devalued by the dominant (patriarchal) culture” (Vakoch 4). In *Sea of Poppies*, Ghosh suggests programs for reviewing and challenging cultural tendencies that oppress women and their nonhuman nature. The fertile land of Bihar and Bengal is denuded by

the cultivation of cash crops like opium, making the soil unfit for producing other necessary crops. Women too, are subjugated to the extent of losing their identity.

Anthropologist Sherry B. Ortner finds that the subordination of women by men is universal. She argues that the pan-cultural oppression of women is the result of the tendency of pan-cultural identification of women with nonhuman nature. “Woman’s body,” Ortner shows, “seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life” (Ortner 75). However, “the male... lacking natural creative functions, must (or has the opportunity to) assert his creativity externally, ‘artificially’, through the medium of technology and symbols. In so doing he creates relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishable human beings” (Ortner 43). So, according to the philosophy of patriarchy, men represent privileged, non-animal culture while women represent the lower order-nature.

These man-nature dynamics is played out against larger background that we now call Anthropocene. It is a proposed geological epoch that marks the significant impact of human activities on Earth’s geology and ecosystems. The term “Anthropocene” combines "anthropo-" (meaning human) with "-cene" (a suffix denoting a geological time span). The concept suggests that human activities, such as industrialization, urbanization, agriculture, and resource extraction, have become the dominant forces shaping our planet's environment. These activities have led to widespread changes in landscapes, biodiversity, climate, and the chemistry of the atmosphere and oceans. The Anthropocene is not yet formally recognized as a geological epoch by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which oversees the formalization of Earth’s time scale (“Working Group on Anthropocene”). However, many scientists argue that the profound and enduring impacts of human activities warrant the recognition of this new epoch. The exact start date of the Anthropocene is still debated but could be traced back to the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th

century when human impacts on the environment intensified dramatically. The concept of the Anthropocene underscores the need for sustainable practices and global cooperation to mitigate further environmental degradation and preserve Earth's ecosystems for future generations. Paul J. Crutzen who proposes the name of Anthropocene to the current geological epoch says:

For the past three centuries, the effects of humans on the global environment have escalated. Because of these anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, global climate may depart significantly from natural behavior for many millennia to come. It seems appropriate to assign the term “Anthropocene” to the present ...human-dominated, geological epoch supplementing the Holocene-the warm period of the past 10-12 millennia. The Anthropocene could be said to have started in the latter part of the eighteenth century when analyses of air trapped in polar ice showed the beginning of growing global concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane. This date also happens to coincide with James Watt’s design of the steam engine in 1784. (Crutzen 23)

Ghosh engages deeply with themes related to the Anthropocene in his recent fiction titled *Gun Island*, published in 2019. In this novel, Ghosh weaves a narrative that reflects on the impact of climate change and human activities on the natural world. The novel explores the interconnectedness of human lives and the environment, delving into topics such as migration, environmental degradation, and the cultural and historical dimensions of our changing planet. Ghosh's other narratives also resonate with the concept of the Anthropocene. Through his fiction, Ghosh explores how human activities have fundamentally changed the planet's natural processes, leading to widespread environmental disruptions. His focus on the Anthropocene shows the urgent need for collective action to mitigate ecological damage and adapt to changing environmental realities.

Ghosh gives agency to environment much like the mythical anthropomorphism. Nature often transcends the traditional role as a literary background and instead appears as a powerful character or metaphor with deep significance. The successful application of anthropomorphism as a literary tool erases the boundaries between human and non-human entities and conveys deeper themes and metaphors within his narratives. The treatment of nature in Ghosh's novels demonstrates a deep engagement with ecological themes, human-nature relationships, and broader philosophical inquiries. The endowment of nature with human-like qualities and agency is, therefore, quite evident in Ghosh's fiction. The mangrove forests of Sundarbans or the Ganges river or even the storm itself takes on a persona of its own in novels like *The Hungry Tide* or *Gun Island*. Nature becomes a powerful but strange character with desire, intentions and responses. The storm, tide or wildlife of the Sundarbans emerge as an agent with unpredictable strength and consequences. Conversely, this anthropomorphism often focuses on the interrelationship between humans and nature, emphasizing the latter's resilience and vulnerability in the face of human actions.

Anthropomorphism in Ghosh's novels goes beyond nature and acts as a powerful metaphor for human relationships and social dynamics. In *Sea of Poppies*, for example, the ship Ibis is a metaphor for a cocoon, a safe haven for people of all classes, castes and creeds. It is the embodiment of diverse human experiences and connections. In the same novel, Ghosh shows how *Kalapani* becomes a metaphor for social and religious taboos restricting the local inhabitants from crossing the ocean for any purpose whatsoever.

The treatment of human and nonhuman agents as active involved in a symbiotic relationship is a reminder of Bruno Latour who forwarded this concept of Actor-Network Theory (ANT)

M. Callon, drawing on Latour, describes that all entities, both human and nonhuman, engage in dynamic networks of relationships inside and between the social and natural worlds, with no

elements existing outside of these networks (63). Defined as actors equal to humans, ANT alters a lot of conventional wisdom. In practical terms, this argument offers a fresh interpretation of the theory. A theoretical and methodological approach to social theory known as actor-network theory (ANT) holds that all that occurs in the social and natural worlds is made up of dynamic networks of relationships. It asserts that there is nothing outside of those connections. Since every aspect of a social situation is equal, there are no outside social forces influencing the current interactions between network members. As a result, it is believed that in constructing social circumstances, objects, concepts, procedures, and any other pertinent elements are just as significant as people.

Ghosh shows how the non-humans exert power and thus wield agency in his fiction. If we look at his novels through the lens of ANT we can see the apocalyptic power of the storm or wildfire in *The Hungry Tide* or *Gun Island* ravaging the earth within a short spell of time. In *The Hungry Tide* water, tides, and winds—which violently merged in the novel's last storm—all point to an agency whose destructive might has been dangerously disregarded by the post-industrial West. But such natural agency could never be disregarded in the history of the Sundarbans (Huggan and Tiffin 207).

Ghosh remains extremely conscious of the rise of capitalism in tandem with industrialization and colonization. He critiques the commercialization of nature and its consequences. The Capitalocene—a term highlighting capitalism's role in environmental degradation (Moore 594) – is useful in understanding the environmental exploitation that particularly impacts the vulnerable and disadvantaged communities. By foregrounding issues of ecological justice and socio-economic inequities, Ghosh's narratives challenge readers to confront the interplay between capitalism, environmental degradation, and human vulnerability.

Ghosh's empowerment of natural as active agents can be deemed as fantastic, if not supernatural. The juxtaposition of the natural and the supernatural verges on being magic realism. However, he seems reluctant to be bracketed with magic realism as his vocation is much more urgent.

In *The Great Derangement*, for instance, Ghosh shows his surprise by saying "Are the currents of global warming too wild to be navigated in the accustomed burques of narration?" (12). Ghosh's response comes immediately "...we have entered a time when the wild has become the norm" (12). Amitav Ghosh's application of magic realism in his current novels enriches the narrative by integrating layers of meaning and enhancing the reader's engagement with historical and cultural contexts. This technique reflects his innovative approach to storytelling, blending the extraordinary with everyday in compelling and thought-provoking ways. Magic realism is a literary genre that blends realistic settings with magical or fantastical elements, often treating these elements as normal or unremarkable within the narrative world. Ghosh's use of magic realism is subtle yet pervasive, enhancing the storytelling and reflecting the cultural and historical contexts of his narratives. By introducing snakes, dolphins, spiders, and various other insects and animals in *Gun Island* Ghosh seems to blend fantasy or magic with realism. Ghosh explores historical contexts, creating realistic settings that reflect the socio-political landscape of the times. Within this framework, he introduces magical or supernatural elements that are seamlessly integrated into the narrative. Storm is a common trope in almost all his novels evoking the feeling of supernatural or magical. Ghosh draws upon cultural mythologies, folktales, and spiritual beliefs to infuse his narratives with a sense of mysticism. The legend of Bonbibi and Manasa Devi creates a sense of awe and wonder and merges the narrative with everyday normal events. Characters in Ghosh's novels often encounter events that defy conventional explanations or border on the supernatural. Yet, these occurrences are presented matter-of-factly, contributing to a sense of wonder without

disrupting the overall realism of the story. Magical elements in Ghosh's novels frequently serve as symbols or allegories, reflecting deeper themes or societal issues. They invite readers to contemplate broader questions about identity, power, and the human condition. However, Ghosh himself is reluctant to categorize his fiction as instances of magic realism or surrealism. Ghosh claims that there have been “movements which celebrated the unheard-of or improbable” (32). He also adds that surreal and magical realism are full of events without connection with probability. He asserts:

However, there is an important difference between the weather events we are now experiencing and those that occur in surrealist and magical realist novels: improbable though they might be, these events are neither surreal nor magical. These highly improbable occurrences are overwhelmingly, urgently, and astoundingly real. The ethical difficulties that might arise in treating them as magical or metaphorical or allegorical are obvious perhaps. But there is another reason why, from the writer's point of view, it would serve no purpose to approach them in that way: because to treat them as magical or surreal would be to rob them of precisely the quality that makes them so urgently compelling—which is that they are actually happening on this earth, at this time. (32)

So, Ghosh is not willing to consider his fiction as magical realism as it deprives the narrative of its real urgency, an attention to improbabilities, which is, in fact, realism.

1.4 Locating Ghosh as an Ecosource

Ghosh, exploring themes of culture, politics, history, and the environment in fiction, has, in reality, managed to draw significant attention within the literary canon of ecocriticism. His contributions

to social justice discourse and environmental literature have been widely accepted and analyzed by scholars and critics alike. Ghosh's fiction often interweaves ecological issues with broader socio-political aspects offering subtle thoughts on complex relationships between humans and the environment. His writings shed light on the intricate issues of colonialism, capitalism, globalization, and climate change and illustrate their impact on both human societies and natural landscapes underpinning the intersectionality of ecological and social systems.

One of the best-loved works of Ghosh is *The Ibis Trilogy*, consisting of *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015). Set against the background of the 19th-century Opium Wars, this epic saga unveils the ecological consequences of colonial exploitation, particularly the exploitation of natural resources like opium which results in environmental degradation.

As far as environmental literature is concerned, Ghosh's fiction is fraught with vivid descriptions of ecosystems, natural landscapes and the effect of human activity on the environment. His recently published novels explore how climate changes intertwine with social, political and economic factors. which affect the lives of the individuals and communities. One of the significant works in this regard is *The Hungry Tide* which draws immense public attention. Set in the backdrop of Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest wrestling with the effects of climate change, rising sea levels, and deforestation. Through his exquisite storytelling, Ghosh draws attention to the subtle relationship between humans and nature, focusing on the vulnerability of both.

Moreover, Ghosh's involvement in social justice discourse is evident in his investigation of power dynamics, imperialism and subaltern voices. Ghosh's novels like *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire* expose injustices, exploitation of labor, displacement of communities and the legacy of colonialism in shaping contemporary societies. Ghosh engages *The Hungry Tide* and

Gun Island in illustrating the struggle and sufferings of the marginalized community. The plight of the womenfolk gets a vivid expression in *Sea of Poppies* and *The Hungry Tide*. *Gun Island* unfolds the uncanny environment as a result of anthropogenic activities. The bleak picture of the migration of humans and nonhumans is also depicted in this novel.

In his fiction, Ghosh shows exquisite dexterity in blending intricate storytelling skills with unique themes. This empowers him to revive the folklore of the seventeenth century like Bonbibí and Manasa Devi and associate these storytelling techniques with themes like greed, economic gain, trading migration, and defiance. Critics and scholars hold in high esteem his commitment to addressing issues like climate change, global warming, and social inequality. His unique style and perspective as a South Asian writer add richness and depth to the understanding of environmental degradation in the literary landscape. So Ghosh's contributions to environmental literature and social justice discourse have left an enduring influence in the literary arena. His thought-provoking narratives invite attention to the issue of interconnectedness between human society and the natural world.

Ghosh's historical narratives are frequently entwined with social injustice and environmental destruction issues. The untold stories of the past get new momentum through his fiction indicating the origin and expansion of the themes like colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. Ghosh fictionalizes the destructive effect of opium cultivation, trading, exporting and warfare on the lives and environment. Ghosh draws our attention to the sufferings of the people who used to work in the opium factories, migrated on Ibis to a distant land as indentured laborers, or accepted the hegemony of the colonial rulers. He examines the intricate interactions that exist between people and the natural world, emphasizing how social, political and economic variables interact with environmental changes. Novels by Ghosh, like *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* explore how

vulnerable groups, especially those in the areas like the Sundarbans, are affected by climate change.

In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh expresses his resentment by asserting:

There are surely very few writers today who are oblivious to the current disturbances in climate systems the world over. Yet, it is a striking fact that when novelists do choose to write about climate change it is almost always outside of fiction. A case in point is the work of Arundhati Roy: not only is she one of the finest prose stylists of our time, she is passionate and deeply informed about climate change. Yet all her writings on these subjects are in various forms of non-fiction. (14)

Ghosh thus points out the dilemma of dealing with climate issues. As a South Asian writer, he both inherits and departs from the Romantic link with nature; such as in Rabindranath Tagore or Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay. The insights that his predecessors had about nature are useful in becoming sensitive to one's surrounding, but to be a climate activist informed by ecocriticism, Ghosh knows that he needs to examine the role of capitalism and global markets leading to environmental degradation and social inequality.

Ghosh intertwines complex environmental issues seamlessly into his recent fiction. His novels explore themes such as deforestation, pollution, and loss of biodiversity and integrate these concerns deeply into his narrative fabric. His novels often situate environmental challenges within larger global and historical contexts. In *Gun Island*, he associates environmental degradation and deforestation with human migrations, globalization and climate change. By inserting ecological issues within broader historical narratives Ghosh exposes the deep interconnectedness between human activities and environmental consequences.

Ghosh's narratives are enriched by local standpoints and indigenous knowledge about nature and the environment. For instance, in *The Hungry Tide*, he portrays the complex relationship between communities and their natural habitat, focusing on how indigenous knowledge and practices can offer sustainable solutions to ecological problems. In addition, his storytelling style blends elements of history, anthropology, fiction, and science creating a multidisciplinary approach to ecological issues. In *The Great Derangement*, he delves deep into the cultural dimensions of climate change critiquing traditional narratives of progress and development. The ecocritical lens allows Ghosh to explore environmental challenges from multidisciplinary perspectives.

Ghosh often employs elements of magic realism or uncanny occurrences in his fiction to project the surreal nature of environmental crises. In his novels like *The Hungry Tide*, *Flood of Fire*, and *Gun Island*, natural disasters like storms become characters symbolizing the disruptive forces of human-induced climate change. By equipping his fiction with magic realism, Ghosh conveys a strong message to his readers about the agency wielded by non-humans.

So, the fiction of Amitav Ghosh explores the nuances of environmental issues and poses to become the advocate for ecological awareness and activism. By depicting characters confronting environmental disasters or ecological transformations, he invites readers to be conscious of their role in shaping a sustainable world. This urge is integrated into the narrative fabric, promoting a deeper emotional engagement with environmental challenges.

Amitav Ghosh's fiction navigates environmental issues with a unique storytelling style that blends historical insight, local knowledge, interdisciplinary aspects, social equity, and advocacy. By embedding environmental issues with richly layered narratives, Ghosh urges readers to confront the immediate realities of deforestation, pollution, and biodiversity loss while offering a thin ray of hope and resilience amidst environmental catastrophes.

This thesis focuses on Ghosh's novels written in the twenty-first century, namely *The Hungry Tide*, *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, *Flood of Fire*, and *The Gun Island*, because in these novels Ghosh explores themes related to human impact on the natural world, climate change, sustainability, and environmental degradation. First, *The Hungry Tide*, which was written in the year 2004, is set in the Sundarbans, a region heavily affected by climate change, where rising sea levels and human interventions threaten both the local community and the ecosystem. The narrative explores the themes of human nature interactions, conservation, the impact of climate change on livelihood, powerplay and hegemony of the colonial and neocolonial agencies, and social discrimination. Second, the three novels such as *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire* which form *The Ibis Trilogy* focus on not only the historical narratives about opium cultivation, production, trade and finally opium wars but also environmental degradation as a result of these activities. These novels unveil the exploitation of natural resources, including forests and landscapes in the name of market economy, capitalism, free trade and globalization during the colonial period which left serious repercussions in the modern days.

Third, *Gun Island* interweaves myth, history and current issues, like loss of biodiversity and climate change. The novel explores environmental degradation, displacement, and adaptation in the wake of the climate crisis.

All these novels demonstrate Ghosh's nuanced exploration of the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world, shedding light on environmental challenges and suggesting a more sustainable approach to development. The reason why the earlier novels of Ghosh like *Circle of Reason*, *Calcutta Chromosome*, *Glass Palace* and *Shadow Lines* are excluded from the discussion is that these novels focus more on socio-political and anthropological issues than on environmental

degradation and planetary crises. They often explore different aspects of history, culture and human experiences that do not directly concern climate change and ecological problems. Ghosh has explored a wide range of topics in his writing, always bridging the traditional lines between anthropology and art, such as travel and diaspora, history and memory, political conflict and collective brutality, love and grief. His recent concentration on global warming, one of the most pressing concerns facing the modern world, has broadened his area of study (Choudhury 1). From that perspective, his earlier novels tend to be more emotional and local rather than global and are not based on that mature observation of the realistic environmental problems encountered by the present world. Conversely, his recent novels usher in a new horizon in literature with the introduction of cli-fi or climate fiction. He can aptly demonstrate the niceties of the interrelationship between humans and nature and the intersectionality of social and environmental justice in these novels. This is where his magic realism or uncanniness draws more public attention than ever before. As far as ecological issues are concerned, Ghosh's recent works offer a rich tapestry of narratives that involve urgent issues of our times. Each novel invites its readers to ponder our responsibilities towards the environment and the impact of our actions on the natural world. In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh writes:

But when it came to translating these perceptions into the medium of my imaginative life—into fiction, that is—I found myself confronting challenges of a wholly different order from those that I had dealt with in my earlier work. Back then, those challenges seemed to be particular to the book I was writing, *The Hungry Tide*; but now, many years later, at a moment when the accelerating impacts of global warming have begun to threaten the very existence of low-lying areas like the Sundarbans, it seems to me that those problems have far wider implications. I have come to recognize that the challenges that climate change

poses for the contemporary writer, although specific in some respects, are also products of something broader and older; that they derive ultimately from the grid of literary forms and conventions that came to shape the narrative imagination in precisely that period when the accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere was rewriting the destiny of the earth. (11-12)

Ghosh's integration of history, culture, politics, and environmental themes offers a nuanced critique of society's complex relationship with the environment. Through his storytelling, he prompts readers to reflect on the deep-rooted socio-political forces that shape our environmental realities and advocates for more holistic and sustainable approaches to our interactions with nature.

Ghosh's ecocritical perspective significantly shapes the motivations, actions, and relationships of his characters with their surroundings in his novels. Through his ecological lens, Ghosh imbues his characters with deep connections to nature, influencing their choices, values, and interactions within their environments. This thematic approach not only enriches the narrative but also underscores the intricate interplay between human lives and the natural world in Ghosh's storytelling.

Amitav Ghosh wrote his novel *The Hungry Tide* in the backdrop of beautiful sights and sounds of the Sundarbans, “a terrain where the boundaries between land and water are always mutating, always unpredictable” (18). Huggan and Tiffin wrote, “*The Hungry Tide* offers a superb evocation of the region: of the sights, smells and sounds of the great delta beyond Kolkata, and of the ways in which the lives of the people who live there are attuned to its ever-shifting rhythms and moods” (204). Ghosh portrays the setting as a beautiful landscape where the sea, the river, the land, the natives, and the animals all coexist in a state of harmony and conflict. What is significant about Ghosh is that he applies perfect sensitivity and balance in bringing together history, myth, culture, and politics on the same canvas.

The novel explores the intricate connections between humans and nature, focusing on how characters interact with and are shaped by their environment. The story revolves around Piya Roy, a marine biologist researching rare river dolphins, and her encounters with locals like Fokir and his wife Moyna, as well as the enigmatic Nirmal, whose diary entries reveal past struggles with conservation efforts in the region.

The Hungry Tide is a compelling work of fiction that engages ecological themes in subtle ways. Ghosh portrays the Sundarbans as a dynamic and powerful force that influences the lives and decisions of its inhabitants. The characters' relationships with the natural world highlight themes of harmony, conflict, and coexistence. The lives of Fokir, Moyna, and Kusum are attuned to the ebb and flow of the tide country. On the other hand, to Delhi-based Kanai and Indian American biologist Piya, the life and culture of Sundarbans offer a shocking experience. Huggan and Tiffin opine, "While Ghosh is sympathetic towards Piya, he is also implicitly critical of her, as he is of Kanai, for their shared tendency to dismiss local/social/ecological knowledge" (204). Piya encounters epistemological differences as her academic learning at a US university does not go with her practical experience on Irrawaddy dolphins in the Tide country. Here the local knowledge of Fokir becomes more important than the intricacies of Western knowledge politics. When Piya notices a difference between her views and the scientific understanding regarding the Orcaella dolphins, which are classified as an endangered species, her perspective on the world is completely altered. She is aware that in a matter of minutes, she will commit her whole professional career to studying these dolphins, whose behavior defies models created in the US American life sciences (Horatschek 3). The novel underscores the vulnerability of the Sundarbans' ecosystem to human activities and climate change. The recurring themes of "the hungry tide" and "storm" symbolize the unpredictable and relentless nature of this environment. Ghosh intertwines colonial history

with ecological concerns, reflecting on how historical power dynamics have shaped the environment and affected local communities. Through Nirmal's diary, the novel explores the tensions between conservation efforts and economic development. It questions whether the preservation of nature can coexist with human progress.

Ghosh's vivid descriptions of the Sundarbans immerse readers in its sights, sounds, and textures, evoking a sense of the region's ecological complexity. The recurring motifs like the river dolphins, the tide, and the mangroves serve as symbolic representations of larger ecological and existential themes. The novel weaves together multiple narratives and perspectives, mirroring the interconnectedness of ecological systems. Each character's story reflects a different facet of human-nature relationships. Ghosh's blend of storytelling and ecological critique invites readers to contemplate the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world, ultimately advocating for a more sustainable and harmonious coexistence. The unique storytelling technique interweaves with the main narrative introducing the readers to the legend of Bonbibi who has been venerated among the natives irrespective of caste and creed for ages not only as a symbol of their social unity and protection but also as a deity for the preservation, peaceful coexistence and sanctity of the wilderness. Ghosh's narrative subtly educates readers about the ecological significance of the Sundarbans and the urgent need for environmental conservation.

