

AN ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES IN *THE HUNGRY TIDE***KG Keerthe**

Research Scholar, PG & Research Department of English Vellalar College For Women (Autonomous) Erode - 638012

Dr. S Janaki

Assistant Professor, PG & Research, Department of English, Vellalar College For Women (Autonomous), Erode - 638012

ABSTRACT

The world is undergoing rapid transition due to industrialization, societal issues and political situations which are often negotiating the value of the environment and surroundings. This paper tries to highlight the importance and vitality of the environment through analysing *The Hungry Tide* by one of the prominent Indian writers Amitav Ghosh who is widely celebrated for his writings which focus on conflicts related to nature, politics and contemporary issues. Furthermore, the research paper examines how the environment is portrayed in the novel and how it is connected with people and animals. Then this paper explores how the characters survive in the dense area of Sundarbans and the living conditions of water dwelling creatures. Also, the paper illustrates how the story *The Hungry Tide* can be critically engaged with environmentalism, eco-consciousness and human resilience, and primarily focuses on the human-nature relationship in the race of unavoidable events. The final output will show how Ghosh plays a pivotal role in throwing light on environmental abuse and thereby paving the way for creating a sustainable environment.

KEYWORDS : Eco sensibility, Environmental Humanities, Human-nature relationship, Resilience and Survival**INTRODUCTION**

The surroundings give the utmost energy and living resources to the people, even though people have failed to show care and empathetic action towards nature and surroundings and Nature plays a vital role in the lives of human beings and other species in the world, it can be both protector and destroys. Nature is a part of living species, which produces all the energy resources through the environment. Environmental Humanities is an interdisciplinary concept that explores the relationship between human and nature world, furthermore examining environmental issues from a cultural, historical and social perspectives. It gets elevated as a wide topic including climate changes, environmental justice, resources management and the cultural representation of nature. Indian literature is highlighting the essential nature of the environment and natural resources and how it blends with the lives of human beings and other species in the world. While analysing Indian literature in English, there are a limited number of writers who focus on the ecological crisis, environmental issues and displacement of humans. Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Roy, Ruskin Bond and Kiran Desai are the prominent writers who are elevating the relationship between humans and nature.

Amitav Ghosh is the most influential voice in Indian literature, who explores the climate change, ecological crisis through his notable writings. The research paper analyses *The Hungry Tide* (2004), contributes to examining the cultural changes after colonialism and environmental crisis in 20th century India after independence. *The Hungry Tide* shows the realistic struggles of people blended with historical context in the dense area of Sundarbans. Ghosh won the 2004 *Hutch Crossword Book Award* for this masterpiece, examining the living conditions and search for rare Irrawaddy Dolphin in the Mangrove forest. The novel depicts the story between the three major characters Piyali Roy, Kanai Dutt and Fokir. The novel examines the strong influence of nature in humans' life. Furthermore, Ghosh criticises the behavior of humans due to colonialism, migration and societal injustices. The objectives of this research paper are, to examine the portrayal of human-nature behaviour, as shown in the novel and to explore the environmental values that are blended with natural and historical context.

ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES IN *THE HUNGRY TIDE*

Amitav Ghosh deliberately addressed the environmental issues and environmental values through the characters and

symbolising historical events in the novel *The Hungry Tide*, supporting environmental development in the particular area Sundarbans which is relatable to the entire global environment. Piyali Roy is a migrated marine biologist who came to do research on the rare Irrawaddy Dolphin, which exposes the sea habitation. Kanai Dutt is a sophisticated urbane translator and businessman in Kolkata, emphasizes the historical events and struggles through his uncle Nirmal's Notebook. And then, Fokir belongs to the fisherman community, who has an intuitive relationship with nature and environment in the rural Sundarbans and who has communication with Piya in her journey.

Transformation From Science To Biodiversity

Piya represents an indigenous ecological knowledge, a central figure who came to India with an identity as a Bengali-American marine biologist, studies the life of ocean beings such as plants, and microorganisms. Piya's journey becomes an environmental awareness who has changed herself and thought process not only as a scientist but as a human, which brings out her empathy and respect for interconnected life in the modern circumstances. Her goal is to research the Irrawaddy Dolphin underlies her attitude and respect of non-human life without any harm. The character arc of Piya implies preservation and respect for animals and ecological sensitivity. Ghosh presents her relationship with Fokir without any exaggeration and romance, rather their conversation shows care and empathy towards nature. Her role in Sundarbans is not only the research but analysing the circumstances of river systems.

Piya intertwines the western culture and scientific frameworks, Piya's understanding of the dynamics of Sundarbans comes to the force when she says, "There are no borders have to divide fresh water from salt, the river from the sea. The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater only to reemerge hours later." (7)

Piya shifts from being an observer to be a part of the village and natural elements, who starts to turn herself from being human centred to eco-centric worldview. These changes are happening after she meet Fokir, who rescues her life from the downfall. The sudden absence and death of Fokir does not stop her drive towards protection of fragile nature and environment. Ghosh introduces the character Piya to criticise Anthropocentrism and promotes holistic approach to environmental ethics with inclusivity.