From an ecocritical standpoint, *The Hungry Tide* invites readers to reconsider human perceptions of nature and our responsibilities towards the environment. It challenges conventional narratives of progress and development by highlighting the ecological consequences of human actions. The novel prompts reflection on how literature can inspire ecological awareness and activism.

The Hungry Tide highlights the problems and issues of wilderness conservation and its related social costs in areas populated by the socially and economically underprivileged both in the past

and the present. The post-colonial Sundarbans witnessed growing human mobility, deteriorating bio-diversity and recognition and marketing of the uniqueness of the Sundarbans. The novel reveals how ecological concerns and conservation efforts served as mere disguises to camouflage the pursuit of political ends. Ghosh criticizes the environmental groups who in the name of preserving the wildlife threaten the existence of the settlers. To Ghosh, there is no alternative to peaceful coexistence. He further believes that the fate and fortune of the indigenous people or the settlers should be decided by them and nobody should intervene in the harmonious cohabitation with nature and animals.

Now the conflict is between pseudo conservation of the ecosystem and the human need for simple survival. This battle is brewed up by two groups - the environment conservation group and the human rights group who regulate their movements living in a technologically advanced Western world and who have barely anything to do with either the environment or with humanity. Here comes the emergence of neo-colonialists who dominate over the lives of this ecosystem sending the human, animal and nature within this system to play the role of “other”. So the “other” becomes powerless and voiceless. They do not have the power or the voice to determine their own future. They are marginalized and subjugated for the petty interests of the so-called environmental and human rights groups. The crux of the matter is the native indigenous people who in their desperate struggle for survival are alleged to destroy the non-replaceable ecosystems. Pramod Nayar, for instance, chooses to focus on the human-rights aspect which is evident in the title of his paper “The Postcolonial Uncanny: The Politics of Dispossession in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” where he shows that the dispossessed population belongs to nowhere. These populations have been deprived of their habitat as a result of the colonial legacy. So these people are always on the move for a permanent settlement. By ‘uncanny’ Nayar connotes a “perception of a space where the

perceiver finds himself simultaneously “at home” and “not at home”, (the) experience of double perception of any space which is at once familiar and strange, safe and threatening, “mine” and “not mine” (89). Here comes the politics of the environmentalist group who are making decisions and policies staying far away from the actual place, who cannot have a true understanding of the ‘at home’ position. These people through the lens of Western knowledge set the hypothesis that the indigenous people who are not in close contact with their natural environment are destroying the environment because of their lack of knowledge. So their over-exploitation of nature causes environmental catastrophe. Conversely, Hoogan and Tiffin are in favor of “the sensible policy of no conservation without local consultation and participation” (5). They identify the European incursion as “both the prime cause and continuing consequence of environmental change incurred through the post-1492 European diasporic intrusions” (1). They further show that the growing concern in the developed countries for the declining environment during the 19th and 20th centuries resulted in a “shift in emphasis from anthropocentric to environment-based (ecocentric) philosophies and practices” to “preserve non-human animal and plant species, and what ‘pristine’ environments remained” (3). Ironically this shift causes disaster for the native or voiceless population who are farther driven to the periphery, occupying a position much below animals and plants in the hierarchical ladder.

Amitav Ghosh’s multi-layered novel *Hungry Tide* is based upon a vital issue involving human-animal priorities. This has become an increasingly popular debate among postcolonial and environmental critics. These critics are conscious of the dilemma of conserving the endangered ecosystems and animals and safeguarding the equally vulnerable local (subaltern) people. The situation becomes of grave concern for both human and environmental demand prioritization. Even independence cannot protect the rights of the dispossessed population. On the other hand, there

are plenty of incidents throughout the world where the subaltern people become the target of their own government who in collaboration with international agencies evict these people from their land to materialize their petty self-interest. In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism Literature, Animals, Environment* Huggan and Tiffin show that “Whether or not such collusion against one’s own nationals occurs with the cooperation of international corporations, it is often precisely those animals and humans allegedly being protected who are the first to suffer from its destructive effects” (203).

Similarly, Ghosh shows the plight and persecution of the marginalized population in his first book of the Ibis trilogy, *Sea of Poppies*, where the socio-cultural and political lives of the indigenous people intersect with the natural world.

The events of *Sea of Poppies* take place in India in 1838, during the height of British colonial rule. The effects of colonialism on the setting and the lives of the characters are examined in the narrative. The plot centers on people from various backgrounds who cross paths throughout their lives while traveling to Mauritius on the ship Ibis.

The novel demonstrates the detrimental ecological impacts of the opium trade, a major facet of the British Empire in India, from an ecocritical perspective. Traditional agricultural methods and local ecosystems are harmed by the overseas shipment of opium. This disturbance serves as a symbol of the larger environmental damage and disappearance of indigenous knowledge brought about by colonialism.

The characters in *Sea of Poppies* represent different viewpoints on ecology. Certain individuals, such as the crew of the ship, have a strong connection with the environment due to their familiarity with the sea and its rhythms. Others, like the colonial traders and administrators, made use of

nature for financial gain without considering the long-term effects. Despite human exploitation, Ghosh depicts the beauty and fragility of the natural world through his evocative portrayals of landscapes and seascapes. The text invites readers to reflect on the ethical implications of environmental degradation and colonialism.

In general, *Sea of Poppies* offers a sophisticated examination of how colonialism affects human-nature relationships by fusing themes of power, identity, and ecology. The significance of taking environmental viewpoints into account within the framework of historical and cultural narratives is highlighted by an ecocritical reading of the book.

Ghosh's novel can be seen as critiquing the environmental consequences of colonial exploitation and capitalist ventures. The opium trade is shown as a destructive force that not only exploits human labor but also ravages the environment. The thesis examines how Ghosh highlights the ecological costs of imperial ambitions and global capitalism. The novel also explores how literature represents cultural and ecological hybridity—the blending of different cultures and ecosystems. *Sea of Poppies* portrays a world where cultural boundaries are blurred, and ecological systems are transformed by human activities. The thesis analyzes how Ghosh's narrative reflects the interconnectedness of diverse cultures and environments.

The application of the ecocritical lens to Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* provides a deeper understanding of how the novel engages with environmental themes, critiques the historical exploitation of nature, and explores the complex relationships between humans and the natural world in the context of colonialism and globalization.

River of Smoke by Amitav Ghosh is a novel that can be critically analyzed through an ecocritical lens, focusing on its portrayal of human interactions with the environment, particularly in relation

to the historical context of the opium trade in the 19th century. Kanika Batra clarifies it in her article titled “City Botany: Reading Urban Ecologies in China through Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke*”:

Amitav Ghosh’s second novel in the Ibis trilogy about the opium trade to China in the early nineteenth century is also a sustained meditation on the economics of botany. The cultivation of poppy flowers and the processing of seeds into opium in India and its sale in China by British, American, and Indian traders is the most obvious aspect of economic botany. The secondary narrative of the search for an elusive flower from China, the golden camellia, is another goal of the mercantile explorations undertaken by the British in the nineteenth century. (Batra 322)

The novel explores the effects of the opium trade on the environment, with a focus on the processing of poppies from India into opium for sale in China. Ghosh paints a striking picture of the enormous plantations and the damage that monoculture farming causes to the environment. The novel shows how colonial economic interests drove the exploitation of natural resources, which resulted in deforestation, degraded soil, and biodiversity loss.

Through its portrayal of the global opium trade, *River of Smoke* highlights the intricate connections between distant ecosystems. The story reveals how actions in one part of the world, like opium production in India, have far-reaching ecological repercussions in another, such as the social and environmental impacts in China. This interconnectedness underscores the fragility and complexity of natural systems.

The majority of this book takes place on the Canton islands, which are now known as Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Connecting the narratives of the Indian and British opium traders with the journey

of a horticulturist to this botanically rich area, the book provides a natural understanding of the effects of the opium trade on regional and global politics, the effects of opium smoking on the otherwise hardworking Chinese people, Chinese diplomacy, the prevailing British imperialism, the Chinese landscape, the Pearl River floating townships, Napoleon's banishment, horticulture, landscape painting, and a host of other topics. (Narayan 02)

In *River of Smoke*, characters are shown grappling with their dependency on natural resources and the ethics of exploiting nature for economic gain. The narrative exposes how human desires and ambitions often clash with environmental sustainability, resulting in profound consequences for both people and landscapes. The novel's historical setting invites reflection on contemporary environmental issues. By examining the environmental costs of 19th-century globalization and capitalism, *River of Smoke* prompts readers to draw parallels with present-day ecological challenges, such as the impacts of international trade, industrial agriculture, and resource extraction on ecosystems and communities.

Amitav Ghosh weaves ecocritical themes into the fabric of his narrative, using vivid descriptions of landscapes and natural settings to underscore the environmental stakes of historical events. Through the characters' interactions with their surroundings and the broader ecological context, the novel invites readers to reconsider conventional narratives of progress and development.

River of Smoke can be seen as a rich text for ecocritical analysis, offering insights into historical environmental degradation driven by human actions. The novel encourages readers to reflect on the enduring relevance of these themes in the context of contemporary global environmental challenges.

Flood of Fire is the last book in Amitav Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy, a novel that delves into topics of colonialism, globalization, and the ecological effects of past events. To give an ecocritical synopsis of “Flood of Fire,” we can look at how Ghosh depicts the interaction between the environment and humankind in the framework of the Opium Wars and British colonial expansion.

British colonialism in the 19th century had a profound impact on the ecosystem, as Ghosh's story illustrates. The Opium Wars show how imperial powers destroyed local ecosystems and took advantage of natural resources in order to further their own financial interests. Because it results in the exploitation of indigenous tribes and the degradation of natural environments, the opium trade, which is key to the story, is portrayed as a destructive force both socially and ecologically.

To illustrate the fragility and beauty of the natural world, Ghosh frequently uses vivid ecological imagery. He emphasizes how humans and their surroundings are intertwined through his in-depth descriptions of landscapes, vegetation, and wildlife. This graphic image aims to draw attention to how human activity affects ecosystems and how crucial it is to maintain ecological equilibrium.

Understanding Ghosh's ecological themes can be gained by looking at how his characters engage with the natural world. Characters' perspectives on the environment can change depending on their experiences, social standing, or cultural background. Characters who are indigenous or have a strong connection to the land, for example, may have a greater respect for nature than colonists who see landscapes only as resources to be exploited. Agrawal says, “The novel *Flood of Fire* is based on the forgotten opium war between British India and China. Colonial India’s largest export was opium and the largest importer of opium was China. The main character of the novel, Neel Rattan Halder, finds himself in the translation office of Commissioner Lin, one of the main persons in China who precipitated the Opium War (11).

Ghosh's narrative subtly critiques the industrialization and technological advancements associated with the colonial era. The influx of Western technology often leads to environmental degradation, as seen through deforestation, pollution, and the disruption of traditional agricultural practices. This critique invites readers to reflect on the long-term consequences of rapid industrial growth on both human societies and the natural world.

An ecocritical reading of *Flood of Fire* reveals Amitav Ghosh's nuanced exploration of environmental themes within the historical context of British colonial expansion. By intertwining human narratives with ecological concerns, Ghosh prompts readers to reflect on the enduring ecological legacy of imperialism and the imperative of sustainable relationships between humans and the natural world.

Gun Island by Amitav Ghosh is a novel that intertwines environmental themes with the complexities of human relationships and history. To provide an ecocritical overview of the novel, we can delve into several key aspects:

The novel traverses landscapes ranging from the Sunderbans in India to Venice and Los Angeles. Each setting is intricately described, highlighting its ecological significance. The Sunderbans, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, plays a central role, showcasing its fragile ecosystem and the impact of climate change on this unique environment.

Ghosh's narrative skillfully weaves in the theme of climate change and its repercussions on nature and human societies. The rising sea levels, erratic weather patterns, and disappearing habitats are portrayed vividly, reflecting the real-world consequences of environmental degradation. Through the protagonist's journey, the novel explores the evolving relationship between humans and nature.

The characters' lives are deeply influenced by environmental changes, underscoring the interconnectedness of ecosystems and human communities.

Ghosh emphasizes the theme of migration and refugee crisis recurrently in this novel underpinning that dislocation, relocation and settlement are some of the major challenges resulting from environmental degradation and socio-political instability. The spatiotemporal backdrop of the ecological migrants and political refugees in *Gun Island* is established by the environmental calamity “known as the Bhola cyclone” in mid-November 1970, as well as the recent arrival of “many more hungry mouths” and the “steady flow of refugees from East Pakistan” (De 106).

Ghosh incorporates historical and cultural dimensions into the narrative, connecting the present environmental crisis with broader historical trajectories. The novel reflects on how human activities, such as colonialism and globalization, have shaped landscapes and contributed to ecological imbalances. The novel integrates myths and folklore, emphasizing the cultural significance of nature and its preservation. Ghosh draws parallels between ancient stories and contemporary ecological challenges, highlighting the enduring relevance of these narratives in understanding our relationship with the natural world.

Ghosh employs literary techniques to symbolize environmental concerns. The *Gun Island* itself becomes a metaphor for the intersection of human narratives and ecological realities, suggesting the profound impact of human actions on the natural world. Amidst the bleak portrayal of environmental degradation, the novel also presents instances of activism and resilience. Characters strive to protect and preserve nature, offering a message of hope and the possibility of collective action against environmental crises.

In summary, *Gun Island* offers a nuanced ecocritical perspective by intertwining environmental issues with human experiences and historical contexts. Through its rich narrative and thematic layers, the novel underscores the urgent need for environmental awareness and collective responsibility in safeguarding our planet.

1.5 Chapter Outline

The argument, hypothesis, research questions, and main facets of the study are presented in the first chapter. Based on the literature evaluation, the second chapter attempts to investigate the research gap. Concern for non-humans is the main topic of the third chapter, which draws attention to the injustice done to biospheres and ecosystems, including plants, animals, and water bodies. The fourth chapter explores the human-nature dialogue seen in Ghosh's books by considering topics including women, children, settlers, migrants, and indentured laborers. Patriarchy, subaltern concerns, and the caste and class structure are highlighted too. The goal of the concluding chapter is to encourage critical thought regarding the study's conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review: Chronicle of the Climate Catastrophe

The current scholarships on Amitav Ghosh highlight in many ways his ecocritical engagement in literary texts. While there is existing scholarship on Ghosh's works from various literary perspectives, there is a gap in comprehensive comparative studies that focus exclusively on the environmental dimensions of his recent fiction. This involves a detailed analysis of how Ghosh's treatment of environmental themes evolves over his current narratives. This thesis broadly highlights environmental issues like human nature relationship, the representation of nature, the symbolism of nature in the narratives, environmental degradation, the impact of industrialization, consequences of consumerism, the influence of colonialism, the intersection between colonialism and environmental issues, examination of power dynamics in relation to nature, environmental racism or environmental imperialism, environmental justice, green postcolonialism, and ecofeminism in the novels taken into consideration for this thesis. Ghosh has fictionalized the historical facts and unveiled the unheard stories of the past. Through the storytelling technique, Ghosh has illustrated the systematic exploitation of the environment by the colonial masters for several centuries to satisfy their petty self-interest.

Ghosh tries to draw our attention to the fact that the exploitation of nature is not the outcome of the men's recent selfish act toward the road to development; rather it started as early as the colonial period to establish hegemonic supremacy and thus satisfy their greed to promote capitalism. Furthermore, it was not only the environment but also other non-human and marginal men and women who became victims of this capitalism. Ghosh's concern for the environment, climate, humans and nonhumans are analyzed in many recent articles. Many significant aspects regarding environmental degradation unfold from these discussions. These articles show that Ghosh's fiction

serves as a compelling exploration of the complexities of climate change, migration, and environmental justice. Ghosh's narratives underscore the imperative for multispecies cooperation and cross-cultural solidarity in confronting global environmental challenges, while also critiquing systemic inequalities perpetuated by historical legacies and contemporary economic structures. Through its nuanced portrayal of interconnected issues, the novels call for transformative action and collective responsibility in addressing the planetary-scale crisis of climate change. This chapter explores the epistemological gap between recent scholarship and this thesis by categorizing secondary materials in terms of themes and discussing theoretical debates and emerging trends, particularly in the context of postcolonial literature. This chapter also takes into account previous studies on Ghosh's ecological and social justice theme. A survey is done on the existing scholarship analyzing ecological, environmental justice, and sustainability themes in his fiction.

2.1 Intersection between Colonialism and Environmental Degradation

Caitlin Vandertop in her article "Opium Cities, Carbon Routes: World Ecological Prehistory in Amitav Ghosh's Hong Kong" unveils the British colonial city and its environmental vulnerabilities to contextualize Amitav Ghosh's notion of anthropogenic modernity as a "great derangement." This article interprets Ghosh's stories of magically altered landscapes, and the strange coincidences and unforeseen events they produce, as part of a "world-ecological" literary engagement with the changes in the British Empire's opium regime and its carbon-intensive infrastructures. It does this by highlighting how Ghosh's *Ibis Trilogy* (*Sea of Poppies* [2008], *River of Smoke* [2011], and *Flood of Fire* [2015]) highlights the appropriation of natural resources by financial markets. Typhoons, rising seas, and floods that threaten the metropolis can all be seen as narrative

premonitions of the capital's ecological constraints if the colonial creation of Hong Kong is an indication of the scope of these alterations (527).

2.2 Epistemic Hegemony

Gana Jayagopalan in “At the Interface of Colonial Knowing and Unknowing: A Critical Reading of the Golden Camellia in Amitav Ghosh’s *River of Smoke*” critically analyzes the fictional portrayal of colonial knowledge acquisition, assimilation, and transmission. The study emphasizes the cultural interchange of horticultural and botanical knowledge that occurred in the nineteenth century between Europe and China, as told by Ghosh. The article highlights the value of non-Eurocentric methods of knowledge preservation, which would otherwise be undermined by the brutality of utilitarian European epistemological paradigms. In this paper, it is shown how Ghosh portrays the Chinese as having succeeded in protecting the Golden Camellia, a rare flowering species in China, from being exploited by European naturalists' epistemic hegemony and the profit-driven logic of botanical expeditions. The paper maps Ghosh's fictional depiction of Chinese horticulturists utilizing botanical illustration to prevent Europeans from obtaining the Golden Camellia, using Pramod Nayar's imperial cosmopolitanism and Robert Proctor's agnotology as critical frames. The Chinese horticulturists in the novel stop European botanists and plant traders from usurping and profiting from the Golden Camellia by spreading the myth that the plant variety does not exist. The study also demonstrates how Ghosh's work contributes significantly to the body of work that highlights the South-South relationship in the South Asian literary imagination (350).

Goutam Karmakar and Rajendra Chetty in their article assert that Amitav Ghosh’s *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times* (2022) is an allegorical rendering of the repercussions of

environmental degradation and the annihilation of indigenous ecological knowledge. They assert that Ghosh in *The Living Mountain* deliberates on the ramifications of the discourses of colonialism and the Anthropocene, and depicts how those have been complicit in asserting a hegemonic Western episteme that has corroborated capitalist extraction and ecological commodification. This article examines Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* as highlighting the layered operation of colonial capitalism in disrupting ecological systems and marginalizing indigenous epistemologies. The article brings to the foreground that such capitalist subjugation becomes instrumental in unleashing "testimonial injustice" on indigenous knowledge systems, culminating in horrendous forms of epistemicide and ecocide. To counter such a pervasive objectification, Ghosh calls through this narrative for a "decolonial turn" that is attendant on "epistemic disobedience" and repudiates the dominant meaning-formations. This article finally argues that Ghosh elucidates the necessity of a collective epistemic responsibility that would discard the hegemonic capitalist perceptions of nature and ecology and celebrate their primacy and organic existence. It is only through the recuperation of indigenous knowledge and an epistemic re-centering that escalating environmental disasters can be checked and new forms of sustainable planetarity and planetary solidarities can be accomplished (1).

Goutam Karmakar and Rajendra Chetty in "Delinking the Capitalist Episteme: Empathy and the Decolonial Turn in Amitav Ghosh's *Junglenama*" show that the graphic verse *Jungle Nama: A Story of the Sundarbans* (2021) by Amitav Ghosh is a symbolic representation of the consequences of the capitalist episteme that condones anthropogenic activity, resource extraction, and ecological commodification. *Jungle Nama*, which takes place in the Sundarbans, the largest mangrove delta, depicts a conflict between the goddess Bon Bibi, who rules as the region's kind protector, and Dhona, an avaricious merchant who seeks to exploit and destroy the forest's resources. The essay

examines how the story explores the need to go above capitalistic ideas of accumulation, profit, and objectification of ecology and the non-human world through his condemnation of Dhona's avarice. This essay examines how Ghosh's work advocates for an epistemological revival by recovering the indigenous knowledge system that believes in the complex relationship between humans and the environment. The poem testifies to the pressing need to reject the dichotomous views propagated by Western modernity and institutionalized by capitalist endeavors and to cultivate critical thinking and cultural empathy as fundamental to the well-being of society. In doing so, the article argues that Ghosh's work supports a decolonial approach that affirms both epistemic disobedience and transcendence. Thus, in order to ensure planetary sustainability, it may be necessary to oppose the dominant exploitative motivations and support alternative decolonial epistemologies (105).

Saswat Samay Das, Ananya Roy Pratihari, and Dipra Sarkhael in "Anecdotes, Colonial History and Planetary: Revisiting Decolonial Grammar with Ghosh's *Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*" examine the ethics of planetary and decolonial grammar today in the context of *The Nutmeg's Curse* by Amitav Ghosh. The authors demonstrate how Ghosh, in contrast to the type of decolonial critique he had previously used in his earlier writings, establishes an anecdotal decoloniality. After that, they argue that only in the context of planetary thinking's disregard for the past, particularly as it has been cautiously reframed by Dipesh Chakrabarty, can such a form be comprehended and valued. Furthermore, the authors appreciate that Ghosh crafts this form in opposition to the daunting elitism of decolonial grammar. The authors' final point is that Ghosh offers the opportunity to liberate decolonial sensibility from the stifling confines of this grammar through such an exercise. (97)

Murshed Haider Chowdhury in “Amitav Ghosh’s Experimentation with Languages and Dialects in *Ibis Trilogy*” says that as a historical fiction, Amitav Ghosh's *Ibis Trilogy* depicts the nebulous opium trade between British India and China, leading up to a full-fledged war between England and China. Nonetheless, the early colonial period's political, social, commercial, and linguistic complexities are also explored in the three novels *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire*. In the context of the Opium War between the British Empire and China in 1839, this article explores how Amitav Ghosh experimented with at least 23 different languages and dialects throughout the over 1600 pages of his highly acclaimed trilogy, which took place against the backdrop of the vast Indian Ocean from Cape Town to Hong Kong (1).

2.3 Cross-cultural Solidarity in Combating Ecological Challenges

Tara Leverton in “Gender Dysphoria and Gendered Diaspora: Love, Sex, and Empire in Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*” shows that the representation of gender at sea, which warps dualistic ideas of home and economic realms of influence, is a major theme in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. The ship that serves as the focal point of Ghosh's book is first shown as a primarily masculine and heteronormative environment, save for the presence of a few Indian travelers who are traveling to Mauritius. Leverton opines that the social dynamics on board the *Ibis* shows that both passengers and crew are involved in a variety of attempts to utilize and express their gender and sexuality. For example, how crew members circumvent normative policing by dressing in gendered ways, creating environments that allow for gender and sexual fluidity. The transient, multicultural environment of the sailboat offers queer opportunities that are closed off on land by the dominant imperial impositions. Leverton argues that *Sea of Poppies* is concerned with the ways that love, sexuality, and gender effectively shape international politics and trade (33).

2.4 Symbolism of Nature, Nonhuman Agency and Anthropocene

Ursula Kluwick in “The global deluge: floods, diluvian imagery, and aquatic language in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* analyzes the flood figure in what is referred to as Anthropocene water fiction in order to reevaluate the possibilities of realism in the representation of climate change. Amitav Ghosh's nonfiction book *The Great Derangement* (2016) and his novels *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *Gun Island* (2019), which were released prior to and following *The Great Derangement*, respectively, are cited in this article. Kluwick shows that Anthropocene water fictions confront the limits of realism that Ghosh points out in *The Great Derangement* by constructing an aquatic language and diluvian imagery (64).

Edwin Gilson in his article “Planetary Los Angeles: Climate Realism and Transnational Narrative in Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island* (2019)” posits the argument that the fire-ravaged Los Angeles in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* functions as a lens through which one can view the planetary processes and continuities of the Anthropocene and climate change. Gilson demonstrates how Ghosh uses metaphor to depict the Earth as a single living entity characterized by environmental, ecological, and social change through identifying commonalities between the diverse places of his novel, especially L.A. and the Sundarbans delta in the Bay of Bengal. Because of this global narrative, Los Angeles is no longer a unique, confined area but rather a warning of planetary malaise. Gilson illustrates how the book demonstrates a modern realist style that opposes localized thinking and promotes global awareness. Furthermore, he argues that *Gun Island* breaks from the long tradition of Los Angeles disaster writing by implying that Ghosh's L.A. exposes planetary conditions rather than national fears, as has frequently been the case in such fiction (269).

Sundarbans is the tide country the contour of which is susceptible to changes with the ebb and flow of the water. Divya Anand in her article ‘Words on Water: Nature and Agency in Amitav

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* posits how Ghosh uses water as a motif and agent 'shaping not only the story but also the geography and history of the land' (23). Water has been used as an agent to change the social matrix of the Sundarbans. Also, water as an active participant takes a moral and ideological stand in resolving conflict between man and animals and exposes ecopolitical and ecosocial issues that 'dramatize the competing claims of human and nonhuman species for survival' (23). Water as a powerful symbol vivifies the struggle of the dispossessed and endangered wildlife in *The Hungry Tide*. According to Anand, Ghosh problematizes human-nature relations, the extra-discursive reality of nature that is both modified and transformed by humans and conflicts that exist between and within human groups in *The Hungry Tide*. Ghosh's book is set in the Sundarbans, a region known as "tide country" because of the way the water flows through it, continually changing the land's shape. However, Ghosh goes one step further: in the novel, he employs water as a tool to rebuild the social structure of the Sundarbans. Water is a motif and an agency that shapes the land's history and topography in addition to the plot. This illustrates the peculiar agency of water—its ability to go from one thing or position to another and to operate the subject and thereby turn the characters' object/subject roles around. The fact that Ghosh resolves the main conflict in the story by using water as the agent is also noteworthy. First, Ghosh is able to avoid adopting a moral or ideological stance while exploring the intricate battle for existence between humans and animals since water acts as a catalyst for change. Second, the water motif allows for the impartial and objective presentation of the predicament of both the displaced population and the endangered fauna. Third, Ghosh is able to maintain the emphasis on the struggle rather than the resolution by utilizing water as a device to subvert the hegemonic social order. This makes the novel and its main theme, water, the agents of social and political change. In this context, Anand shows that her paper investigates how water transforms from a recurrent literary symbol

into a dynamic actor that participates in and influences human drama in a meaningful way. As it dramatizes the competing claims of human and non-human species for existence, water functions as both a symbolic and a literal phenomenon in the book, acting as a heuristic tool to reveal the ecosocial and ecopolitical themes that are addressed (23).

Meg Samuelson in “Crossing the Indian Ocean and Wading through the Littoral: Cosmopolitan Vision in Amitav Ghosh’s *In An Antique Land* and *The Hungry Tide*” examines the cosmopolitan frameworks Ghosh forges along the South Asian coastline in an era of climatic change, as well as those he rescues from the medieval Indian Ocean civilization. Samuelson argues that The Sundarbans in West Bengal's dynamic environment and sedimented temporalities are the setting for *The Hungry Tide*'s story. The agentive force of nature, environmental devastation, and equally destructive conservation projects resulting from a promiscuous union between multinational capital, a professed Left government, and neoliberal organizations like the World Wildlife Trust are all played out on this littoral stage. The article shows that the three main tenets of cosmopolitan thought—love of humanity, an ethic of tolerance and mutual respect in a celebration of hybridity and fluidity attendant on human migration; and the "Kantian tradition in thinking of cosmopolitanism as the emergence of norms that ought to govern relations among individuals in a global civil society" (Benhabib 19)—are located in this social, political, and ecological space (190).

2.5 Interface Between Cultural Discourse and Climate Change

The insufficiency of realist fiction in depicting the climatic issue is highlighted by Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*. Accordingly, the book is brimming with alternate narrative styles that subvert the

legitimacy of truthful depictions of catastrophe. Lava Asaad demonstrates Ghosh's portrayal of disaster in *Gun Island* using James Clifford's concept of "ethnographic Surrealism" in this essay. The emergence of Surrealism in Europe throughout the 1920s and 1930s served as a means for its proponents to come up with fresh approaches to dealing with the aftermath of World War I. Similarly, in writing about catastrophe, Assad contends that Ghosh is distancing himself from strict realism fiction. The novel has received praise for its fantastical linkages, unlikely realities, and legendary Bengali stories. Ghosh uses the juxtaposition of cultural discourses that might otherwise clash to eloquently describe climate change (7).

2.6 Prioritizing Ecology over People's Fundamental Rights

Quazi Arka Rahman in "Sound of Silence: Locating the Agency of Voice in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*" says that *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh chronicles characters who live in various socio-political quadrants of the Sundarbans archipelago and navigates the challenging intersection between human existence and non-human conservation. He uses the 1979 Marichjhapi massacre, a significant but frequently overlooked historical event, as the starting point for this navigation. The government of West Bengal prioritized ecology over people's fundamental rights, which made the massacre possible. Indian popular history has mostly ignored this slaughter and its effects on the local community's later generations. It has been determined that the events of Marichjhapi were detrimental to nationalist sentiment and environmental conservation, two causes that were gaining ground at the time (1).

Sabah Pirzadeh in "Persecution vs Protection: Examining the Pernicious Politics of Environmental Conservation in *The Hungry Tide*" underpins that the global South has experienced a change in

the way that it appropriates the environment; colonial policies of resource exploitation have given way to Western environmental conservation programs that cause ecological crises while causing human ones, underscoring the necessity of analyzing the negative effects of environmental preservation. In the Sundarban islands, where indigenous people are socioeconomically marginalized and violently evicted from their land after it is designated as a reserve for tigers, who have been declared an endangered species in the region, Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* highlights the detrimental effects of environmental protectionist policies. The disastrous result of ecological conservation in this instance highlights the shortcomings of general Western strategies that ignore local context and are based on the erroneous notion that an area is predictable or knowable. This essay argues that *The Hungry Tide* subverts the notion that the islands are easily knowable places and emphasizes the mutability, complexity, and diversity of the region by providing a de-essentialized representation of the Sundarban islands. In doing so, it addresses the issue of decontextualized (Western) knowledge production. Moreover, the literary portrayal is employed to scrutinize the foundation of Western environmental conservation initiatives, which are driven by neo-colonialist goals of appropriating territory and assets for private profit. According to Pirzadeh, Ghosh in his novel highlights the negative effects of environmental protectionist laws, particularly in the context of the Sundarban islands, where native people were forcibly relocated and subjected to physical abuse to make way for tigers, who were deemed to be species that required protection (107).

2.7 Ecology and Development

Malcolm Sen in “Spatial Justice: The Ecological Imperative and Postcolonial Development” argues that the development problems that postcolonial nation-states face are frequently sidelined

in favor of a historicist perspective that highlights the significance of environmental politics during the colonial era in discussions of postcolonial ecocriticism. While such historicism has its place, this essay contends that postcolonial ecocriticism must critically examine the developmental and environmental contexts in which the postcolonial subject currently exists. Using *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh as a case study, this essay makes the point that reading postcolonial ecocritical literature necessitates taking into account the relationships among postcoloniality, environmentalism, and economic growth.

2.8 Nexus Between Climate Crisis and Refugee Problem

Rakibul Hasan Khan in his article “Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island*: The Climate Crisis and Planetary Environmentalism” shows that Ghosh’s novel portrays the interconnectedness of human and non-human species in responding to the impacts of climate change. He argues that by drawing parallels between human migration and animal behaviors driven by environmental disruptions, Ghosh highlights the shared vulnerability and importance of collective action across species and geographical boundaries. Khan shows that *Gun Island* underscores the intersection of environmental crises with social, racial, and historical injustices. Ghosh connects the refugee crisis in the Western world to broader environmental degradation beyond the West, emphasizing how global capitalism and historical processes like European colonization have aggravated the climate crisis. The novel sheds light on inequality in terms of the impact of climate change on marginalized communities and the need for equitable solutions. Khan also argues that Ghosh's novel highlights the historical roots of the climate crisis, particularly the role of European colonialism in shaping contemporary environmental challenges. The novel critically examines how colonial exploitation of resources and the expansion of global capitalism paved the way to ecological degradation and

socio-economic disparities. By linking past injustices to present-day environmental crises, Ghosh emphasizes the importance of acknowledging historical accountability in addressing climate change. Khan underscores that the environmental problem does not require geographical boundaries since the map created by humans is meaningless when the entire planet is at risk (1).

Pramod K. Nayar in “The Postcolonial Uncanny; The Politics of Dispossession in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” argues that *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh is a humanist critique of dispossession in the postcolonial world. It addresses those who feel "out of place" and are looking for a "home." Refugees are "created" in postcolonial India, with its colonial past and ongoing demands for social justice from women, minorities, the displaced, and the Dalits. Dalits, minorities, and other oppressed groups occupy an "unhomely" zone in the postcolonial nation; in reality, a large number of refugees in the Sundarbans are Dalits. Morichjhapi's phantom refugee is symbolic of the incapacity of the postcolonial state to provide a safe "home". They are "unhomely" not only in the sense that they have no place on the earth or in history but also in the sense that the land is "unhomely" because it is uninviting (89).

This is how Nayar portrays a grave picture of homelessness in India due to massive development and urbanization. Nayar associates the postcolonial uncanny with homelessness. Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* foregrounds the hostile nature of ‘Home’ because the very essence of home like ‘safety, security and freedom from fear’ lacks human settlement in the islands of Sundarbans. This is caused on the one hand by 'human predators' on the other, the changeable nature of the land which is why Sundarbans turns out to be an ‘unhomely’ home for the settlers (89).

Nayar explored in his article the trajectory from the uncanny setting of the Sundarbans, strange and mysterious to the perception of a visitor like Piya and Kanai thoroughly dependent upon the local knowledge ‘to the “land” of the postcolonial dispossessed’ to what he calls ‘indigenous

canny' adjusted 'by the local, folkloric, mystical and ungraspable forms of knowing embodied in Fokir's life and death' which makes the same topos 'home'. Pramod Nayar observes, "It is a trajectory that marks a shift from the *perception* of the landscape as a *scene* or setting to an experience of it as an environment" (91). This is what Nayar argues is a shift 'from the uncanny to the indigenous canny' (92). The uncanny of the land of the Sundarbans lies in its half-land-half-water condition - a condition resulting in the regular appearance and disappearance of the islands at regular intervals.

The refugee migrant dichotomy takes a distinct feature in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh. Ghosh's latest novels *The Hungry Tide*, *Ibis Trilogy* and most recently *Gun Island* are replete with both refugee and migrant issues. One reason behind this unwilling displacement is that Ghosh's ancestors became ecological refugees. They had to move from Bengal to Bihar because of river erosion which sent their dwelling places underwater. The term ecological refugee was invented much later than the displacement of Ghosh's forefathers. Ghosh narrativizes in *The Hungry Tide* how religio politico, ethnoreligious, sociopolitical, and ecological aspects forced the refugees to leave their land. This has been clarified in the article titled 'From *Bastuhara* to *Immigrati*: Resistance and Refugee Solidarity in Amitav Ghosh' by Asis De who cited Claire Gallien where Gallien considers 'refugee' as the 'historical construction' which focuses more on ideological and political issues than ecological and economic ones (*Refugee Literature* 723). Based on this observation Asis De opines that India's historical construction and the international border's geopolitical construction in 1947 both shape the imaginative construction of 'refugees' in the novels of Ghosh. The differences between refugees and immigrants are refugees do not have any choice but to leave their land. On the other hand, immigrants choose to leave their land mostly for economic and also for ecological reasons. By referring to Gallien, De argues that while "refugees"

are the impoverished who migrate in search of safety, migrants have specific reasons for moving ("Forcing Displacement", 738), which may indicate economic migrations. The scope of Ghosh's most recent book, *Gun Island*, on cross-border migration and refugee rights is very broad, as the author deftly blurs the lines between the UNHCR's definition of a refugee and the Indian image of one. The book addresses topics such as the systematic human trafficking of younger labor migrants from Bangladesh and Pakistan to Europe as refugees via Egypt and the Middle East, as well as the Mediterranean and Adriatic Seas. Ghosh demonstrates how economic migrants from these nations join tiny groups of war-torn Middle Eastern refugees and impoverished sub-Saharan migrants who reach Europe as asylum seekers before settling in as laborers and menial jobs. After reading through the majority of Ghosh's stories, it becomes clear that another important aspect is his deft portrayal of the refugees as a group, rather than as unique individuals, with whom the author finds a morally righteous humanitarian connection. A few significant characters, such as Tipu and Rafi in *Gun Island*, are mentioned as refugees at certain periods in the stories, although they never begin or end up in camps for refugees. But the novelist's variety of visions at the nexus of history and politics, terror and hatred, chaos and order, conflict and solace, movement and settlement, memory and recognition, and, most importantly, his ethical obligation to history is what really drives the transformation of Ghosh's refugees (De 74-75).

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* delves deep into the root of the refugee crisis. The fiction posits state-sponsored atrocities by the left-wing government of West Bengal against the stateless dispossessed refugees. To this neocolonial power regime, wildlife preservation and protection are more important than the settlement and rehabilitation of the refugees. In *Gun Island*, similar resistance from the right-wing government is faced by immigrants stranded at the entry point of Italy. What makes the two novels identical is the solidarity of the refugees being united for the common cause

of saving humanity against inhuman barbarity. The multidimensional matrix of the refugee movement has made the fiction of Ghosh refugee narratives. Through this creative imagination, the author tends to showcase the major emotions of the refugees like anger, fear, shame, suspicion, and anxiety. The misery, anxiety and bewilderment behind this mass migration find no voice in the official statistics and history of the refugee movement and rehabilitation. However, in present-day economic globalization, transnational migration in the hope of a better life impacts the socio-cultural, and religiopolitical practices of the host countries.

The reason why Ghosh's fiction and nonfiction voice solidarity with the refugees is his ancestors who were ecological refugees long before the term was invented (Ghosh 4). Asis De in "From Bastuhara to Immigrati: Resistance and Refugee Solidarity in Amitav Ghosh" observes the fact that Ghosh referred to his ancestors who fled from Bengal to Bihar in the second half of the 1800s as "ecological refugees" highlights the fact that migration brought on by natural disasters is just as important as the political-historical violence that occurred in the Indian subcontinent after Partition. In Ghosh's literary narratives, the refugee is the impoverished person who observes the loss of nearly all material belongings from their past in the maelstrom of situational disasters. In essence, Ghosh's refugees are without a home because they either lose it or choose to leave it behind (De 73). De opines that environmental disasters play an important role in the dislocation and relocation of ill-fated people. It has been a major concern for migration in the South Asian region for a long time. De says, similar to Ghosh's ancestors mentioned in *The Great Derangement*, the unfortunate refugees and cross-border migrants that appear in his novels are not always victims of political, ethno-religious, or racial conflicts; one such example is the story of Lubna and her husband, who immigrated to Venice from Bangladesh following the Bhola cyclone on Gun Island. The diversity of refugee characters in Ghosh's works is another intriguing observation. From the

political and ethno-religious refugees in *The Hungry Tide* to the ecological refugees and young economic migrants breaking into Europe illegally in Gun Island, the novelist's portrayal of the cross-border intruders shows a shift in the ideas and moral principles chosen (74).

De finds that “*The Hungry Tide* accommodates the issue of the settlement of political Hindu refugees from across the border of Bangladesh in the Sundarbans of coastal India, the rehabilitation of thousands of refugees in Dandakaranya - an infertile plateau in central India, their counter-migration to the Sundarbans as climate refugees and the state-sponsored evacuation of the refugees from the island of Morichjhapi resulting in a genocide that soon lapses into oblivious public memory” (75). The huge influx of climate refugees, hence, encountered the anti-human opposition from the newly-elected Left Front government “that preferred the project of wildlife sanctuary over refugee rehabilitation” (76). The solidarity of the refugees tried to organize resistance against the barbaric stand of the Left Front government. So De infers that “The geo-cultural homogeneity of the refugee community and tide country people in *The Hungry Tide* promotes a sense of solidarity and prepares the ground for resistance against the state power in securing the refugees’ right over the land and rivers of the Sundarbans” (77).

In addition, the refugees as victims of ecological crisis and migrants of economic volatility get significant attention in the fiction of Ghosh. *Gun Island* projects on the one hand economic migration and on the other hand organized human trafficking of worker-migrants who are young and conversant with new technology. The spatiotemporal perspective of ecological and economic transnational migration is one of the major themes of *Gun Island*. De observes, “*Gun Island* focuses precisely on the complications in the scenario of transcontinental work-migrations in an age of economic globalization and advanced cyber technology unlike any of Ghosh’s earlier narratives. So, apart from ecological and economic migrations, the organized human trafficking

network promotes illegal transnational migration through unusual routes which become possible through increasingly cheaper communication systems and internet facilities. So, both *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* show the representation of refugee solidarity in the face of anti-immigrant resistance or state-sponsored oppression.

2.9 Environmental Racism

S Aarthi in her article “ Environmental Racism in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace and Sea of Poppies*” shows the adverse effects of imperialism on colonized ecology as well as colonized communities. She focuses on how environmental imperialism is manipulated to exploit not only the ecology but also the lives, culture, and tradition of the colonized. She shows that in both novels Ghosh categorically demonstrates the oppression of the colonial rulers on the ecology and the people of the colonized land. Ghosh makes a comparative study of the precolonial and postcolonial states and thus amply illustrates the drastic changes that the environment, humans and nonhumans have witnessed under the rule of the imperial power. To highlight environmental racism Aarthi shows how Ghosh’s narratives make a fine blending of fact and fiction to give way to the idea that colonists plunder and destroy natural resources and put the natives under untold hardships with the means of political, economic and military dominance. Aarthi emphasizes that Ghosh merges postcolonial issues with environmental exploitation and focuses on the evil acts of the colonizers toward the destruction of nature and the sufferings of humans and nonhumans (520).

Aarthi shows how ecological imperialism and environmental racism are given due attention by Amitav Ghosh in *The Glass Palace* and *Sea of Poppies*. In *The Glass Palace* Ghosh shows how the British imperial power attacked Burma because of wood. Later they introduced rubber

plantation to that region to achieve monetary gain. In *Sea of Poppies* Ghosh shows how opium cultivation brought a catastrophic effect on the lives of the native Indians. People from all walks of society were devastated by the way British colonists imposed opium cultivation, production and trading on the economic, social, and moral lives of the Indians. Opium which was not considered to be a major crop like wheat, pulse and rice was systematically made a cash crop and the native land and farmers were exploited to grow opium only to enjoy its sheer economic and financial benefit by the British. So it shows that wherever the colonists went they targeted the native land and the indigenous people to be their first victims.