Intellectualism Transform Into Ecocentrism

The characterization of Kanai Dutt shows a tremendous growth from the elite to understanding the struggles of the environment. Kanai is a well-known translator from Delhi, who meet Piya in the railway station and reaches the Lusibari to meet his aunt. He has power dynamics of logic, elite class behaviour, and a privileged person who ignores environmental values. Kanai symbolises modern industrialization and globalisation detached from cultural values and disconnected from the rural environment. *"But these elements of an ordinary rural existence did not entirely conceal the fact that life in Lusibari was lived at the sufferance of a single feature of its topography. This was its badh, the tall embankment that encircled its perimeter, holding back the twice-daily flood."* (50)

Kanai went to Lusibari to read his uncle Nirmal's notebook where he can understand the cultural struggles of people in West Bengal, who have undergone the catastrophe through Marichjhapi massacre. He feels alienated, all experiencing dangers of the environment in the terrifying journey. Ghosh portrays the ecological vulnerability throughout the novel by Kanai who intertwines raw and untamed power of the natural world. He has jealousy on Fokir, who maintains realistic nature with Piya, and Kanai understands Fokir's value after his death. Kanai gets inspired by the illiterate Fokir who had spiritual power and bravery to survive in the ocean.

"He has become a token for a vision of human beings in which a man like Fokir counted for nothing, a man whose value was less than an animal. In seeing himself in this way, it seemed perfectly comprehensible to Kanai why Fokir should want him dead-but he understood also that this was not how it would be. Fokir had brought him here not because he wanted him to die, but because he wanted him to be judged" (270)

Ghosh emphasizes Kanai's intellectualism and Fokir's intuitive attitudes towards nature. Kanai realizes his harsh and biased attitude towards Fokir, and recognizes his intrinsic worth to the land. Through the notebook, Kanai questioned the moral and historical context of Marichjhapi massacre which in 1979, eviction of refugees in Bengali. The character arc of Kanai Dutt has evolved from superiority to humility who has changed himself from intellectualism without engagement.

Environment Serves Harmony And Spirituality

Fokir is the reserved subtle character who plays a prominent role in the silenced nature, who implies the lived experience of natural calamities and ensure non-human behaviour towards nature in Sundarbans. He knows the ways and routes of tides, mangrove, channels and animal behaviour in the ocean. Fokir guides Piya to research in the dense area of the Malta river, where he knows the movement of tides and Irrawaddy Dolphins, and balances the spiritual empathy between humans and animals. He contrasts life between the respect for nature and human tendency to dominate.

The two of them, Fokir and she, could have been boulders or trees for all they knew of each other, and wasn't it better in a way, more honest, that they could not speak? For if you compared it to the ways in which dolphins' echoes mirrored the world, speech was only a bag of tricks that fooled you into believing you could see through the eyes of another being. (132)

Ghosh indicates the non-verbal communication and silent understanding of nature through the character Fokir. The spiritual conversation of Fokir with Piyali shows their deep emotional commentary even though they have language barrier. Fokir has freedom of wisdom in the circumstances who knows how to survive in the natural calamities such as tides, cyclones and storms. The sudden death of Fokir while

protecting Piya from the cyclone, indicates the harmonious behaviour of Fokir.

Understanding the Environmental Values in *The Hungry Tide*

Ghosh portrays the ecological images and symbols throughout the novel which enables the readers to provide care and empathy towards fictional stories such as *The Hungry Tide*. He mentions various elements to understand nature as protectors and disasters which are the tide, Mangrove forests, Sundarbans tigers, Irrawaddy Dolphins, Storms and cyclones, Rivers and waterways and Garjontola in West Bengal.

Ghosh indicates the natural calamities through the title that the tide has hunger and a kind of praying portrayal to predict the novel's flow that has some catastrophe event in *The Hungry Tide*. The cyclical power of the tide enables the reader to understand the fragility of the balance between human and natural forces. The tides give hope but sometimes have the power of erasing the inhabitants of Sundarbans. Ghosh uses flow and ebb of the tide to criticise the human life facing the ethical dilemmas and understand the ecological power. Ghosh pictures the ecological power and adaptability of humans through the tide, compromising the lives of people in the forest area.

Mangrove forest provides the power of resilience and gives a mysterious atmosphere that brings the barriers against cyclone and rich biodiversity in the area which enables globalisation and climate changes. Ghosh mentions Mangrove forest to expose to human behavior in modernization. He is expecting the need for conservation, sustainable interaction between humans and nature.