Through his novel *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh foregrounds the impact of the policies taken by the authoritarian government and neocolonialist agency. In the name of environmental conservation, the commoners are deprived of their social justice and economic freedom. Rajender Kaur in his article "'Home Is Where the Oracella Are": Toward a New Paradigm of Transcultural Ecocritical Engagement in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*' shows the striking contrast between livelihood and ecology against the backdrop of "deep time" which in a broader sense has to do with the age of the earth being counted by measuring the rocks. Kaur shows the diversified cultural account of the affinity with ecology by Piya, Nilima, Fokir and the villagers of Marichjhapi. Piya is a Western environmentalist, Nilima is a pragmatic activist who works for the welfare of the grassroots level of people, and Fokir is closely associated with the flora and fauna of the biotic space of Sundarbans. Apart from these, Sundarbans provides the eco-space for 'playful Oracella dolphins' and 'majestic tigers' to share a common habitat with humans. So *The Hungry Tide* envisions global solidarity by bringing together sensibilities like liberal steadfastness, simplicity, and skeptical and positive activism exemplified by characters like Piya, Nirmal, Kanai, Moyna and Nilima. So Kaur shows that the text creates not only a close connection between language, history, family and

profession with the complex transcultural network of the modern global marketplace but also bonds indigenous myth and folklore in an intricate relationship with science and other legends.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh shows how the ecosystem of Sundarbans is greatly impacted by the deep time. Rajendra Kaur in his article foregrounds that "deep time" is a powerful concept in geology that can provide productive insights into reexamining the ecological cold wars between the North and the Global South that result from globalization and the troubled footprint of colonialism. Kaur shows that *The Hungry Tide* perfectly balances the duality of trans-historical vistas of "deep time" and the mutability of nature by choosing Sundarbans as a locale. Sundarbans, which is "an immense archipelago of islands, some of which are large and have lasted for millennia, while other, smaller ones, are daily destroyed and washed into being, effectively embodies the duality of nature in its trans historicity and mutability" (127). Kaur shows that deep time hardly gets attention in colonial discourse and postcolonial politics. In his opinion, "The Sundarbans are a unique biotic space, a chain of islands that are constantly transformed by the daily ebb and flow of tides that create and decimate, at aberrant intervals, whole islands and eco-niches that struggle to adapt to the shifting levels of salinity in the water." The natives of this region live in perfect harmony with the tidal storms, man-eating tiger and harmless Oracella, and maintain the ethereal and poetic qualities of the ecosphere of Sundarbans. Ghosh's environmental consciousness urges a kind of environmental awareness and responsibility which is, according to Kaur, "sensitive to the diverse political, economic and cultural histories of the nations across the world" (127). That is why Kaur posits, "It is precisely this enlightened perspective - at once exquisitely historical in outlook and yet attentive to the nuanced complexities of contemporary global capitalism, and a world increasingly bridged by extensive transnational networks- that animates *The Hungry Tide*" (127). Kaur observes that the Sundarbans represent a distinct biome,

a network of islands perpetually altered by the daily surges and tidal fluctuations that, at irregular intervals, generate and destroy entire islands and ecological niches that are incapable of adjusting to the fluctuating salinity of the surrounding waters. The distinct environment and microculture of the Sundarbans, which are located between Bangladesh and India, highlight the bloody past of disputed national boundaries in the Indian subcontinent. Kaur further says that *The Hungry Tide* alludes to a novel form of postcolonial ethics that goes beyond the Manichean viewpoint that characterized previous colonialist thought. The book pushes us to accept an ecological viewpoint that is forced by the realization that we live in one globe, not multiple, by eschewing racial, ethnic, and nationalistic divisions (127).

Kaur highlighted the exploitative environmental policies of the authoritative force like the postcolonial Indian state in *The Hungry Tide*. In his article, Kaur demonstrates how Ghosh critiqued the environmentally blind policies of housing and development in Morichjhapi. Kaur puts this short-sighted political venture against the vast geological vista of deep time. Quoting James Hutton in *Theory of the Earth* (1795) and Charles Lyell in *Principle of Geology*, Kaur shares a fresh look at deep time by conceptualizing it as an ecological warfare “between the North and the Global South that result from globalization and the troubled legacy of colonization” (126). Deep time in its distant perspective brings the effect of political conflict resulting from globalization and the long legacy of colonization. Kaur argues that the setting of Sundarbans evokes both the trans-historical perspective of deep time and the fluidity of nature at the same time. According to Kaur, Sundarbans, an enormous archipelago of islands with a unique topography that successfully symbolizes the duality of nature in its transhistoricity and mutability, contains both huge and smaller islands that have endured for millennia alongside smaller ones that are constantly being destroyed and washed into existence (127).

To Kaur, *The Hungry Tide* advocates a broader canvas of ecological commitment that maintains harmonious interdependency between humans and non-humans within the bio-space of the Sundarbans. Piya, the cetologist, is conscious of the sociocultural impact of the local knowledge and undertakes her research project keeping in mind community-based conservation. However, the locals of the Sundarbans, being low caste, can not taste the true spirit of ‘home’ in their homeland. They are continuously dispossessed of the ownership of their home though the environment is very much homely to them (128).

2.10 Intersection between Anthropogenic Climate Change and Neoliberal Capitalism

However, in exploring the trajectory of the lives of the migrant workers in *Gun Island* Raihan identifies precarity in the relationship between capitalism and climate change and argues that the latter is a new determining factor of precarity (Raihan 97). He shows how the impact of ‘anthropogenic climate change’ and the ‘dynamics of neoliberal capitalism acts as a catalyst for the vulnerability of climate refugees. He encapsulates that through *Gun Island* Ghosh foregrounds how the repercussions of anthropogenic climate change engender precarity and precariousness of climate refugees. In his paper, he defines precarity as “both labor conditions and life experiences that mirror unstable, insecure, and uncertain circumstances” (97). Raihan shows that Marx’s writing indicates that precarity is a regular feature of capitalism. Marx believed that the reserve army of labor encounters the constant threat of being abandoned as a redundant labor force. As a result, the migrant workers and refugees who are not regular turn out to be the excess population of the transnational labor forces. Raihan argues that he employs *Gun Island* as a point of reference to place precarity in the relationship between capitalism and climate change, and he contends that the latter has become a new factor influencing precarity. He also looks at how capitalism shapes

both precarity and climate change, seeing that the latter is a byproduct of the former. After critically analyzing the novel's adoption of the Anthropocene ethos, he suggests reading the Anthropocene through the prism of capital and making the case that the global subordination of labor practices and entire social relations landscapes by capital is what made human collective agency, a defining feature of this geological era, possible. He believes it is vital to look at how the novel formalistically combines the issue of climate change as well as the individual and communal human experience of this crisis to fully investigate *Gun Island's* portrayal of precarity brought on by climate change. Based on the novel's depiction of various crises caused by climate change, it is hypothesized that the fictional portrayal of the climate crisis enables us to understand the problematic relationship between ecology and capitalism, as well as the precariousness and movement of bodies across time and space (98).

In *Gun Island* the climate migration becomes so inescapable that “the exodus of the young was accelerating every year: boys and girls were borrowing and stealing to pay agents to find them work elsewhere” (Ghosh 53). Moyna’s account gives a vivid picture of the growing vulnerability of the people of the locality: “[w]hen people tried to dig wells, an arsenic-laced brew gushed out of the soil; when they tried to shore up embankments the tides rose higher and pulled them down again. Even fishermen could barely get by, where once their boats would come back loaded with catch now they counted themselves lucky if they netted a handful of fry” (53). All these induce the people to migrate and as a result, human trafficking has become a burgeoning business where Moyna’s son, Tipu gets involved and takes pride in it. He does not consider human trafficking a crime, “but a valuable service to the vulnerable community” (Rakibul 190). Climate change prompts migration of not only humans but also nonhumans. The technological artifacts bring the migration-seeker close to a virtual world where they are constantly tempted by the better life. But

in reality, they encounter different forms of struggle and suffering engendered by racial, social, cultural, political persecution, and economic exploitation. So Khan observes, “The displaced people who constantly endure discrimination and abuse harbor the potential to rise” and that is “through their unity” (191).

The Anthropocene era gives rise to the appearance of nonhuman agency exemplified by ‘uncanny’ which conditions the precarity. There are several instances of extraordinary incidences in *Gun Island*. According to Khan Rakibul, “The extraordinary events that appear to be supernatural in ordinary human experience are, as the novel suggests, nature’s expression of agency” (186). The presence of nonhuman agency becomes prominent in the concluding scene of the novel when the multispecies interference makes the rescue effort of the refugees of the Blue Boat possible. The justification of the word ‘eco collectivism’ comes from an observation of Khan Rakibul as he argues that Ghosh advocates for multispecies justice as part of his planetary ecology, which addresses the significance of symbiotic connections during a period of climactic upheaval, drawing on Deen's journey towards recognizing the complex relationship between humans and nonhumans. What Rakibul refers to as eco-collectivism is the novel's reflection on multispecies survival in the face of climate change (187).

Ghosh’s narratives are, in most cases, an account of “world histories from below” (Antoinette Burton 2012). Ghosh shows in his fiction the rewriting of history from a local and individual perspective to global collective issues. So the local migration and resettlement turn out to be cross-national relocation. Maria Sabina Draga Alexandru in her paper “Routes beyond Roots: Alternative Ecological Histories in Amitav Ghosh’s *Sea of Poppies*” examines the tracing of pathways and connectivities across the Indian Ocean by Ghosh in the period just before the opium wars, with an emphasis on his reevaluation of his human connections and hierarchies from an

ecocritical standpoint. She asserts that Ghosh has always been interested in reevaluating the boundaries set by colonialism, biology, geography, caste, and class. This approach transcends these limitations. As the Ibis identities become deterritorialized and flexible while on board, they are cut off from the origins and trajectories set by inflexible frameworks conditioned by culture. She argues that humans and other living things connect to form a continuum that spans the Indian Ocean's trading channels and becomes a fluid place where identities are rebuilt (Maria 37).

The above discussion is all on the readings of specific texts of Ghosh shedding light on various dimensions of the effects of climate change triggered by anthropogenic activities of the current geological era known as Anthropocene, affecting the lives of humans and non-humans. Latour argues that “the climate question is at the heart of all geopolitical issues and that it is directly tied to questions of injustice and inequality” (3). Khan shows that the socio-economic and sociopolitical issues have become critical because of the impact of the climate crisis resulting in the displacement of the population who can take the challenge. Again the climate crisis is the result of anthropogenic activities of spatiotemporal magnitude. Based on these discussions, my thesis tries to address the terrain of the catastrophic effect of climate change engendering from the legacies of the colonial past and neoliberal capitalist system resulting in the vulnerability of humans and non-humans encompassing the fiction of Amitav Ghosh. The origin and impact of environmental degradation that permeates through the narratives of Ghosh shed light on the trajectory of some untold historical facts projecting the rise of capitalism and its inevitable effects reflected through the counterattack by nature which determines the nexus between nature and humans. This thesis focuses not only on class, caste, gender, and race discrimination but also on the exploitation of nonhumans by humans as a result of fulfillment of petty self-interest.

After analyzing the scholarly articles on Ghosh's ecocritical engagement, this thesis addresses the following epistemological gap that unfolds from the above discussion:

Amitav Ghosh indeed offers a profound exploration of interconnected themes in his fiction, weaving together ecocriticism, environmental justice, and sustainability with a keen eye on social inequality. This thesis explores how his fiction serves as a mirror reflecting the intricate relationships between human actions, power structures, and environmental consequences. Through Ghosh's fiction, this thesis examines how historical contexts, particularly the legacy of colonialism and capitalist exploitation, shape contemporary environmental challenges and how the power dynamics perpetuate environmental injustices, revealing how marginalized communities bear the brunt of ecological degradation caused by broader societal forces. Through his storytelling, Ghosh underscores the urgency of addressing ecological crises with a nuanced understanding of the social injustices embedded within them. He challenges readers to confront the disproportionate impact of environmental decline on vulnerable populations, emphasizing the moral imperative to confront these interconnected issues. Ghosh's work not only raises awareness but also fosters empathy and encourages collective action. By intertwining human stories with environmental concerns, he invites readers to reflect on their roles within these broader narratives and to recognize the importance of advocating for a fairer and more sustainable world. All the papers highlighted above give us a partial view of the environmental challenges Ghosh is addressing through his fiction and nonfiction. However, this thesis explores the footprint of climate change and environmental degradation resulting from anthropogenic activities and impacting vastly both the social, cultural, political and economic lives of the people and the ecosystem that concerns the nonhumans illustrated through Ghosh's novels written in the twenty-first century.

In essence, the study shows that Ghosh's fiction serves as a powerful catalyst for dialogue and action, urging us to confront the complex realities of environmental degradation while advocating for justice and equity in our relationship with nature. Through his writings, he invites us to engage critically with our environmental responsibilities and to envision a future where social and ecological well-being are intertwined and prioritized.

CHAPTER 3

Human-Nonhuman Interaction: “Cassandras of Climate Science”¹

According to Amitav Ghosh, there is a feeling of strangeness in the word ‘uncanny’ as he refers to climate change ‘unfolding around us’. Ghosh mentions explicitly in *The Great Derangement* that the changes are strange not that they are ‘unknown or alien’ to us, but the ‘uncanniness’ they arouse among us is something that the recognition of their ‘encounters’ “we had turned away from: that is to say: the presence and proximity of non-human interlocutors” (Ghosh 35). By referring to the word “uncanny” mentioned repeatedly in the translation of Freud and Heidegger, Ghosh says, “it is indeed with uncanny accuracy that my experience of the tornado is evoked” (35). Uncanny, according to Sigmund Freud, is “something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression” (Freud 241). “Inanimate objects coming alive” is one of the examples of uncanny feeling (241). Ghosh foregrounds the idea that, like humans, nonhumans exercise the ability to wield their agency, which, according to Ghosh, is uncanny, producing imaginative visions of the afflicted nature confronting the hubris of the capitalistic modern world bolstered by the anthropogenic activities for centuries. Ghosh’s narratives establish the fact that nonhumans assumed to be inert are very much active and alive. His fiction thus juxtaposes the unwavering human enterprises in the terrains of capitalism, consumerism, commercialism, free market and globalization against the precarious and freakish nature of the environment posing an ominous threat to human existence. Ghosh

¹ Henry Piddington, a shipping inspector under East India Company who coined the term ‘cyclone’ back in the nineteenth century is considered the Cassandra of climate science because of his flawless speculation about the terrible destruction of Port Canning (Ghosh 285).

narrativized the mysterious silence of non-humans in his fiction to give way to the idea that they are lurking in close proximity to take vengeance for the human atrocity inflicted upon them.

To Ghosh nature is uncanny and so are the nonhumans that nature contains. Nature and nonhumans are juxtaposed with humans showing one against the other. It is as if nature and nonhumans are constantly beholding humans without the consciousness of the latter. Ghosh shows the analogy of the Royal Bengal Tiger whose presence is everywhere in the Sundarbans, but the human gaze fails to trace its presence. But when the final moment of visual communication comes, it becomes impossible for the human to take any action. In *The Great Derangement* Ghosh puts it this way:

In these stories a great deal hinges on the eyes; seeing is one of their central themes; *not* seeing is another. The tiger is watching you; you are aware of its gaze, as you always are, but you do not see it; you do not lock eyes with it until it launches its charge, and at that moment a shock courses through you and you are immobilized, frozen. (33)

This mutual gaze is a sort of communication that evokes uncanny feelings. In the same manner, nature is as if in a way gazing at human activities just to take its turn in a mysterious way confounding the human consciousness. Ghosh is trying to indicate the strangeness of nature and its non-human agencies evolving around us. He quotes George Marshall as saying, “Climate change is inherently uncanny” (35). Marshall shows that the extreme weather conditions that are caused by high carbon-induced extravagant lifestyles are nothing new, yet they cause new danger. Ghosh explains by adding, “For these changes are not merely strange in the sense of being unknown or alien; their uncanniness lies precisely in the fact that in these encounters we recognize something we had turned away from: that is to say, the presence and proximity of non-human interlocutors” (35).

In the same breath, Ghosh wants to reiterate that in the era of global warming, there is no way to turn away from the reality of life as something otherworldly:

It is precisely not an imagined ‘other’ world apart from ours; nor is it located in another ‘time’ or another ‘dimension’. By no means are the events of the era of global warming akin to the stuff of wonder tales; yet it is also true that in relation to what we think of as normal now, they are in many ways uncanny; and they have indeed opened a doorway into what we might call a ‘spirit world’- a universe animated by non-human voices. (75)

Actually, the storms, the floods, the droughts, the wildfires etc.-all these natural calamities are no longer normal in any way. Rather the freakish nature of climate change has become a new reality. However, our indifference to this grave issue is making the situation worse.

One of the uncanniest things about climate change, according to Ghosh, is our consciousness of the inanimate objects coming to life. This awareness of the agency of the elements, although it seems to be renewed consciousness, is not altogether new because the indigenous people of the Sundarbans believe that the tiger and other nonhumans in the region possess ‘intelligence and agency’ (Ghosh 66). Ghosh’s resentment is explicit in his claim that most of the literary imagination of the modern period of global warming when human activity is responsible for changing the earth’s atmosphere, centers on humans. The non-humans have no place in serious fiction, rather they have been banished in the relegated fantasy or science fiction.

This chapter focuses on Ghosh’s human-nonhuman binary in novels like *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* where Ghosh sheds light on representation of nature and nonhuman entities by portraying landscapes, animals, and ecological systems and emphasizing their agency and interconnectedness, exploring how human characters interact with and perceive nonhuman entities

within the narrative, examining how Ghosh addresses issues of environmental justice, analyzing power dynamics and social inequalities exacerbating environmental injustices, and investigating sustainable practices and alternative modes of living. Ghosh's nonfiction *The Great Derangement* has been analyzed to substantiate these themes.

3.1 Representation of Nature and Nonhuman Entities

3.1.1 Portrayal of Landscape, Animals, and Ecological Systems, Emphasizing Their Agency and Interconnectedness

Ghosh's nonhumans are anthropomorphized so as to show their ability to strike back. To Ghosh, Sundarbans, the locale of his novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*, is not merely a place, it is a character. In his interview, Ghosh said, "That's certainly what I wanted the forest to become. I wanted it to have its own agency, its own will. Because that's how I experienced it" (Vescovi 138). He also added that according to Indian tradition one can anthropomorphize, which, though anti-scientific to him, is natural. He said, "I anthropomorphize things: objects of the natural world become people, become themes to me" (Vescovi 138). So, the islands act as not only fictional backdrops but also environmental activists.

In Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*, the setting is anthropomorphized as a powerful agent wielding enormous influence on humans and nonhumans. In this novel, Sunderbans has been shown as a universe itself. In Ghosh's words, "A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself" (7). Ghosh suggests an alternative way to make the viewers attracted to the plenitude of the Sundarbans. "Ghosh's novel", as Laura A. White observes, "might be understood in terms of a larger decolonial project" which develops "a rhythmic pattern of organization that reflects nonvisual ways of

knowing the Sundarbans” (White 514). As a result, Ghosh’s novel systematically breaks the colonial and neocolonial understanding of the Sundarbans by establishing interactions between “geo historically located and embodied knowers” (515). Embodied knowing, as Hanna (1980) foregrounds, is a constant flow of senses and actions that take place within the experiences of an individual. From that perspective, the mysteries of Sunderbans lie not only in the manner the landscape is described but also in the relationship that has been developed between humans and the forest over the years. Ghosh said in his interview “What I liked most about writing *The Hungry Tide* was just spending time in the Sunderbans. With those people it was so beautiful to hear the language around me all the time and to hear the songs” (Vescovi 140). It was such a wonderful thing for Ghosh to witness the simplicity of life that he had occasion to experience because, like the people of Bengal, he also happened to come from a peasant background. So Ghosh says, “I certainly feel a deep sense of connection with that sort of life. And it was incredibly fulfilling, just living in those houses, to be on the boat at night: it was pure magic, pure magic. I just can’t explain how magical it was” (Vescovi 140) So the beauty of Sunderbans is not to be realized through the gaze of a tourist. It will be revealed through embodied knowing which Ghosh has developed and considered ‘pure magic’ (140). Ghosh also wants his readers to experience the same sense of the beauty of Sunderbans. His honest opinion about Sundarbans is “If I was to write ten books like *The Hungry Tide*, it would never do justice to the absolute magic of being there at night with the tide changing, under the moon, and to hear the tiger nearby” (Vescovi 140). Knowing a place, to Ghosh, is not only visiting it as a tourist who does not develop intimate relations with the land, people and natural resources. Similarly, Ghosh traces geospatial affinity between Sundarbans and Italy which he mentions” And you know there is something so lovely in it, something so beautiful about the texture. I suppose you can experience that if you go to some rural part of Italy. It is

something you cannot experience as a tourist. It is because I am Bengali, because I am of a certain age that they can interact like that with me. With that sort of simplicity and openness and a kind of trust” (Vescovi 140). This is how Ghosh can make us realize how closely and mysteriously Sundarbans is connected with Italy. This spatiotemporal affinity between these two settings resonates in *Gun Island*. The way the aerial view of Venice takes Deen to the islands of the Sundarbans in the same way the flood of the tide country helps Rafi develop the resilience of facing the sudden flood in Venice. The local knowledge of the environment, thus, turns out to be a global understanding of the intricacies of the freakish behavior of the ecosystem. Ghosh, therefore, introduces Sundarbans not in an ordinary manner but in a way perfect for projecting its duality - “to the world at large this archipelago is known as the Sundarbans which means ‘the beautiful forest’... and to the inhabitants of the islands this area is known as the bhatir desh - the tide country” (7). This means, to the outsiders the epistemological understanding of the land presents it as an economically valuable asset with its intrinsic value lying in commodifying the natural resources of the islands. On the other hand, to the local inhabitants it is a land of interchanging tides - “every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater only to reemerge hours later” (7). So, keeping the interest of the locals in the forefront, the novel is advocating a larger ecological spectrum projecting a mutually beneficial relationship between humans and nonhumans living in the exquisite biosphere of the Sundarbans.

3.1.2 Biotic and Abiotic Factors

In Ghosh’s fiction, both biotic and abiotic factors have received equal attention. Ghosh’s settings are premised on the assumption that abiotic factors like land, water bodies, and forest-like actants either intercept or are exploited. Biotic and abiotic factors together constitute our ecosystem. Both biotic and abiotic factors have an impact on living things and the environment. Biotic factors are

animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria while abiotic factors are forests, fires, water, climate, habitat, soil, minerals, and human activity (“Biotic”).

Sundarbans itself is the largest mangrove forest consisting of a group of islands that witness the wildest of storms, tidal bore and other natural calamities in a cyclic manner. The people of these areas are constantly battling as much with natural catastrophes as with the terribleness of the wild animals. Storm creates indelible history in these parts of the earth proving the fragility and vulnerability of abiotic factors like land, waterbodies, forests, and human habitats as well as biotic factors like animals and plants. Humans seem to be powerless against the horrendous power of nature. In *The Hungry Tide* the storm which brings Fokir, Piya and the Royal Bengal Tiger together and costs the life of Fokir, the indigenous man of Sundarbans, is a striking testimony of the severity and destructive nature of the natural calamity. Ghosh in *The Great Derangement* admits his inability to draw the real magnitude of the horrific nature of the storm, the storm which he experienced in his real life. But somehow or other he manages to conclude his fiction by demonstrating the appalling condition of storms, be it tornado or cyclone.

However, Ghosh in his *The Great Derangement* argues for our equal inability to perceive the magnitude of the crisis caused to the environment by human activities (Ghosh 7). As Nirmal in *The Hungry Tide* is directing the attention of Fokir from heinous corruption of the people for the sake of petty self-interest towards the stupefying attack of nature he is, in fact, showing the humble effort of the humans in the face of severe natural calamity- “Even as we stand here, untold multitudes of crabs are burrowing into our badh. Now ask yourself: how long can this frail fence last against these monstrous appetites-the crabs and the tides, the winds and the storms”(206)? So this is the defense of nature against the atrocities of humans. Nature itself encounters mutability

due to a natural process known as deep time which is a sharp contrast to the phenomenon called Anthropocene caused by human-induced activity.

3.1.3 Anthropocene and Deep Time

Like other novels, *The Hungry Tide* can not only be judged as mere fiction. These have undercurrents of many other epistemological references like ‘deep time’ from geology. The deep time animates Sundarbans, the vast mangrove forest as the protagonist of *The Hungry Tide*. In *The Great Derangement* Ghosh depicts-

Sundarbans the great mangrove forest of the Bengal Delta, where the flow of water and silt is such that geological processes that usually unfold in deep time appear to occur at a speed where they can be followed from week to week and month to month. Overnight, a stretch of riverbank will disappear, sometimes taking houses and people with it; but elsewhere a shallow mudbank will arise and within weeks the shore will have broadened by several feet (5).

So, the deep time which demonstrates the mutability of the biosphere over a period of time is juxtaposed against the Anthropocene where the geological age is greatly affected by human activities. As a result of the Anthropocene, the appearance or disappearance of the land in Sundarbans takes place within a short spell of time amply showing the ravages caused to the ecosystem by anthropogenic activities.

The land in the vast mangrove forests in the archipelago of Sundarbans, according to Ghosh, “is demonstrably alive; that it does not exist solely, or even incidentally, as a stage for the enactment of human history, that it is [itself] a protagonist” (11). This is the power of the nonhuman which changes its course with the advancement of time like what Ghosh says about a child who

remembers the days of his grandmother “In those days the river wasn’t here and the village was not where it is” (11).

At the macro level, *The Hungry Tide* is written against the backdrop of a “deep time of Geology”. Nature as part of the evolutionary process brings changes to the earth which are recorded in deep time. Rajendra Kaur in his article “Home is Where the Orcella Are: Toward a New Paradigm of Transcultural Ecocritical Engagement in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” emphasizes that “deep time” is an evocative concept in geology that can provide productive insights into re-visioning the ecological turf wars between the North and the Global South that result from globalization and the troubled legacy of colonialism. Kaur shows that *The Hungry Tide* perfectly balances the duality of trans-historical vistas of “deep time” and mutability of nature through the depiction of flora and fauna of the vast regions of Sundarbans which is “an immense archipelago of islands, some of which are large and have lasted for millennia, while other, smaller ones, are daily destroyed and washed into being, effectively embodies the duality of nature in its trans historicity and mutability” (127). Kaur shows that deep time hardly gets attention in colonial discourse and postcolonial politics. In his opinion “The Sundarbans is a unique biotic space, a chain of islands that are constantly transformed by the daily ebb and flow of tides that create and decimate, at aberrant intervals, whole islands and eco-niches that struggle to adapt to the shifting levels of salinity in the water” (127). The natives of this region live in perfect harmony with the tidal storms, man-eating tigers and harmless Oracella. So this ecological diversity shown in the novel takes us beyond the nationalistic, ethnic and racial binaries to a world which according to Kaur ‘is not many but one’ (127).

In his novel *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh not only exposes the biodiversity of Sunderbans but also makes it an actor of his vast canvas. The beauty of Sunderbans is not perceivable at first sight. The

mystery of the evolution of such islands is dawned on a visitor gradually. Quoting Ghosh, Laura A. White in her article “Novel Vision; Seeing the Sundarbans through Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” mentions the background of choosing such an untrodden place -

Part of the idea behind *The Hungry Tide* was to shine a light on this area that is little known within India. But even within Bengal, the Sunderbans is really a kind of area of darkness. People don’t think of it, they don’t write about it, they don’t look at it. This is such a strange thing. For the ordinary tourist, the Sunderbans doesn’t offer much. You will never see the tigers; there is no wildlife to be seen. Sometimes you may see a crocodile or a few birds, but it is not like going to the Serengeti or some resort; it offers nothing to tourists as such. But, at the same time, it is a place of incredible beauty and presence. To appreciate it, tourists have to be there for quite a long time - for three or four days at least - because the beauty of it reveals itself very slowly. (513)

Ghosh’s settings are, therefore, carefully chosen to provide him ample scope to explore many other empirical facts like the biotic and abiotic diversity. In this chapter, the biotic and abiotic factors that have been foregrounded in the fiction of Ghosh are analyzed to show how they have been demonstrated to have an impact on the entire ecosystem.

3.1.4 Theme of Deep Time in Pre-modern Cultural Artifacts

Ghosh narrativized pre-modern cultural artifacts to unfold the trajectory of the uncanny beauty of the Sundarbans. In *The Hungry Tide*, the schoolmaster Nirmal’s account shows that Vishnu, the Hindu mythological god, incarnated as a divine dwarf, was measuring the universe with his feet. A misstep caused an opening on the floor of the cosmos through which came down the stream of Ganga from the heavens washing the sins of the universe. Now the Ganga has become the greatest

of all the rivers of the world. Though it sounds paradoxical, the logical explanation is that geologists after a thorough research have made a map of the sea floor demonstrating that Ganga does not end its course when it merges with the Bay of Bengal rather it scrubs its way out to meet with Brahmaputhra. To substantiate this mythological truth to his students, Nirmal would claim, “This map shows that in geology, as in myth, there is a visible Ganga and a hidden Ganga: one flows on land and one beneath the water. Put them together and you have what is by far the greatest of the earth’s rivers” (181).

Nirmal associates the mythological story with geological deep time. Deep time is, in fact, the age of the earth. It is very difficult for geologists even today to measure the exact age of the earth or the geologic time. They try to comprehend the deep time by measuring the rock dipped in the ocean bed. It was from the observation of the Scottish geologist James Hutton, that the idea of the young earth’s chronology came to the forefront. He tried to notice very closely the soil being washed away from his farmland into the local streams and then carried to the ocean which he later imagined to be gathered into a huge mass of rock like the one he can see as hills around his countryside. Similarly, he assumed that the sea must have exchanged its position with the land which is formed by the erosion of the rocks situated at the floor of the ocean in a cycle that may take many many years. Such a process may occur at an incalculable time frame (Alden).

Nirmal observes that in accordance with the mythology, Ganga is the daughter of the Greek Goddess Tethys, wife of Oceanus. The current flowing of Ganga was once a landmass, a coastline of the southernmost Asian landmass. India was not at its current position. It was attached to Australia and Antarctica. There was no visible existence of Himalaya, Ganga, Jamuna, Saraswati, or Brahmaputra. So Nirmal firmly utters “And since there were no rivers, there was no delta, no flood plain, no silting, no mangroves - no Bengal, in other words” (181). He further added that the

green coastline of Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu was once a mass of ice running sixty meters deep into the sea - “Where the southern shore of the Ganges now lies was a length of frozen beach that dipped gently into the waters of the now-vanished Tethys Sea” (181).

The deep time chronicle gets a new momentum as Nirmal further relates the emergence of Ganga in a poetic manner:

I would show them how it happened that India broke away suddenly, a hundred and forty million years ago, and began its journey from Antarctica to the north. They would see their subcontinent had moved, at a speed no other landmass had ever attained before; they would see how its weight forced the rise of the Himalayas; they would see the Ganga emerging, as a brook on a rising hill. In front of their eyes they would see how, as India traveled, the Tethys shrank, how she grew thinner and thinner as the channel closed. They would watch as she withered- the two landmasses finally colliding at the expense of the mother ocean; they would see her dying but they would share no tears, for they would see also the birth of the two rivers in which her memory would be preserved, her twin children - the Indus and the Ganga. (181)

The uncanny mythology gets a logical basis through geological time or deep time. The earth has been transformed over the years as a natural cycle. The story of Nirmal ends with a fairy tale where he shows that the two rivers the Ganga and the Sindhu inherited the river dolphins from their mother Tethys. The river dolphins are the rarest of the species that would only be found today in these two rivers which their mother had gifted them to nurture. In reality, nowhere in the world this kind of river dolphin is available. Piya, the US-based marine biologist has come to Sundarbans only to do her research on this rare kind of river dolphin.

3.1.5 Conservation and Folktales

There has always been a close relationship between humans and nature. The abundance of folktales, tribal tales, myths, and legends emerging from the depths of deep woods attests to the intimate relationship between forests, human ingenuity, and narrative—both imagined and real. In the Indian subcontinent, mythical and cultural narratives play a major role in shaping the sense of nature. Among the rural and indigenous populations, protecting the environment has long been ingrained in the fabric of their culture. Stories have long served as a storehouse of knowledge and wielded the power to inform, enlighten, caution, and awaken us. These tales are regarded as myths. Myths are cultural and transhistorical representations of cultural knowledge that are passed down from generation to generation. With an emphasis on the Sundarbans, the study intends to investigate the function of myth in environmental preservation (Sharma 147).

Ghosh's Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest, is not only home to settlers and different species of animals and plants but also a repository of folktales and fables that regulate the lives of the people of the locality. Myths and folktales are such artistic artifacts that Ghosh employs in his narrative as its handmaiden. The communication with these pre-modern literary genres gives new momentum to the ecological consciousness of his fiction. They intensify the importance of the sanctity and preservation of nature and the protection of other-than-humans. The unique storytelling of the mundane everyday life of the islands is intersected with the fantastic inclusion of the magic realism element to demonstrate how important a role is played by the pre-enlightenment era folktales and how relevant these artifacts are for showing the urgency of the protection of the environment and the peaceful coexistence of human and nonhuman. The boundary between realism and magic realism is erased as Ghosh shows the veneration of the age-old belief in the myth and folktales among the islanders. These myths and folktales represent

nature by becoming its strong advocate for its protection and preservation and warning humans to remain within the limit.

The parable of Bonbibi is not a mere story but a narrative with serious moral implications. This parable has testified to the ecological understanding of the local inhabitants of the Sundarban region. Bonbibi tradition is one such folktale that Ghosh exploits ingeniously in *The Hungry Tide*. The story is handed down among the people of the vast regions of Sunderbans as religious and cultural practices and has influenced so much so that it creates a mystical cult irrespective of caste and creed.

“Bipod e poriya bon e jeijon e daak e, Ma boliya Bonbibi doya r maa take Uddhariye

taro toreya aponaro gun e, Maaer o hujura koto likhibo ekhane”

[Facing any danger inside the forest, whoever prays to Her,

Mother Bonbibi protects them all]

- Bonbibi Johuranama (Sen and Mukherjee)

This excerpt from *Bonbibi Johuranama* is chanted by the forest workers at the villages of the outer edge of Sunderbans before entering the forest. These forest workers comprise honey collectors and fishermen whose main source of livelihood is the forest. They take the risk of entering the forest with the blessing of Bonbibi. The imagination and worship of Bonbibi are customary in the Sundarbans region. This is closely connected with ecological consciousness, established traditional practices executed within a particular socio-cultural setting and unshakeable faith. Forest workers customarily enter the forest following age-old norms and practices and do not collect more than they need. The standard practices of the forest workers include entering the forest at a particular time and thus avoiding entering the forest during night time so as not to disturb the

wildlife. They strictly maintain the sanctity and purity of the environment by avoiding smoking and excreting. They do not take arms inside the forest. They do not catch fish during the breeding period and collect wood and honey from small trees (Sen and Mukherjee 22).

Ghosh has beautifully aligned his narrative with classical mythology by reviving the story of Bonbibi. Bonbibi and her brother Shah Janguli fight with Narayani, mother of Dakshin Roy for usurping the possession of Sunderbans. Dakshin Ray is a soothsayer who assumes different shapes with the help of his mythical power. He mostly takes the shape of a tiger. Johuranama is also a narrative of a young boy called Dukhi who is saved from the attack of Dakshin Ray by Bonbibi. The forest workers identify themselves with Dukhe before entering the forest and seek the blessing of Bonbibi against possible attack from the tiger (Sen and Mukherjee, *Arcadia*, no 22).

According to the parable, Bonbibi or “Woman of the Forest” is chosen by Allah to save the people of “Aathero Bhaatir Desh” or the Land of the Eighteen Tides from the persecution of the high caste priest Dokkhin Rai. (Halder)

Dokkhin Rai takes the shape of a tiger out of his mysterious power and terrifies the community on the island. Bonbibi, accompanying her brother Shah Jongoli, comes to the rescue from Madina. Together they defeat Dokkhin Rai and take hold of the forest. Bonbibi being merciful to Dokkhin Rai leaves half of the region of the tide country unharmed and unaffected by human activity. This land, which is the safe haven of non-humans, remains under the control of Dokkhin Ray, and the rest is governed by Bonbibi. There is a treaty between Bonbibi and Dokkhin Rai that both humans and non-humans are supposed to be loyal to the demarcation. In other words, they will strictly adhere to the accord agreed between Bonbibi and Dokkhin Rai. However, this pact is challenged by human greed (Halder, *NICHE*). The character who is shown to be the epitome of human

temptation in the fable is Dhona and the innocent victim of his unsurmountable thirst for riches is Dukhi.

Dukhi, an innocent village young boy, has fallen prey to this human avarice. He lives with his widowed mother and makes his living from shepherding and grazing animals of other villagers. He is tempted by his village uncle Dhona to join his group to collect honey from the forest. Dukhi's mother doesn't want him to go. Later she agrees and tells Dukhi to seek Bonbibi's help if any misfortune befalls him.

Dhona's greed to collect good quality honey leads him to command his team to follow him deep into the forest which is, in fact, the territory of Dokkhin Rai. Dokkhin Rai in the guise of a tiger reveals his true nature to Dhona by offering him as much profit to collect from the forest as he desires but in return, Dokkhin Rai has to be satisfied with the young flesh of Dukhi. This pact leads Dhona to leave the forest with overt satisfaction and Dukhi to please the palate of Dokkhin Rai. Dukhi, unaware of the evil design of Dhona, finds himself alone in the forest and seeks the mercy of Bonbibi when he is about to be devoured by Dokkhin Rai. Bonbibi rescues Dukhi immediately and sends her brother Shah Jongoli to settle the issue with Dokkhin Rai. Dokkhin Rai is utterly defeated by Shah Jongoli. However, he is saved by the intervention of a saint called Ghazi. Bonbibi sends Dukhi safely to his mother with a huge fortune of wax and honey and warns him not to venture into the forest with the intention of plundering the resources of the forest. This tale has become more than a mythical story to the forest inhabitants and they strictly maintain the fine demarcation between the forest and human habitat. This ensures the peaceful coexistence of humans and other-than-humans in the tide country.

The lives of the major characters in *The Hungry Tide* like Piya, Kusum and her son Fokir are closely interlaced with the wildlife of the vast region of Sundarban. Kusum and Fokir are natives

of the Sundarbans, the tide country. As a result, they hold Bonbibi, nature and the wildlife of Sundarban as sacred. They strictly follow the rituals of Bonbibi, the forest goddess. Kusum is a staunch devotee of Bonbibi, the forest goddess. Kusum shows her surprise when she learns that Kanai does not know about Bonbibi. Her naive utterance is “Then whom do you call on when you’re afraid?” (101).

As far as the devotion to Bonbibi is concerned, people irrespective of caste and creed, show their veneration towards Bonbibi. Bonbibi influences every sphere of life of the islanders. She controls the livelihood and culture of the inhabitants dictating to them how to coexist with the forest and the other-than-human beings, most importantly Royal Bengal Tiger.

Every household in Sundarbans has the shrine of Bonbibi. Kanai being a city dweller is not that aware of the influence of Bonbibi on the lives of the people of the island. He asked his uncle Nirmal about Bonbibi. Nirmal, a realist, who would prefer to get Kanai enlightened about the tale of Bonbibi from Horen ended up saying that Horen would have related the story by saying that Bonbibi is the ruler of the jungle and all the animals pay their homage to Bonbibi. In an era of scientific and technological advancement, the people of Sunderbans still rely on gods and saints for their protection and well-being.

Amitav Ghosh dedicates a chapter in *The Hungry Tide* to the description of the stage performance titled *The Glory of Bonbibi* named after the popular folktale *Bonbibi Johuranamah (The Narrative of the Glory of Bonbibi)* found in the works of the nineteenth-century poets Munshi Mohammad Khatir and Abdur Rahim. Part of the story where Dokkhin Rai is offered protection by the saint Ghazi has a connection with the epic ‘Ray-Mangal’ written by Krishnaram Das in 1686 (Halder).

The Glory of Bonbibi is the stage performance which Kanai and Kushum enjoyed in the yard of Hamilton house. The performance was based on the story of Bonbibi Johuranama. The moral of the story is humans and nonhumans live in peaceful coexistence in the country of eighteen tides under the rule of Bonbibi who has an agreement with Dokkhin Rai which highlights the matter that both humans and nonhumans will strictly maintain their jurisdiction and thus none will encroach upon the other's area. It is human greed that disturbs peaceful equilibrium and causes havoc. The story of Dhona and Dukhi is the finest example of human greed.

Ghosh through this fable directs our attention to the ritual and practice of the ordinary people of the forest for the preservation of the wilderness. Like the fable of Bonbibi in *The Hungry Tide*, much of Ghosh's *Gun Island* is influenced by the portrayal of Manasa Devi, the snake goddess. These two novels have taken Ghosh to the labyrinth of the mystery of Sundarbans. The association of Manasa Devi with Gun Island is intentional in order to recreate the legend to serve the purpose of portraying the ecological crisis of the global standard. Ghosh has logically foregrounded the connection between folktales and the ecological crisis through *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*.

As the legend goes, Manasa Devi, the goddess of snakes and poisonous creatures, is a powerful deity who is worshiped in order to be protected from snake bites and diseases like smallpox and chickenpox. According to Hindu mythology, snakes are considered to be dreadful being closely associated with eternity as well as materiality, life as well as death. This legend is connected with a man called Banduk Sadagar or the Gun Merchant. Manasa Devi is considered to be a goddess who is feared for her temper. She is fond of wealth, ornaments, elaborate meals, etc. Among her multitude of worshippers, only Banduk Sadagar has the ability to satisfy her desire.

Many centuries ago, there lived a wealthy merchant named Chand Saudagar somewhere in the region of Bhagirathi. The entire area was under the control of the snake goddess Manasa Devi.

The merchant was so proud of his own wealth that he did not consider Manasa Devi a deity to be worshiped. Even he did not pay his homage to the deity by offering gifts from his vast fortune. This led Manasa Devi to show her fierce anger against the merchant. She appeared in person before Chand Saudagar and demanded her offerings which the merchant was reluctant to pay. Consequently, the goddess threatened to kill all his offspring. The wealthy merchant gradually lost his sons and riches as a result of causing the wrath of the snake goddess including his youngest son Lokhinder. Eventually, the merchant's cargo was sunk and he faced fierce natural calamities. Later it was Lokhinder's newlywed wife Behula whose devotion softened the heart of Manasa and enabled her to bring back the life of her husband. Behula had to promise the goddess to persuade her father-in-law to worship Manasa.

Ghosh's *Gun Island* excavates the fable through a sudden visit by the protagonist Dinanath Datta, popularly known as Deen, a nonresident Indian Bengali, who is a reclusive antique books dealer based in Brooklyn, New York to the shrine of the Gun Merchant or Banduki Sadagar. The shrine is located deep in the mangrove forest of the Sundarbans island. This is the place where the merchant is believed to have ended his journey. It is Piya, another important character from *The Hungry Tide*, who is a marine biologist, persuades him against his interest in experiencing the legend of snake goddess Manasa Devi. Deen on a day's trip visits the shrine of the goddess which is now guarded by King Kobra. At the shrine, Deen discovers mysterious ciphers engraved on the walls of the shrine focusing on the ordeals encountered by Chand Saudagar or Gun Merchant. Gun Merchant, according to the legend, is a restless wanderer like Odyssey. Ghosh has not associated the saga of the Gun merchant merely with the mythological story of fate and divine wrath but with serious issues like ecological disturbances and migration.

The Sundarbans is today an ecologically endangered region getting vulnerable day by day by the anthropogenic effect. The cyclone of 1970 killed half a million people. However, Deen has heard that a small number of people survived the cyclone because of the intervention of Manasa Devi. They, by taking shelter in the shrine, could escape the inevitable casualty. Deen is skeptical about the myth of Manasa Devi because he is not inclined to believe a supernatural being ensnaring the snakes to achieve her objectives (Rumman Alam). Nevertheless, to his utter disbelief, Deen had a strange encounter with King Kobra when he visited the dham. This majestic creature is assigned to protect the shrine. So Tipu's aggressive attempt to ensnare the snake had a quick retaliation. The snakebite sent Tipu to a delirium. Rafi, who is nursing Tipu, assures him by saying "Don't be afraid. The snake that bit you is no ordinary snake- my grandfather used to say that it had been sent to protect us" (?) So, the fable of Manasa Devi refers to the conflict between nature and humans. Manasa Devi as an emblem of nature protects those who are helpless and innocent. Tipu in his frenzy could see the haunted shadow following him at a close distance. But they could not reach him because of the snakes. Now the shadows have left Tipu and are following Rani. Tipu's vision has made invisible things visible.

The gun merchant is an epitome of human greed. His greed has made him a restless wanderer. Manasa Devi in the form of queer nature brings drought, famine, and storms to punish the gun merchant. The gun merchant is, however, unyielding and obstinate to the ferocity of Manasa Devi. It is as if the cataclysmic effect of the unbridled advancement of capitalism in the wake of the severe climate crisis. The mercantile enterprise of humans towards the creation of the mechanistic world devoid of sensitivity to nature and ecology which took its shape at the beginning of the seventeenth century with maritime conquest to serve colonial greed is epitomized by the portrayal of the legend of the Manasa Devi.

Ghosh draws an analogy between myth and geology in *The Hungry Tide*. Nirmal in *The Hungry Tide* expresses his desire to begin his new teaching life at Morichjhapi by asking questions of his pupils “What do our old myths have in common with geology” (180)? So, it is Nirmal who shows that both the supernatural deities and the stirrings of the earth are all gigantic and “both equally otherworldly, equally remote from us” (180). Also, the time span in both myth and geology are similar “yugas and epochs, Kaliyuga and the Quaternary” (180).

So these cultural artifacts exercise their power as nonhuman agency to influence the social and religious lives of the people of Sundarbans. The natives nurture these traditions with veneration and maintain a peaceful coexistence with nature.