Garjontola is another groundbreaking location in the Sundarbans, which is considered as a 'place of roaring', where Fokir guides Piya to find the dolphins without any hassle and moreover he is aware of the tiger's tracks. Ghosh portrays this place for a sacred spirituality through their Bonbibi shrine. The rivers and waterways are interconnected between the upstream and downstream mechanism where Ghosh indicates the lives of human beings between the elite and rural while Kanai and Fokir travelling in the boat to Garjontola. Furthermore, he criticises human behavior that stops the natural waves and waterways in the river where they control the flow and speed of water through dams and embankments, leading to loss of biodiversity but the growth of industrialization and urbanization.

Ghosh narrates people's lives and surviving in the harsh rural life between the natural calamities and wild animals. Fokir's subtle behaviour with nature and animals creates respect towards them. Ghosh mentions the wildlife of the tiger through the tracks and footprints in the mud water. *"Wasn't this why people who lived in close proximity with tigers so often regarded them as being something more than just animals? Because the tiger was the only animal that forgave you for being so ill at ease in your translated world?"* (271)

The conversation between Kanai and Fokir records the moment of wildlife by the accurate awareness of Fokir on the way to Garjontola, where he finds out the tracks of a tiger in the mud, showing his spiritual interconnectedness with animals and land. Unlike other writers Ghosh portrays the tiger as a predator and divine source for Fokir rather than danger and scared. But people lives in the dense area often have fear of wildlife, where the situation made Ghosh to balance the narration between protection and human survival.

Piya's arrival for Irrawaddy Dolphin has been shifted to the development of understanding about the Sundarbans.

Irrawaddy Dolphins are rare water dwelling species which are called as Orcella brevirostris, shows the beauty of nature's fragility. Piya handles the situation gently without any harm to the dolphins which shows the scientific understanding of Piya and harmonious behaviour of Fokir in the river. The search of Irrawaddy dolphin seeks the international corporation to protect the rare species and endangered habitats.

Ecological vulnerability is unavoidable made by man in the coastal areas and marginalized communities. Ghosh portrays the climate changes for the mutual changes in the world seeks the ecological responsibility. The storms and cyclones are unexpected, unpredictable calamities in the world and there is no escape from the natural disasters. Fokir is the one who acknowledges everything related to rivers and aware of the situation, but he lost his life in the cyclone while protecting Piyali. This nature of empathy and care towards biocentrism is highly appreciable and to be followed.

CONCLUSION

The study "An Analysis of Environmental Values in *The Hungry Tide*" explains the ecological behaviour of humans to survive in the world, which is a contemporary debated topic in the 21st century. Most of the events in the novel happening particularly in the Sundarbans, West Bengal. The study highlights the environmental values mentioned in the novel and generalization needs of biocentrism in the modern era. Furthermore, the study illustrates characters' acknowledgments of nature and how they are experiencing the environmental situations in the areas such as Sundarbans, Lusibari and Garjontola.

The research provides not only the environmental values and their issues but seeks the attention of an individual to protect the nature and environment as Ghosh deliberately addressed all the events in his work *The Hungry Tide*. The study draws attention to develop the human-nature relationship which helps for betterment of the environment and growth of respect towards the environment.

REFERENCES

1. Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. HarperCollins, 2004.
2. Kumar, Anil. "Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*: A Study of Eco-criticism." *International Journal of Humanities and Education Research*, vol. 6, no. 1, Jan. 2024, pp. 83-85.
3. Younas, None Shehriyar, et al. "Navigating the Ecosphere: Ecological Awareness in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and Gun Island." *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, Feb. 2025, pp. 2305-16.
4. Verma, Rajesh Kumar. "The Hungry Tide of Amitav Ghosh: An Ecocritical Analysis." *International Journal of Humanities Social Science and Management*, vol. 4, no. 4, 2024, pp. 153-156.
5. Ahmad, Zahra, and Shahla Rehana. "Environmental Catastrophe in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2024, pp. 335-344.
6. Nivetha, E. "Nature's Influence in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *International Journal of Research in English*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2024, pp. 85-87.
7. Oppermann, Serpil, and Serenella Iovino. "Introduction: The Environmental Humanities and the Challenges of the Anthropocene." *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*, edited by Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino, Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, pp. 1-21.
8. Panta, Pradip. "Post-Colonial Ecocritical Dynamics in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *Dhaulagiri Journal of Contemporary Issues*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2024, pp. 126-133.
9. Basu, Swagatalakshmi. "Exploring the Bond between Man and Nature in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 5, 2020, pp. 1353-1354.
10. Anitha Sree, A. "Eco-Critical Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, vol. 5, no. 6, 2018, pp. 297-301.
11. Patel, Anuja B. "From Reverence to Destruction: An Eco-Critical Approach to Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, vol. 7, no. 12, 2020, pp. 362-364.