3.1.6 Actor Network Theory and the Agency of the Nonhumans

Actor-Network Theory (ANT), particularly in the context of novels by Amitav Ghosh, therefore, offers a fascinating lens through which to explore the agency of non-human entities. ANT challenges traditional views of agency and social theory by emphasizing the role of both human and non-human actors in shaping networks of relationships and outcomes. In ANT, agency is not solely attributed to human actors but is distributed across a network of humans and non-humans (objects, technologies, organizations, etc.). Ghosh intertwines human narratives with complex networks of non-human elements like landscapes, climate, and material objects. These non-human entities are not a passive background but integral to the unfolding of events and the shaping of human lives. Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*, highlights how environmental factors, such as climate change and natural disasters, are not just backdrops but active agents influencing characters' lives and decisions. Non-human elements like cultural artifacts, artworks, or manuscripts can be seen as agents in Ghosh's narratives, driving the plot or altering characters' perceptions and actions. By applying ANT, we can appreciate how Ghosh's novels portray

complex networks of human and non-human actors, blurring the boundaries between subjects and objects. This perspective enriches our understanding of how narratives unfold and how societies are shaped by dynamic interactions across diverse actors within a network.

Storm is a significant and recurrent trope in Ghosh's novels. As nonhumans, the agency of storm has a strong influence on both humans and nonhumans. So, if Sundarbans are projected as the protagonist with its beautiful sights and sounds, the storms and the tidal surges are portrayed by Ghosh as something creating awe and wonder. Nirmal's description in *The Hungry Tide* evokes a fearful picture of the tidal country, "And imagine that fateful night, when the storm struck, at exactly the time that a kotal gon was setting in; imagine how they cowered in their roofless huts and watched the waters, rising, rising, gnawing at the mud and the sand they had laid down to hold the river off" (203).

Storms are like frequent travelers. They come with full strength and rip the entire region off its vitality "as if some giant had bitten off a part of Lusibari's coast" (203). The ravages are still vivid "Look: that was done by the storm of the 1970" (203). Nirmal recalls and informs Fokir of the devastating effects of the storms - "It was a bhangon, a breaking: the river tore off a four-acre piece of land and carried it away. In an instant it was gone - its, fields, trees were all devoured." (203). Nirmal's account shows that this was not the worst of all storms. The most terrible storm took its toll in 1737 some thirty years before the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. The British East India Company had made Calcutta the main port of the east. The storm usually shows its rage in October and November. It was in October when a huge tidal surge hit the coastal area. Storm influences the life of the ordinary people so much so that Ghosh says about Horen in *Gun Island* "Storms, I soon discovered, were Horen's measure of time ... Horen spoke of the Bhola cyclone, and of Aila, as events that bookended extended spans of time" (72).

Like the storm, wildfire rouses a feeling of suspicion among people whether it is real or unreal. It so happens that Lisa, a character in *Gun Island*, is doing her research project on bark beetles “who eat up trees from the inside so that when there is a dry spell the dead wood is like kindling, just waiting to go up in flames”(136). This insect is extending its range and as a result, large areas start getting affected by it. When Lisa reports this to the authorities, nobody cares only to blame Lisa that this is her conspiracy. They could not even realize that wildfire has its own power to destroy. This is the same wildfire that engulfs the sky of the entire LA and sends the protagonist on the flight and the audience in the museum in a frenzy (156). “The tsunami of smoke in the distance was still in the same place” (156). The opening speaker of the seminar held in LA talked about the seventeenth century which is known as the Little Ice Age when “many parts of the world had been struck by famines, droughts and epidemics” (152). This period in history witnessed political and religious unrest, economic depression on the one hand and enlightenment, industrial revolution, and development on the other hand. So the Gun Merchant epitomizes the flood, drought, famine, and wildfire of the seventeenth century but the natural calamities could not subdue his greed and pride. Ghosh’s *Gun Island* thus shows how flood and river erosion send Rafi and Tipu to be “ecological refugees” and navigate to Italy for migration taking the risk of life.

3.2 Development, Environmental Justice and Marginalized Communities

3.2.1 Marginalized communities affected by ecological crises

The extreme third-worldist critiques show that development is “a little more than a disguised form of neocolonialism, a vast technocratic apparatus designed primarily to serve the economic and political interests of the West” (Huggan and Tiffin 29). This is evident in *The Hungry Tide* when

the settlers in Morichjhapi face inhuman persecution and evacuation as the local government with the help of an international agency constructs a sanctuary for the protection of the tiger. The islands, which are the tiger's habitat, are state-protected conservation reserves, so the refugee relocation initiative is doomed. The Indian authorities violently put down the insurrection of the refugees in retaliation for their blatant disobedience of the ban on human habitation of these islands. The government besieged Morichjhapi and, following a deadly standoff between the armed forest reserve guards, forced the refugees to flee. In Nirmal's diary, Kusum, Fokir's mother and one of the rebel commanders, chronicles her depressing thoughts during the island's siege:

... the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit there helpless, listening to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, were worth less than dirt or dust. This island has got to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world... Who are these people, I wondered who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? (261-62)

In the name of wildlife preservation, Ghosh shows the naked representation of the protection of the interest of the neocolonial agents.

3.2.2 Power Dynamics and Social Inequalities Aggravating Environmental Injustices

Ghosh's fiction shows the detrimental effect of development on an environment inspired by imperialism and capitalism. Ghosh directs our attention to the massive development of the coastal areas at the cost of unthinkable ecological disruptions during the colonial period. These port cities played a pivotal role in the expansion of oceanic trade networks in the nineteenth century. The coastal cities are developed keeping in mind the instant commercial benefit ignoring any long-

term strategic plan for the sustenance of the environment. This is perfectly exemplified in the Ibis Trilogy (*Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, *Flood of Fire*). Ghosh's vivid description shows that the sprawling foreign settlements in Canton "was so thickly settled that nobody could tell where the land stopped and the water began"(392); Calcutta's river congestion, harbor and shipyards give a vibe of " a forest of masts, spars and sails" (289); and Hong Kong's coast looks like a kind of an artificial island whose "masts, flags and pennants were so quickly bunched together that it was as if a great fortress had arisen out of the water" (353) Thus the cities are artificially created by reclaiming land ignoring the vulnerability of its ecosystem. The port cities serve the navigation of the commercial goods delivered from one port to another. But these port cities were prone to any kind of cataclysmic effects like tsunamis and cyclones. Ghosh says:

It is surely no accident that colonial cities like Mumbai, New York, Boston and Kolkata were all brought into being through early globalization. They were linked to each other not only through the circumstances of their founding but also through patterns of trade that expanded and accelerated Western economies. These cities were thus the drivers of the very processes that now threaten them with destruction. In that sense, their predicament is but an especially heightened instance of a plight that is now universal. (57)

The coastal cities developed into mere ports ignoring its colossal impact in terms of ecological vulnerability has got significant attention in Ghosh's fiction. Mumbai initially consisted of an estuarine archipelago of which a couple of islands are large and hilly and were situated to the north while a group of low-lying islands to the south. Ghosh mentions:

The southern part of the archipelago passed into British control when King Charles II married Catherine of Braganza in 1661: the islands were included in her dowry(which also contained a chest of tea: this was the Pandora's box that introduced the British public to

the beverage, thereby setting in motion the vast cycles of trade that would turn nineteenth century Bombay into the world's leading opium exporting port). It was only after passing into British hands that the southern islands became the nucleus of a sprawling urban conglomeration. It was then too that a distinct line of separation between land and sea was conjured up through the application of techniques of surveying within a 'milieu of colonial power'. (43)

Mumbai came under European rule in 1535. There were shrines, villages, forts, harbors and bazaars on the southern islands of Mumbai for millennia but those were not the center of urban sites even at the beginning of European occupation. New York, on the other hand, was the site of the earliest European settlements in the area around Albany. Under Dutch rule around 1625, it became New Amsterdam which eventually came under the control of the British in the 1660s. Then it became the present New York. Both Mumbai and New York were very attractive to the colonial rulers because of their closeness to the deep water harbors on the one hand and strategic position on the other hand. Ghosh mentions, "... as islands, they were both easier to defend and easier to supply from the metropolis. A certain precariousness was thus etched upon them from the start by reason of their colonial origins" (43).

Ghosh records another interesting history of the birth of Calcutta on the banks of the river Hooghly in the late seventeenth century. This port city which was for a long time the capital of the British Raj came into existence when the river was silting up. However, by the early nineteenth century, East India Company planned to build a new port close to the Bay of Bengal. The location was chosen in the 1840s which was situated some 55 kilometers to the southeast of Calcutta on the banks of the river known as 'Matla'. Matla which means intoxicated in Bangla was a river supposed to cause a huge mass of salt water to inundate the port. Henry Piddington, a shipping

inspector, cautioned the then Governor General about the ominous warning of a cyclone and the accompanying tidal surge that would destroy the port. It may be mentioned here that it was Piddington who coined the term ‘cyclone’ through his vast study of storms and storm surges and this is why he is still remembered today. Being a storm expert Piddington could realize the craziness of the river Matla. Piddington wrote several letters to the planners and surveyors and also to the Viceroy warning them of the dangers of building a port on the bank of the river Matla. Ghosh recorded it in the following way:

he (Piddington) told them it was crazy to build a town so deep in the tide country; the mangroves were Bengal’s defence against the Bay, he said- they served as a barrier against nature’s fury; absorbing the initial onslaught of cyclonic winds, waves and tidal surges. If not for the tide country, the plains would have been drowned long before: it was the mangroves that kept the hinterland alive. Kolkata’s long, winding sea-lane was thus its natural defence against the turbulent energies of the Bay; the new port, on the other hand, was dangerously exposed. Given an unfortunate conjunction of winds and tides, even a minor storm would suffice to wash it away; all it would take was a wave stirred up by a cyclone. (286)

However, Piddington’s warning was not paid any attention by the builders and developers of the new port city. The port was developed on a massive scale. There were banks, hotels, a railway station and grand public buildings. The city was inaugurated ceremoniously in 1864 and was named Port Canning after the name of the governor-general who was the ruler at that time. Ghosh wrote:

Port Canning’s claims to grandeur were short-lived. A mere three years after its inauguration, it was struck by a cyclone, just as Piddington had predicted. And even though

the accompanying storm surge was a modest one, rising to only six feet, it caused terrible destruction. The city was abandoned four years later (Canning is now a small river port and access point for the Sundarbans). Piddington thus became one of the first Cassandra of climate science. (60)

So it demonstrates that port cities are very vulnerable to the cyclonic wind and tidal surge, yet the policymakers remain stuck to the commercial gain at the cost of the damage caused to the land and ecology. Major port cities are the nerve centers of the country's economy. However, the policymakers and government do not tend to pay attention to the long-term sustenance of the environment. It has been happening since the colonial period when capitalism started to burgeon at a fast pace. Ghosh says in *The Great Derangement*:

It is surely no accident that colonial cities like Mumbai, New York, Boston and Kolkata were all brought into being through early globalization. They were linked to each other not only through the circumstances of their founding but also through the patterns of trade that expanded and accelerated Western economies. These cities were thus the drivers of the very processes that now threaten them with destruction. (57)

The sprawling colonial harbors, cities and dockyards are rapidly constructed and expanded with a view to promoting enforced production and marketing of narcotics. This is how the 'muddy mess' of Singapore's port city suddenly turned into a booming economy where "hotel, church, all are built on opium"(324-325) On the other hand, the rise of Post Opium War Hong Kong on the reclaimed land leaves it at risk to the mercy of the unpredictable behavior of the storm and business magnets. So Caitlin Vandertop in his article "Opium Cities, Carbon Routes: World-ecological Prehistory in Amitav Ghosh's Hong Kong" rightly mentions:

In describing these cities as part land, part water Ghosh produces an anticipatory sense of the socio-ecological fragility of the British Empire's port cities, alluding to their bases in highly fluid, financialized opium economies reliant on carbon-intensive steam technologies, their environmental precarity due to coastal deforestation and the selection of unsustainable construction sites, and their vulnerability to rising sea-levels, flooding and extreme weather events. In other words, these cities' representations speak not only to the themes of coastal and cultural interconnectedness that pervade Ghosh's fiction but also to the more literal potential of the ocean to overwhelm and reclaim these spaces, affirming a sense of the socially produced vulnerability shaping both their colonial pasts and their ecological futures. (3)

In fact, the European colonial rulers ventured their mercenary enterprises into the coastal regions with the sole intention of promoting capitalism and free trade in the name of development. This objective is materialized by harnessing nature in such a way that the port cities are now paying the price for their perilous positions. So, the logic of short-term colonial development has driven millions of displaced people to the dangerously exposed coastal urban areas where cyclones, flooding, and resource shortages are common phenomena. Ghosh, therefore, argues that cities like Kolkata, Boston, Singapore and Mumbai were "drivers of the very processes that now threaten them with destruction". (55)

3.3 Sustainability and Alternative Ecological Practices

Ghosh explores themes concerning sustainability and suggests alternative modes of living in his narratives. In *The Hungry Tide* Ghosh portrays the nuances of the ecological balances and the

struggle of humans to coexist with nature. The lives of the people of the Sundarbans as depicted in the novel are closely connected with the environment for their sustenance. They depend on sustainable practices like fishing, collecting honey, gathering woods and timbers from the forest, and maintaining the harmony and equilibrium of nature. The indigenous community as projected in the novel is concerned about the preservation of nature for their own sustenance. They have the traditional knowledge and understanding of how to live in communion with the wilderness. In carrying out her cetological endeavor, Piya's enlightened environmentalism respects the fishermen's deep local knowledge and is sympathetic to the material and cultural interests of the community:

And for myself, I know that I don't want to do the kind of work that places the burden of conservation on those who can least afford it. If I was to take on a project here I'd want it to be done in consultation with the fishermen who live in these parts. (397)

Piya's collaborative perception is in line with the most current developments in ecological discourse toward “community based conservation,” where, according to Tsing (qtd. in Kaur) the local community is “reimagined as culturally marked, and naturally wise” (129). Furthermore, by highlighting the crucial role that class and economic standing play in conservation initiatives, Piya clarifies one of the main points of contention in the environmental debate between affluent Western countries and postcolonial states like India, where the indigenous populations and peasants, most affected by conservation projects, perceive these initiatives as elitist and insensitive to the needs of the state's most vulnerable residents. For Fokir, the struggle to survive—even if it means taking the life of an animal that may be listed as an endangered species by the World Wildlife Fund—goes hand in hand with a spiritual connection to the natural world. Kanai suggests the text's broader definition of the environment, or bio-space, as one in which the human is part of the ecology and

not outside or opposed to it, by restating a variant of the idea that Kusum had made before (Kaur 131). Piya now develops into a more progressive environmentalist from a narrow-minded conservation scientist who is primarily interested in researching Oracella. Her humaneness and environmental responsiveness now go hand in hand as she learns to accept and value the Sundarbans' indigenous people as informed collaborators in advancing her ecological goal. *The Hungry Tide's* togetherness stems from a feeling of community that is, for the most part, “homogeneous”. These refugees' resistance to the state's demand for their eviction "to make room for wildlife conservation projects" (Ghosh 59) is as strong as their solidarity. The geo-cultural homogeneity of the tide-country people and refugee community fosters camaraderie and lays the foundation for resistance against the state authority in defending the refugees' rights over the Sundarbans' land and rivers (De 77).

In *Gun Island*, Ghosh shows the right-wing anti-immigrant groups and a group of pro-refugee demonstrators engaging in a boisterous encounter. It becomes evident that pro-refugee activists play a key role in plotting refugee unity in the face of right-wing hostility as Palash explains to Dinanath how human rights activists throughout Italy had chosen to take up the cause of the boatload of immigrants. So Ghosh suggests that cross-cultural solidarity and the emergence of new forms of community can be facilitated by the experiences of South Asian economic migrants with transnational travel, friendship with dispossessed individuals of various ethnic nationalities, and their patients listening to the trauma of another. The economic immigrants in *Gun Island* accept the relatively strange reality of transnational networks to realize their goals together with greater optimism and confidence rather than lamenting the loss of their roots (De 80).

CHAPTER 4

Human-Human Interaction: Navigating the Socio-Political and Ecological Trajectory

Amitav Ghosh's fiction reveals a horrifying history of injustice, betrayal, and oppression perpetrated by those in positions of power upon the helpless and defenseless. The vast canvas that Ghosh makes use of to portray a wide range of characters—including mixed-race ancestry, imperial rulers, British and American traders and businessmen, Chinese officials, multinational labor force, sailors, army, men and women from various race, color, and creed—means that he does not want to be classified as a postcolonialist writer. However, there is a strong undercurrent in his fiction about the Western world and their successors' and agents' domination over the multitudes from colonial and post-colonial origins, who were perceived as part of silent, powerless nature and therefore treated like animals. Anthropogenic catastrophes are the result of the globe being divided between the mighty and the voiceless and powerless due to the unbreakable cycle of capitalism and free trade. In the face of a severe climate crisis, the anthropocentric view that has been influencing people's attitudes toward the environment as a masculinist and reason-centered culture and giving rise to the philosophical, cultural, and political justification for European dominance over non-Europeans has now proven to be hazardous and destructive. This chapter broadly concentrates on social hierarchies and environmental exploitation, the contribution of capitalist and colonial ideologies to environmental exploitation and degradation, environmental resistance and activism, the role of social movements and grassroots initiatives in combating environmental injustices, gender dynamics in relation to environmental justices, and gender intersecting with other axes of oppression in shaping environmental experiences and responses in Ghosh's novels. This chapter will also shed light on how one class of humanity is oppressed—

whether overtly or covertly—by another, causing widespread migration, settlement, and relocation as well as impacting and supporting vast ecosystems.

4.1 Social Hierarchies and Environmental Exploitation

4.1.1 Contribution of Capitalist and Colonial Ideologies to Environmental Exploitation

Ghosh intends to show in his fiction the systematic exploitation of humans and nonhumans with a certain mission and vision adopted by the European colonizers under the propaganda of civilizing the non-Europeans or rather facilitating their blueprint of widespread consumerism and commercialism and thus supported by self-serving Western needs and political motives. Plumwood puts it:

The Western definition of humanity depended- and still depends- on the presence of the ‘non-human’: the uncivilized, the animal, the animalistic. European justification for invasion and colonization proceeded from this basis, understanding non-European lands and the people and animals that inhabited them as ‘spaces’, ‘unused, underused or empty’(53). The very ideology of colonization is thus one where anthropocentrism underlying Eurocentrism is being used to justify those forms of European colonialism that see ‘indigenous cultures as “primitive”, less rational and closer to children, animals and nature’. (qtd. in Huggan and Tiffin 53)

The lives of the indentured laborer find a unique place in the *Ibis Trilogy*. Amitav Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies* unfolds an unrevealed narrative of the sufferings of the indentured laborers under the rule of British colonial power. Laborers who enter into a formal agreement with their employer stating that they will work for the employer for a set period of time or until a debt is paid are said

to be engaged in indentured labor. Generally speaking, the obligation is regarded to include the expenses incurred by the employer for accommodation, food, and transportation of the employee from their place of residence. Costs related to the apprenticeship or other training that is supposedly supplied by the employer may also be included. Employers frequently take advantage of indentured workers who voluntarily or inadvertently sign agreements (Raikar). The function of an indentured laborer was to work on sugar, cotton, tea plantations, and rail construction projects in British colonies in the West Indies, Africa and Southeast Asia. It is worth mentioning here that, slavery was nullified in British empires in 1833 under the Slavery Abolition Act. This Act primarily focuses on dismantling the plantation slavery that persisted in the British tropical colonies where the number of plantation slaves was greater than that of the colonial people. So the fear of revolt among the slaves forced the colonists to go for the abolition of slavery. However, the most important reasons for revoking slavery were free trade and capitalism. This chapter shows Ghosh's detailed depiction of the British colonial ruler's ongoing practice of indirect slavery, which promotes consumerism and commercialism under the pretense of indentured servitude. This chapter discusses how the East India Company's cruel treatment of the indigenous people turned them into indentured servants, where they accepted a new kind of slavery and fled their homeland in search of a better life in a foreign country ruled by colonists, eventually joining the diaspora.

4.1.2 Indentured Laborer

Amitav Ghosh illustrates in *Sea of Poppies* the rise of indentured laborers, as trade and business links between colonial rulers and the outside world increased after slavery ended. Actually, with the advent of indentured labor, the trading connection reached a new height. By forcing the people to work in jobs that would appear to be alternatives to slavery, Ghosh depicts this kind of labor as an imperial ruler's deception intended to generate wealth. The promise that they would be able to

live productive lives in a new land full of hopes and promises is what persuades or forces the locals to sign this pact. This is how the locals were tricked into accepting a life of uncertainty and being cut off from both their own families and their property. Even after slavery was outlawed, the colonial rulers continued to subjugate the local labor force in cruel ways in order to further free trade and capitalism. Furthermore, the local intermediaries who worked with the British dealers double-colonized these indentured immigrants. Nonetheless, proponents of indentured labor argue that this new labor modifies the lives of the diaspora population and makes their historical contributions to the global economy noteworthy. In his fictionalized account of this historical event, Ghosh tells the story of a variety of locals, including impoverished peasants, banished upper-caste relatives, a falsely accused feudal ruler, and marginalized communities who had no choice but to choose to migrate as indentured laborers to an unidentified place. This chapter examines how Ghosh skillfully depicts indentured labor as a methodical process of profit-making from free trade and capitalism, as well as an act of deceit that encourages enslavement after slavery is abolished. The term "girmitya," which is epistemologically derived from the word "girmit," a warped form of the English word "agreement," was used to refer to indentured laborers in the Bhojpuri language. Following the abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833, indentured migration was established in the 19th century to address the growing demand for labor due to the labor shortage. Over 60,500 laborers from different castes and religions would be brought to the Fiji islands on 42 ships over 37 years, or nearly 87 journeys, between 1879 and 1916. These migrants were among the over a million Indians who journeyed to the colonies situated in the Indian and Atlantic oceans. (Malhotra). A workforce capable of multiplying economic progress was desperately needed in the area that the British Raj eventually came to dominate. Malhotra observes that the colony of Fiji, which the British Crown acquired in 1874, was anticipated to

experience economic expansion and prosperity. But labor and capital were hard to come by. The first official governor of the island, Sir Arthur Gordon, invited Australia's Colonial Sugar Refining Company to expand into Fiji. India, which already provided indentured labor to other British possessions, was his first choice for the labor force (Malhotra).

The workers who accepted contracts in their home countries to be indentured servants and serve overseas for a set amount of time were also derisively referred to as "coolies." After the contract expires, they agreed to provide a salary, a small plot of land, and return travel. Many times, the migrants were unable to arrive. They received quite meager pay as well. They were forced to live in abject poverty. Numerous laborers attempted to flee their appalling living conditions, but when they were unable to do so, they were imprisoned and had their sentences doubled to ten years for breaking the terms of their employment contract. Ghosh perfectly illustrates the image of the planters in *Sea of Poppies* when the planter Monsieur d'Epinay sends a letter to Mr. Burnham. He said, "My canes are rotting in the field, Mr. Reid." "Tell Mr. Burnham that I need men. Now that we may no longer have slaves in Mauritius, I must have coolies, or I am doomed" (Ghosh 22).

4.1.3 Imperialism and Transatlantic Human Trafficking

The continuation of colonial rule and subjection in order to advance globalization and capitalism led to the transatlantic human trafficking crisis. In their work *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin contend that the intentional (or unintentional) movement of people, animals, and plants throughout the European empires fostered widespread ecosystem change under visibly unequal power regimes, facilitating or reinforcing the environmental effects of Western attitudes toward humans in the world once invasion and settlement had been accomplished, or at least once administrative structures had been established (6).

In addition, the West attempted to demonstrate to the rest of the world that mass transit for people was meant to promote development which according to Huggan and Tiffin is a “little more than a disguised form of neocolonialism, a vast technocratic apparatus designed primarily to serve the economic and political interests of the west”(6). The migrants found themselves in a variety of situations, including losing their identity and renouncing their own country, culture, language, and belief.

A major indicator of global migration is the existence of oceans. The “transnational connectivity” through “movement, border crossings and heterogenous encounters” is described by Anupama Arora in her work "The Sea is History: Opium, Colonialism and Migration in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*" (Arora 21). Anupama highlights Ghosh's evocative depiction of the diverse obstacles encountered by migrants of various nationalities who were subject to the colonial regime's direct or indirect rule. The extensive marine network is used by the British government to transport people, goods, and plants. She describes the ocean as a huge archive that has layers upon layers of tales of "power and violence, exchange, resistance, and survival" (Arora 21). Derya Bidercidinc makes the case in "Displacement in *Sea of Poppies*" that migration and movement shape and reshape a migrant's identity.

The British regime exploits the vast oceanic network to transport people, products and plants. According to her, the ocean is a vast repository possessing layers of stories of “power and violence, exchange, resistance and survival” (Arora 21). In “Displacement in *Sea of Poppies*” Derya Bidercidinc argues how the identity of the migrants is created and recreated with migration and mobility. Thus, she applies postcolonial ecocriticism to the analysis of how identity is constructed in connection to geography (Bidercidin 374). This chapter concentrates on how the imperial

repressive forces, in order to support imperialism and capitalism, create a sense of otherness and racism while dealing with the indentured workers.

The Empire appeared to set out to bring the so-called barbaric and uncivilized people of non-European descent under control. Because the East India Company saw the native people as "other," it subjected them to hegemonic tyranny, injustice, deceit, and misrule. The colonial overlords soon realized that there were scholars, revered spiritual leaders, and recognized administrators among the people living in India. In his "Speech on the East India Bill," Edmund Burke describes how the corporation violated the agreements they had made with the local feudal lords, bringing the long-standing feudal system to an end. Burke contends that the East India Company's charter, which established its governance, was drafted with the goal of upholding the monopoly of British traders and advancing the interests of the ruling class. Additionally, the colonial masters' violence and enslavement of the aboriginal people were justified under this charter. Burke also draws attention to the ways in which the East India Charter violates the fundamental human rights of common Indians. He draws a contrast between the Magna Carta, which is regarded as the best charter for defending peoples' inherent rights, and the East India Charter. In his trilogy on *Ibis*, Ghosh captures the agony of the indigenous Indians in precisely the same way that Burke does in his speech regarding the East India Bill. Burke's claims are supported by his studies and careful observations of the colonial rulers' misbehavior throughout time. Burke's statement, "In India, all the vices operate by which sudden fortune is acquired, in England are often displayed, by the same persons, the virtues which dispense hereditary wealth," resonates strongly with Ghosh's *Ibis trilogy*" (Burke 55). Burke further illustrates this point by saying, "Here the manufacturer and husbandman will bless the just and punctual hand, that in India has torn the cloth from the loom, or wrung from him the very opium in which he forgot his oppressions and his oppressor" (55).

4.1.4 Environmental and Social Racism

According to Ghosh's *Ibis* trilogy, the British merchants initiated opium cultivation, production, and export to China after assessing the possibility of the opium trade as a way to reduce the significant trade deficit. Ghosh regards opium as “among the most precious jewels in Queen Victoria’s crown” (83). His fictional narratives substantiate the view of economist Carl Trocki who mentions “Without the drug, there probably would have been no British Empire” for “the economic foundation of the imperial economy lay on opium” (Trocki xiii). To the great detriment of all Indians, the country's peasants were compelled to cultivate opium rather than the traditional crops of rice, wheat, and pulses. The Indians were thus forced to migrate due to poverty, social inequality, colonial tyranny, fraudulent lawsuits, and bankruptcy.

Richard B. Allen in the abstract of “Indian Ocean Indentured Labor, 19th and Early 20th Century” argues that, to meet the demand for free (nonslave) workers in French and especially British colonies, over three million men, women, and children migrated from eastern Africa, East Asia, and South Asia across the Indian Ocean in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The social, economic, cultural, and political landscapes of the former British colonies that gained independence in the late 1940s, early 1950s, and early 1960s are still shaped by the labor trades of the past.

During the colonial era, the colonies developed as the center of the British rulers' capitalist supremacy. The ancient crops that provided the indigenous people with their daily needs were forbidden from producing. As a substitute, a new set of cash crops including tea, sugar, opium, and indigo were suddenly made to be cultivated in order to close the trade gap between Britain and China. The old level of living was shattered by the financial and social costs associated with the

production, transshipment, and distribution of these crops. Deeti, one of the central characters muses over her childhood memories:

Poppies had been a luxury then, grown in small clusters between the fields that bore the main winter crops-wheat, masoor dal and vegetables. Her mother would send some of her poppy seeds to the toil-press, and the rest she would keep for the house, some for replanting, and some to cook with meat and vegetables. As for sap, it was sieved of impurity and left to dry, until the sun turned it into hard abkari afeem. (Ghosh 29)

When Deeti thinks back on the hardships of the present, the nostalgic vision of bygone days leads her into a hallucination. She can easily compare her present life with her earlier days:

In the old days, farmers would keep a little of their home-made opium for their families, to be used during illnesses, or at harvests and weddings; the rest they would sell to the local nobility, or to pykari merchants from Patna. Back then, a few clumps of poppy were enough to provide for a household's needs, leaving a little over, to be sold. (Ghosh 29)

Since poppies were not a necessary crop, large-scale cultivation of them was not required. Due to the high cost of growing the crop, peasants had little interest in growing poppies:

No one was inclined to plant more because of all the work it took to grow poppies- fifteen ploughings of the land and every remaining clod to be broken by hand, with a dantoli; fences and bunds to be built; purchases of manure and constant watering; and after all that, the frenzy of the harvest, each bulb having to be individually nicked, drained and scraped. (Ghosh 29)

This is how the mercenary goals of the British colonial authority turned the populace and the environment into its victims. The primary driver behind the manufacturing and cultivation of

opium was their enormous need for revenue. The British were so consumed by their desire for power and wealth that they gave little thought to the plight of the indigenous populace. The narrator reminds us, “Such punishment was bearable when you had a patch or two of poppies- but what sane person would want to multiply these labours when there were better, more useful crops to grow, like wheat, dal, vegetables?” (Ghosh 29)

As a result, the locals are denied their basic human rights by the British colonizers and their local operatives. The British autocratic ruler's increasing demand for opium exports to China caused a dramatic fall in the yield of winter crops. In order to accomplish their goal, the colonial officials began to persecute the local farmers. In words of the narrator:

Come the cold weather, the English sahibs would allow little else to be planted; their agents would go from home to home, forcing cash advances on the farmers, making them sign *asami* contracts. It was impossible to say no to them: If you refused they would leave their silver hidden in your house, or throw it through a window. It was no use telling the white magistrate that you had not accepted the money and your thumbprint was forged: he earned commissions on the opium and would never let you off. And at the end of it, your earnings would come to no more than three-and-a-half sicca rupees, just about enough to pay off your advance. (Ghosh 30)

In addition to the British government and the East India Company, poppy growing benefited British traders who began profiting from opium manufacture and trading with the help of their local employees. In an attempt to safeguard their own interests, these local workers encouraged their employers to take advantage of the local feudal leaders' land, forcing the estate's owner into bankruptcy and the farmers into difficulty. A local worker named Baboo Nob Kissin told his boss,

British trader Benjamin Burnham, that the East India Company was supposed to be giving up poppy cultivation in Eastern India, so he bought the Raskhali land to produce poppies:

Were that to happen, poppies might well become a plantation crop, like indigo or sugarcane: with the demand rising annually in China, merchants who controlled their own production, rather than depending on small farmers, would stand to multiply their already astronomical profits. (Ghosh 215)

Therefore, with the help of his employee Baboo Nob Kissin, Burnham falsely accused Raja Neel Ratan Halder, the owner of the Raskhali estate, of forgery. After a ridiculous trial, he was found guilty, leading to the confiscation of his substantial estate and his deportation to Mauritius as an indentured servant.

But for some, this "girmitya" pact offered fresh hope for escaping the brutality of patriarchy. For example, Deeti would have to die alongside her deceased husband Hukum Singh, also referred to as "Sati," in accordance with the custom of the day. On the other hand, the family of her in-laws forced her to wed the extravagant brother-in-law of his, Chandan Singh. She accepted the challenge of escaping the funeral pyre and brushed aside all the social shame because it was completely against her will, and she married Kalua, a member of a lower caste. Nevertheless, the social class and caste system of India prevented her from living in her native country with her low-caste spouse, so she and her recently married husband were forced to sign an indentured labor contract. Thus, Ghosh effectively illustrates how the Indians were forced or forced into becoming indentured servants.

The British mercenaries pay attention to a profit of any kind. When they need information or opportunities to bolster their employers' positions, their Indian employees are quick to supply it to

them. Although Mr. Burnham's primary focus was on the opium trade, his gomusta, Baboo Nob Kissin, persuaded his employer to transfer the indentured servants. "The gomusta was well aware that Mr. Burnham considered the transportation of migrants an unimportant and somewhat annoying part of his shipping enterprise since the margins of profit were negligible in comparison to the enormous gains offered by opium" (Ghosh 213).

However, when there appears to be a serious threat to the flow of opium to China, the gomusta may be able to convince his employer to choose a different approach to earning money by transferring the migrant laborers. Furthermore, the gomusta expresses interest in joining the migrant ship to oversee the enslaved laborers. In fact, this Indian employee of the British employer did not think twice about crossing the Black Water and operating as a middleman in human trafficking, even at the expense of violating religious prohibitions, anytime he smelled profit.

Crispin Bates and Marina Carter in *Enslaved Lives, Enslaving Labels A New Approach to the Colonial Indian Labor Diaspora* show the role played by the middleman "Recruiting sirdars, men and sometimes women who had been overseas and could speak with firsthand experience of conditions in the colonies, emerged-- both formally and informally (they did not always bear the title of sirdar)-as a "middleman" network between the subaltern and employer. This undoubtedly typified the involvement of sirdars in recruitment for industrial labor within India as much as abroad." (Bates and Carter)

These intermediaries ended up serving as the migrant workers' local recruiters. These local employers held a significant amount of power over the workers' destiny. The middleman's contribution allowed the growth of the British economy and trade to continue at a steady pace to "the transformation of India into a source of cheap labor for the British Empire, and the increasing involvement of overseas capitalists in recruitment for plantation economies resulted in

competition both among colonial recruiters and between them and local employers. The sourcing of recruiters from within the ranks of migrants became crucial to the effectiveness of labor mobilization, but in the process, the increasing autonomy of these agents subtly altered the balance of power between laborer and employer, with far-reaching consequences for the plantation societies to which they resorted in large numbers” (Bates and Carter).

In “Servitude and the Changing Face of the Demand for Labor in the Indian Ocean World, c. 1800–1900”, Gwyn Campbell shows:

The nineteenth century marked the single most important turning point in the economic history of the world: the creation of a truly international economy, centered on the burgeoning capitalist economies of Western Europe and North America, which by the close of the 1800s had drawn all but the remotest regions of the globe into its orbit. The new international economy was driven by ever-accelerating technological change that transformed the relationship between the West and the rest of the world, underpinning the economic and political expansion of the West, including modern European colonialism. (Campbell 1)

In ‘Origins of the Girmitiyas’, Brij V Lal asserts “ On 9 September 1834 36 impoverished and lost looking Dhangars (tribal people) were accosted by some recruiters in Calcutta and asked if they would be willing to emigrate to Mauritius as indentured labourers” (82). Considering the stay at the colonial state for a stipulated five years of time and high remuneration and also Mauritius is close to Bengal these people agreed to undertake this sojourn. These migrant workers then affixed their thumb impression in order to show that they agreed with the terms and conditions of the contract provided by the Chief Magistrate at the Calcutta Police Court and that they were traveling of their own accord. “These men were the forerunners of over one million indentured labourers

who left India during 82 years of indentured emigration to colonies scattered across the globe” (82). Additionally, he noted that the majority of indentured laborers are from North India, particularly Bihar, where mobility has long been a feature of life since pre-modern times. Because of this, they considered the colonial government's offer of migration to be extremely advantageous. Lal claims that these emigrants signed a contract promising a friendly working environment, greater pay, a higher standard of life, and the option of a free return journey to India. Because they anticipated a better life far away, the indentured workers willingly accepted the offer.

Social scientists have highlighted both the advantages and disadvantages of this movement, with anthropologists leading the way. They saw this endeavor as a guarantee of a life full of options that would free them from the tyranny of social degradation, caste, and class. There are, nevertheless, refutations to this assertion. These academics contend that the indentured system involves cruelty, injustice, and unfairness toward migrant laborers. In his work, Hugh Tinker illustrates the distinction between indenture and slavery by pointing out that the former is a transient arrangement and the latter is a long-term establishment. However, they both had to endure emotional and bodily anguish. Professor Tinker also brought out the recruiters' deceit in trying to find migrant labor.

Deeti and her shipmates encountered a new environment on board the *ibis* which was no less than a prison. The migrant workers were housed in the hold which “ran the length of the vessel, and had no compartments or internal divisions: it was like a floating storage shed, with a ceiling so low that a grown man could not stand upright in it for fear of hurting his head. The hold’s windows, of which there were several, were usually kept shut for fear of thieves, thugs and river dacoits; after the rains came down they were almost permanently sealed, so that very little light penetrated inside, even when the clouds cleared” (231). Deeti felt as though she was diving into a deep hole

filled with pitch-blackness. But when a small amount of light let her see how that compartment was kept up, she was astounded to discover an unbelievable amount of individuals crammed into a tiny area. The local migrant workers and their superior commanders were segregated into different compartments with glaring inequality. While their bosses were pampered with every luxury, the migrant laborers were given cramped, unbreathable quarters. “With no flame lit and the hatch secured, such light as there was came from cracks in the timber and the opening of piss-daies. The leaden gloom, combined with the midday heat and the fetid stench of hundreds of enclosed bodies, gave the unstirred air a weight like that of sewage: it took an effort even to draw breath” (Ghosh 370). This was the state of the area designated for the sailors' quarters. For the migrant workers, having a small area to settle into the ship's empty interior was a dream come true. “No sooner had the overseers departed, shutting the hatch behind them, than the migrants began to disrupt the careful circle of their mats, scuffling and shouting as they fought for space” (Ghosh 370). The female folks were engulfed by unprecedented fear “As the noise of the tugboat mounted, Munia began to tremble, and Paulette, guessing that she was on the verge of hysteria, drew her closer” (Ghosh 370). So many migrants in a small space who never experienced seafaring before found themselves in an unimaginable situation “ The schooner lurched to its Jamuna side and down in the darkness of Dabusa, people slipped and slid and tumbled upon each other like crumbs on a tilted tray” (Ghosh 371). The situation gets worse when a riot breaks out among the migrants “dozens of terrified migrants hurling themselves at the ladder, pounding on the fastened hatch, in a belated attempt at escape”. They were imploring to let them free but all in vain. Their appeal was heard by none of the officers nor their loyal forces. Getting annoyed Neel silenced them saying “Be quiet you fools! There’s no escape, no turning back...”(Ghosh 371). Officers and indentured migrants were the two groups of passengers on the Ibis that were assigned separate meal plans.

The migrant seafarers were given rice, dal, and lime-pickle, while the officers were given roast lamb, mint sauce, and boiled potatoes.

The subcontinent's residents experienced social and ecological racism as a result of capitalism and imperialism. In modern literature, these unfortunate people's voices are seldom heard. Only a small number of official and historical documents reveal the harshest aspects of the human trafficking that was carried out to advance capitalism and free trade. If there had been no indentured labor following the abolition of slavery, the colonial masters would never have imagined themselves to be in a position of total hegemony. To illustrate the extensive flow of enslaved labor from South Asia to other colonial territories, Ghosh brought back to life the ancient commercial diasporas of the Indian Ocean in *Sea of Poppies* as a component of the transoceanic commerce system. By inventing the migrant laborers' suffering, Ghosh preserves the exact alignment with history. Their experiences with racial discrimination were on par with those of slaves. They experienced the anguish of an identity crisis after being uprooted from their ancestral home.

The image of the gun dealer in *Gun Island*, who was by no means conquered by Manasa Devi, the serpent goddess who personifies the preservation of nature, represents the greed that governed capitalism. The gun merchant never gave in to Manasa Devi's destruction because he was too busy trying to satiate his capitalistic greed. The seventeenth century, when the Little Ice Age reminds us of the global catastrophe that followed the Industrial Revolution, when the anthropocene is thought to be beginning, and when European conquest began to establish the anthropocentric and eurocentric view, is when Cinta's interpretation and Deen's solution to the riddle centered around the fable of the gun merchant take us.

4.2 Social Movements, Grassroot Initiatives and Activisms in Combating Environmental Injustices

The main characters in *Sea of Poppies* are thrown together by coincidence. They are forced to relocate from their current locations and down the Ganges and further across the Indian Ocean towards Mauritius because they share similar, albeit unusual, memories of traumatic displacement. The majority of them are under contract as indentured laborers, while some are just travelers. Regardless, they are all driven to relocate in order to flee oppression or to pursue a better life. They are bonded by the realization that, in the face of tremendous adversity, prejudice has no place and that, in the end, what matters are spontaneous, unconditional human ties. In the spirit of a true postcolonial literary ecosystem, the novel challenges not only the inflexible boundaries of society but also some presumptions about the writing of history through the use of specific cases that are constructed as remarkable instances of revolt against the social status quo. Ghosh also offers an alternative history that honors individuals who are marginalized but truly embody the driving force of transformation. In doing so, he questions societal categories that are practically unchangeable. People who would never have been able to interact due to the customs that control society on land come together on board the schooner Ibis. This puts an end to untouchability. When compared to the individual force of feelings—which is completely disregarded by both faiths but which Ghosh fearlessly defends—marriage, which is depicted as an equally tightly structured institution in both Hindu and British culture, loosens its restrictions. The characters, both male and female, equally assert their right to live free and happy lives, calling into question gender stereotypes.

The three sections that make up *Sea of Poppies* are Land, River, and Sea. These sections represent steps in a ceremonial journey that begins on land, moves through centuries of entrenched old social order, and ends on the sea, free from its shackling obligations. After passing through the Ganges,

the holy river of Hindu tradition, which transforms into a route to liberation, the road to freedom ends at the sea. An opening up of Hinduism that heavily draws its positive focus from the symbolism of nature is connected to the Ganges, on which the journey begins and continues at sea on board the Ibis, through a multitude of intricate rites of death, rebirth, and purification. This interpretation of what is generally understood to be the forbidden gesture of crossing the Black Water or *kala pani*, sees it as a group effort to achieve liberation, which makes even losing caste a win rather than a loss. The protagonists gradually reinvent themselves as they set out down the river on the ship carrying migrants who have been forced to uproot and start new lives due to varied personal circumstances. A degree of solidarity between them is freeing in and of itself as all these individuals, brought together by their shared personal struggles and aspirations for a brighter future, grow on a ship that is not exactly what it is officially supposed to be. Despite the inevitable ongoing strife amongst part of the crew, the Ibis transforms into a self-contained utopian world led by an ecological ethic that suspends the social norms that govern the land and establishes other, much more liberated rules in their place.

4.2.1 Activism to Protect the Environment

A major theme in Amitav Ghosh's book *Gun Island* is Cinta's fight for environmental protection, which highlights the pressing need to address ecological issues and the effects of human activities on natural ecosystems. Cinta is a driven and devoted character who exemplifies a great commitment to environmental conservation in a number of ways, including her views and actions. Through her portrayal of the interplay between individual conviction, cultural legacy, and group responsibility in preserving the environment, Cinta personifies the spirit of environmental activism. In order to address the global ecological issues, Ghosh emphasizes through her story arc the critical necessity for environmental stewardship as well as the transformative power of

individual and collective action. Cinta's persona is closely linked to the natural world, especially the Sundarbans' mangrove forests. She exemplifies a spiritual bond with the natural environment, seeing it as a living being deserving of respect and care, rather than merely as a resource. She is against governments and corporations using natural resources for their own gain. She organizes networks and communities against harmful practices like industrial pollution and deforestation. She is enthusiastic about the Sundarbans' cultural legacy and the benefits they provide to the surrounding communities. She also supports the preservation of indigenous customs and traditional knowledge that are connected to the environment, in addition to ecological issues. Cinta's advocacy goes beyond words and includes concrete deeds. She works with scientists and activists, takes part in rallies, and looks for creative ways to lessen environmental harm. Cinta is a symbol of tenacity in the face of environmental hardship. She is unwavering in her will to preserve the environment and encourage others to take up the cause, even in the face of obstacles and disappointments.

In *The Hungry Tide* as well as *Gun Island*, Piya's persona makes a strong case for protecting the environment and educating people about how human activity affects natural equilibrium. Piya, a marine biologist, studies dolphins in the Sundarbans with the goal of comprehending and protecting these threatened animals. Her love of preserving wildlife and her determination to safeguard the area's fragile ecosystem serve as the driving forces behind her scientific research. Piya has the opportunity to educate communities about the value of conservation through her encounters with locals and her partnerships with other researchers. She imparts her wisdom and experiences in order to increase awareness of the Sundarbans' rich biodiversity. Her presence in the Sundarbans highlights the dangers associated with human exploitation, such as poaching and destruction. She draws attention to the necessity of sustainable practices to lessen environmental

deterioration through her activism and research findings. During her stay in the Sundarbans, Piya forges a close bond with the environment that makes her more determined to preserve it. Her passion for conservation initiatives stems from her empathy for the dolphins and their habitat.

4.3 Intersection of Gender with Other Axes of Oppression in Shaping Environmental Experiences and Responses

This section foregrounds the innermost fabric of a woman's exuberance for life constantly threatened by patriarchal domination, humiliation and neglect. This study unfolds strategies of emancipation these women tried to venture against all odds. From the ecofeminist perspective, this research unveils a new horizon of understanding into the subjugation of women and nature.

In Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, these liberatory ideals are actualized in the real world focusing on a new dimension of ecofeminism. One of the main female characters here is Deeti who is found to be an epitome of a virtuous lady that an Indian culture can cherish. Deeti is married to Hukam Singh who is a crippled factory worker in the Ghazipur opium factory. Hukam Singh's sexual impotence is discovered as Deeti is drugged with opium on the wedding night by her mother-in-law so that she would be raped by her brother-in-law and thus consummate the marriage. Hence, her brother-in-law is actually the father of her daughter Kabutari. Kabutari is sent to her relative's house when Deeti's husband Hukam Singh dies. Deeti is forced to choose either to die with her husband as the sati ritual (immolation on her husband's funeral pyre) or to face the threats of more rapes by the brother-in-law. In the wake of this disaster, she is rescued by Kalua, the untouchable caste oxman from the neighboring village. They escape with the fear that their relationship will not be acceptable to the high-caste villagers. Later they become indentured labourer on a schooner

named *Ibis*. She embraces the life of a migrant alongside her savior when Kalua unexpectedly saves her, and she doesn't let his untouchable status stop her. After being saved from the deadly fire by Kalua's selfless act, Deeti marries him in the middle of nature, which transforms into a temple of progressive becoming, far from the inflexibility of the human world. The novel's portrayal of this instance of what may be called true ecological closeness is significant because it foreshadows a number of other such shifts brought about by the protagonists' rejection of limiting social roles and conventions. Deeti transforms into an unexpected artist on the occasion of an unplanned marriage that is the result of her own choice, dressing herself and her partner in homemade garlands and consummating a love that is completely real and not merely unrestricted by conventions. A strong argument for authenticity over convention and for free will over tradition-bound family arrangements is in line with the symbolism of nature serving as the ideal setting for love and marriage.

Deeti's contempt towards caste is a component of the novel's broader anti-caste message. Early in Part II, Kalua negotiates their admittance aboard the *Ibis*, and this is the official stance: "Caste doesn't matter, said the duffadar. All kinds of men are eager to sign up – Brahmins, Ahirs, Chamars, Telis. What matters is that they be young and able-bodied and willing to work" (Ghosh 216). Even though it is possible that the historical circumstances that gave rise to the institution of indentured labor altered some aspects of Hindu society's traditional structure and called into question the inviolability of caste, this statement still sounds remarkably contemporary and appears to be a part of Ghosh's larger project of challenging Hindu traditions.

Gender norms appear to be changing, as seen by Deeti's revolutionary mindset and that of other female characters in the book. Even more outspokenly unusual than Deeti is Paulette, who experiences a different kind of marginalization as the orphaned daughter of a French adventurer

in India and for whom fighting for her right to a better life is a matter of course. Nothing can stop Paulette from achieving her aim of boarding the Ibis on her voyage to Mauritius, even if it means dressing like a lascar or a native woman. Second mate Zachary Reid, the octoroon, sets out on a new life in the rootless, free world of the Ibis, where such details are irrelevant. Zachary Reid is an emancipated son of a freed slave and himself a border-crosser, whose "skin the colour of old ivory" (11) would have made it difficult for him to be socially integrated into his native United States. The constraints of gender are also called into question when Paulette, who is distinguished by her English with a French accent and who is portrayed as a character who is not free from cultural preconceptions about the free-spirited French, tries to convince Zachary to let her board the Ibis while posing as a lascar. As we find out, Paulette is a feminist avant-la-lettre and a deserving disciple of a grand-aunt who had sailed the world's oceans with intrepid men. Paulette and Zachary join the other couples in the novel who transcend seemingly insurmountable barriers to be together as they progressively grow to love one another and learn all the things they have in common despite their disparate ethnic and cultural backgrounds and numerous norms shattered.

Widowhood is viewed as an undesirable situation in Hinduism, one that nearly always results in solitude during prayer or in death (sati). Deeti views sati as a practical decision rather than a religious one in the wake of her husband's passing (death being preferable to life as a widow potentially exposed to abuse akin to her brother-in-law raping her on her wedding night). Through Kalua's incredible abduction, which is akin to a literal rebirth for her, she is fortunate enough to entirely escape it. If not for Baboo Nob Kissin's devotion, Taramony would have faced an equally tragic fate (as she transforms into a leader, Ma Taramony). Kissin ends up becoming more than just her spouse. The conversation on this subject between Paulette and her purported protectress, Mrs. Burnham, who wishes to marry her off to her husband's friend, Old Justice Kendalbushe,

despite the girl's desire to marry for love, reveals that marriage in the British world is more of a means of acquiring social and economic status than of finding personal fulfillment. Ghosh seemed to just be interested in an individual insurrection (Alexandru 45).

Ghosh's fiction depicts a variety of dislocation scenarios, many of which are of the kind that usually require women to recreate a home. As the real revolutionary force in these many circumstances, women possess a visionary-like ability. According to Ghosh, the ability to alter history and even confront the most extreme forms of societal inequality belongs to women and marginalized groups such as outcasts. The story of exploitation, suffering, and deprivation is shared by all colonized people. The narratives of each person detail the injustices inflicted upon them by the despotism of the governing elite. Their original home was a developed, self-sufficient society with its own unique indigenous customs, but it was eventually plundered and reduced to a desolate, destitute, and starving condition. By emphasizing a time of ecological racism during which people collided and colonized one another, rewriting the history of a country, its people, and its land, Ghosh is able to successfully recreate an earlier era of imperialism.

4.4 Postcolonial Perception of Identity

The postcolonial understanding of identity is a prerequisite for postcolonial ecocriticism. Postcolonialism holds identity as fluid, which can change with time and circumstance. It is not fixed or rooted in one or two stable areas but can continuously rebuild itself. Without subjecting them to clichéd or essentialist presumptions, Ghosh explores the worldwide transfers of indentured laborers. Characters attempted to flee their names, caste, race, and places of origin as they were

rebuilding their identities to find who they were and lead respectable lives. Their origins prevented them from creating, constructing, and satisfying their own identities and individualities.

Deeti changed her identity and took on the name Aditi. In Indian mythology, Aditi was a woman who was given the opportunity to start over. Maddow Colver is Kalau's new self. The ship broke down the dualistic conceptions of the hegemonic power structures, the prevalent caste system, religious distinctions, and racial and gendered barriers in place of roots.

The Ibis developed into a place with several identities. People from different castes, classes, faiths, regions, and countries were able to coexist in this place; individuals from different backgrounds, including Brahmins, Ahir, Chamars, and Telis, came together, exchanged ideas, and formed new identities. The Ibās became "the mother-father of her new family, a great wooden mai-bap, an adopted ancestor and parent of dynasties to come" (Ghosh 356) and bonded them to one another when they were accepted as the new cultural group. The diverse group of people were reincarnated as offspring of the ship and referred to one another as brothers and sisters. "From now on, and forever after, we shall all be ship-siblings to one another—jahazbhais and jahazbahens. We won't be different from one another (Ghosh 372). They were forced to create a common origin, history, one family, or kinship by the Ibis. Boats do, in fact, represent a resonant image of the various modes of travel that define diasporas that are linked or divided in place and time (Mullaney 12). Since every passenger on the ship shared the same characteristics, the indentured immigrants created new social bonds and connections outside the existing limits. A unique sentiment toward their new home, the Ibis, emerged within the framework of the diaspora. Their diaspora identities are determined by acknowledging a necessary plurality and diversity. The Black Water carried away their history and previous relationships. The social barriers of caste, gender, religion, and race are all symbolically erased when one crosses the Black Water. Social engagement beyond the

caste system was made feasible, for instance, by the loss of caste purity. To get to his incarceration across the Black Water, Raja Neel Rattan, the former zemindar, had to travel with Aafat, a guy from a lesser caste. "He is everything that he has—his family, friends, caste, and so on" (Ghosh 330).

Colonial capitalism severed the linkages between the native population and their environments, destroying their sense of self, community, and nation. According to Ghosh, the terms "displacement" and "belonging to a place" are crucial in highlighting the significance of identity. His characters' identities were impacted by displacement. The Indians' displacement was associated with their diasporic gathering. He describes how the Ibis moved across borders, formed their own identities, and created a culture that transcended boundaries in their new location. He demonstrates that identity is not a single, unchanging thing, but rather a product of changing circumstances. Ghosh's use of displacement with a focus on postcolonial ecocritical place perception characterizes the identity.

The experiences of the Indians who suffered as a result of the sociopolitical, environmental, cultural, and economic upheavals that occurred in colonial India are depicted by Ghosh in his narratives. Ghosh explains how the natural resources and labor of India were essential to the British Empire's financial might. He reconstructs the early nineteenth-century Indian immigration to British colonies as indentured laborers, which was one of the pivotal historical moments that shaped the identity of the South Asian diaspora.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion

Reading Amitav Ghosh serves as a reminder of how fluid the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction can and should be in order to draw public attention to the catastrophic impact of the environmental crisis. As a climate activist, he has used both fiction and nonfiction to address the all-encompassing issues of ecology. In *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Ghosh expresses his deepest dissatisfaction and serious concern about the failure of fiction, history, politics, and culture to make readers aware of the planetary crisis. According to Ghosh, even the famous literary journals fail to fathom the intensity of this problem by considering it close to ‘extraterrestrials’ or ‘interplanetary travel’. He regards it as an ‘imaginative failure’ on the part of the literary practitioners who diminish the intensity of the catastrophe by fantasizing about this planetary crisis as science fiction. His latest nonfiction, *Smoke and Ashes*, reveals the untold history of the journey of opioids from a simple opium poppy plant to a draconian opium industry, which is at the background of the wealth and profit of many wealthy nations. Therefore, Ghosh's fictional work significantly contributes to the ecological mission he has undertaken through his nonfiction writing. As a trained anthropologist, he understands the limitations of science's supposed objectivity. The fictional world allows him to combine scientific facts about environmental catastrophes with imaginative fiction.

The textual reading has shown how Ghosh's fiction depicts the effects of the Anthropocene and anthropogenic activities on planetary crises and climate change. This thesis, by referring to Ghosh's essays and interviews, has further highlighted the interwoven issues of sustainability, environmental justice, and ecocriticism in his fiction, illuminating the relationship between environmental degradation and social inequity. Power dynamics, capitalist exploitation, and the

historical legacy of colonialism impact human-nature relationships in Ghosh's stories, resulting in environmental injustices that disproportionately affect vulnerable communities. Through his writing, Ghosh draws attention to the pressing need to confront social injustices that are a direct result of environmental degradation, as well as the urgent need to address ecological problems. As a result, Ghosh's fiction serves as an engaging platform for fostering empathy, increasing understanding, and encouraging group action in the direction of a more equitable, sustainable, and fair world. As Ghosh's concern about climate change and the environment partake of the issues covered under the paradigm of ecocriticism, this thesis justifiably adopts ecocriticism as the theoretical framework and analyzes the fiction of Ghosh in the light of ecocriticism, environmental justice, and sustainability. Ghosh frequently weaves socio-political narratives with environmental themes in his novels, thus making his readers reflect on the consequences of environmental degradation and humanity's relationship with nature.

Ghosh distinguishes himself from other nature writers by giving agency to both humans and nonhumans. Hence, Ghosh draws attention to the ecological relevance and beauty of landscapes and natural environments. The Sundarbans, for example, emerge as a major character in *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*, signifying the complex interrelationship between people and the natural world. Environmental concerns like climate change, deforestation, and animal extinction are recurrent themes in Ghosh's narratives. In his nonfiction, *The Great Derangement*, he expresses his resentment at how humanity has failed to address climate change effectively. Ghosh delves into the intricate relationships between people and the natural environment, challenging ideas that people are in charge of. In his stories, characters frequently struggle with how they fit into natural systems.

This study shows how Ghosh views globalization as the originary source of the planetary crisis. Globalization began with the goal of promoting free trade and an open-market economy. In the *Ibis* trilogy, Ghosh exemplifies globalization as dangerously anti-environmental. According to him, the seventeenth century, or the age of enlightenment, is a turning point in human history that ushers in globalization and capitalism through the Industrial Revolution. The widespread use of fossil fuels made the Industrial Revolution possible. Initially, steam engines used coal and petroleum as fossil fuels. The steam engine's invention propelled the use of coal and petroleum. Then there was natural gas, also known as coal gas. In addition to this, industries, infrastructure, and transportation also utilized gasoline and diesel fuels. The widespread use of these fossil fuels, which are non-renewable energies, expedites climate change and ecological disaster. Opium cultivation, trading, and exporting began as part of the industrial revolutions, globalization, and capitalism. In the 19th century, the opium trade commenced, paving the way for free trade, a term the British adopted to mitigate their trade deficit with China. For a long time, China was highly resistant and reactive to allowing the outside world access to its trade and commerce. China exported silk, porcelain, and tea, but restricted any goods from the foreign country from entering Chinese territory. The Chinese emperor strictly warned foreign traders, saying that China was self-sufficient. It didn't require anything from the outside world. However, the British used to only understand trade and business. Tea grown in China and purchased with a silver coin from Peru or Mexico satisfied the British's growing tea craving. Tea imports from China were depleting British silver coffers. The British became anxious to overcome the deficit, so they ingeniously invented the trick of trade with trade—tea with opium. The Chinese emperor granted limited access to foreign traders by restricting their business within Canton, now known as Ghuang Jhou. Canton was a popular business hub in the River of Smoke, also known as Fanqui Town or Foreigners'

Town. The British used to grow opium at a colossal rate in India. Then they shipped it to Canton. Within a short period of time, the Chinese have become a drug-addicted nation. The Chinese government began to believe that drugs were a deadly poison, posing a threat to the country's minds and morals. So they banned the products. However, once more, smugglers infiltrated the market with opium. Then there was a massive crackdown on smuggled opium, which led the British to go to war with the Chinese. Critics criticized globalization not only for promoting the interests of the rich and powerful by lowering trade barriers at the expense of the poor, but also for its dominance over local laws and customs that safeguarded ecosystem rights. Vandana Shiva, director of the Research Foundation for Science and Ecology, New Delhi, attacked the World Trade Organization, which is the chief advocate of globalization or free trade, by saying, "The WTO has earned itself names such as World Tyranny Organization because it enforces anti-people and anti-nature decisions to enable corporations to steal the world's harvests through secretive, undemocratic structures and processes. It institutionalized forced trade, not free trade. The rules set by the secretive WTO violate principles of human rights and ecological survival. They violate the rules of justice and sustainability. They are rules of warfare against the people and the planet." (Shiva 1999, 4-5)

Therefore, this study investigates how the opium trade, which led to opium wars, wreaked havoc on the region's ecosystem. The Ibis trilogy by Amitav Ghosh is a testimony to the environmental degradation affecting the lives of millions in this vast region of Asia. The East India Company's opium trade between India and China, which involved massive trafficking of indentured workers and convicts, forms the basis of the trilogy. The interconnectedness of lives, cultures, languages, classes, castes, and genders that these texts offer draws the attention of their readers to their global merit. The Sea of Poppies illustrates both the peasants' splendor and misery:

In the past, when the sahibs forced everyone to grow poppy, the fields would be heavy with wheat in the winter, and after the spring harvest, people would use the straw to repair the damage from the previous year. However, as the sahibs compelled everyone to cultivate poppy, the shortage of thatch forced people to purchase it from distant villages at the market, causing them to delay their repairs for as long as possible (29).

With an emphasis on the disproportionate effects of environmental problems on underprivileged communities, this thesis examines how the environmental justice perspective investigates the intersections between environmental issues and social justice. Ghosh demonstrates how environmental degradation, leading to displacement, impacts marginalized people. Characters in *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* deal with the loss of resources and territory caused by sea level rise. Socio-economic situations in *Sea of Poppies* turn marginalized people into indentured laborers. Ghosh's works frequently highlight inequalities in access to natural resources, such as water and forests, and demonstrate how power relations exacerbate environmental injustices. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh forcibly evicted the settlers from Marichjhapi to make way for the Royal Bengal Tiger conservation project. Characters in Ghosh's novels frequently engage in environmental activism or resistance against exploitative activities, reflecting the struggle for environmental justice. Kusum, Piya, Fokir, Cinta, Nirmal, and Nilima sacrifice their lives for activism for the environment or opposition to unfair practices.

Ghosh's desire for a sustainable world forms the basis of all his work. The sustainability perspective in Ghosh's fiction involves analyzing how civilizations can satisfy their current demands without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to satisfy their own, frequently taking into account social, economic, and environmental factors. Ghosh highlights the interdependence of human society and ecosystems, promoting comprehensive strategies for

sustainability. The Sundarbans are a case study of how the people of this locality rely on nature for their sustenance. Ghosh's stories explore the preservation of customs intertwined with the natural world, highlighting the importance of preserving cultural diversity within the framework of sustainable development. His distinctive storytelling technique evokes premodern folktales such as Bonbibi and Manasa Devi, which once enlightened and warned the previous generation about the importance of preserving nature. Ghosh challenges readers' preconceived notions about progress and development through his fiction, inviting them to imagine sustainable futures.

By analyzing Amitav Ghosh's fiction through the lenses of ecocriticism, environmental justice, and sustainability, readers can better understand the intricacies of environmental concerns and their wider socio-political ramifications. Ghosh's writings effectively raise important issues and encourage thought-provoking conversations about how mankind may contribute to the creation of a sustainable future. This thesis analyzes Amitav Ghosh's multifarious and noteworthy contributions to ecocriticism and environmental justice studies stemming from his combination of fiction and non-fiction writings. His treatment of these subjects touches on postcolonial literary studies, environmental justice discourse, and ecocritical theory in a number of significant ways.

Ghosh emphasizes the interdependence of human communities, cultures, and the environment in his writings, which challenges conventional ecocritical viewpoints. His argument is for a more comprehensive view that takes into account the intricate connections between environmental challenges and political, social, and historical settings. He criticizes the notion that nature exists in a vacuum from society. Through his writings, Ghosh broadens the definition of ecocriticism by demonstrating the inextricable link between stories of environmental degradation and climate change and larger stories of colonialism, globalization, and capitalism.

Ghosh's other major concern is environmental justice. As a climate refugee, his sympathy for those displaced by climate-related disasters is quite apparent. He highlights the disproportionate impact of ecological catastrophes on vulnerable groups, particularly those in the Global South. Ghosh emphasizes the pressing need to approach environmental issues from a viewpoint that promotes equality, human rights, and solidarity with disadvantaged groups by introducing social justice themes into his stories. His approach emphasizes how environmental justice involves addressing systemic injustices and inequality in addition to conservation.

Ghosh is well aware of the asymmetrical power arrangements and the colonial legacy that put people in the Global South in a disadvantageous position. Within the framework of postcolonial literary studies, he explores the nuanced effects of colonialism and how they relate to environmental degradation. He examines how colonial exploitation of the environment and natural resources continues to influence today's environmental issues. Ghosh challenges prevailing narratives that frequently ignore the colonial roots of environmental problems by highlighting the voices and experiences of communities that have historically borne the burden of environmental exploitation. By bringing up problems of power, representation, and historical accountability, his work with postcolonial theory enhances conversations on environmental concerns.

The thesis has also shown that through his interdisciplinary approach, involving literary studies, anthropology, history, and climate science, Ghosh writes stories that transcend academic subjects and appeal to a wider audience by fusing scientific knowledge with literary imagination. This multidisciplinary method promotes a more sophisticated comprehension of environmental challenges among readers and policymakers, in addition to enhancing ecocritical and postcolonial studies. In short, Ghosh's contributions to environmental justice studies and ecocriticism show how important literary and cultural analysis are to solving pressing global issues. Ghosh's challenges

us to reconsider established paradigms and adopt more inclusive, justice-focused approaches to environmental action and scholarship through his nuanced investigations of the relationships between humans and the environment.

The thesis also surveyed Ghosh's fiction and nonfiction to understand the intersectionality of his narrative strategies. The previous chapters looked at the micronarrative that the master storyteller Ghosh presented to illustrate the macronarrative of environmental challenges. Ghosh's concern for marginalized groups is evident in his ability to connect different actors working within the environmental network. The planetary crisis affects us all, both the great and the small. We are all stakeholders in this shared world.

Ghosh's critique of colonial exploitation and exploration presents him as a leading green postcolonial writer. By identifying poppies as a cash crop forced to be cultivated in foreign soil and dispersed across the globe as a narcotic substance leading to the great opium war, for instance, Ghosh shows how man-made natural disasters are caused by greed and lust for power. His nonfiction reveals his perturbation at his colleagues' obliviousness, as they normalize climate disasters in their works and use them as mere literary props.

Instead, Ghosh's narratives, as we have observed, are deeply rooted in history. Past historical events condition the environmental realities of the present. Industrialization, capitalism, and colonial legacies are some of the known culprits. He is also critical of the detrimental effects of globalization on ecological systems and human life. He makes no secret of his disgust against the myths of progress that prioritize economic expansion above social justice. Ghosh emphasizes the moral obligation to safeguard communities and ecosystems that are at risk in his ecological vision. His stories arouse compassion for people impacted by environmental deterioration and encourage moral reflection while addressing difficult ecological conundrums. They plead for social and

environmental reform. By giving agency to both humans and non-humans, he entices readers to become stakeholders in a future that needs to be sustainable. He hopes that his readers will be a part of the actor network that eschews complacency and adopts proactive strategies for sustainability, resiliency, and equity.

Ghosh's ecocriticism exemplifies the use of literature as an activist tool, demonstrating how storytelling can motivate individuals to address environmental issues and heighten public consciousness. His writings encourage discussion, introspection, and practical action in the direction of creating more equitable and sustainable societies, empowering readers to become change agents. His narrative fiction highlights literature as a transforming force for social and environmental change, encouraging us to take on our shared responsibility of preserving the environment and promoting justice for all living things.

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