



Review Article

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*: An Ecocritical Analysis: From Ego to Eco

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Abstract

A literary work that represents life in all of its aspects is defined as such by most definitions. A relatively new concept termed ecocriticism has been used more recently to characterise the interaction between humans and their physical environment. The emphasis of ecocriticism is on the natural world rather than on people. But modern man, pushed by the demands of the capitalist market, utilises modern life and technology to ruin the natural world. In the tidal region of the Sundarbans, Amitav Ghosh talks about nature, people, and environmental issues in addition to climate change in his book *The Hungry Tide*. Ghosh interweaves two narratives: the first is given through Nirmal's journal and recounts the events of the Morichjhapi incident; the second is disclosed through Piya's travels and describes the present situation of the people together with the flora and fauna of the Sundarbans.

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INTRODUCTION

The study of human-environment connections and human effect on nature is known as 'green study', which is an interdisciplinary field of study. The cosmos has given humanity its most priceless and treasured gift: nature. It is the primary source of every element that is necessary for every living creature on the earth. Like a mother, nature provides for and nurtures us. Humanity has values and forms, but in modern times, people are either ignored or driven only by selfish motives. However, our forefathers' age was extremely aware of the environment and actively worked to preserve it. Today, more than ever, people must fight to create a coexisting ecosystem so that future generations can witness the beautiful species and trees that will blossom in the future.

The pressing problems affecting the current generation include famine, malnourishment, species extinction, drought, killing of animals, building of unsafe dwellings, retreating glaciers, increasing sea levels, air and water pollution, noise pollution, tree-cutting, and disappearing sources of water. Ignorance, population growth, migration, and the need for money are the causes of all of these issues. In this sense, ecocriticism has become a field of study that illustrates not just the connection between the literature and the planet but also other ecological ethics necessary for a sustainable future.

Indian authors have exhibited a deep reverence for the natural world. They accurately captured nature and stayed highly aware of it. One of the key personalities in Indian English-language writing is Amitav Ghosh. His readers were quite admiring of him. *The Hungry Tide*, his masterwork, is recognised as the first work of Indian English literature to audaciously tackle ecological issues. In all that he did, he tried to protect the environment. The Sundarbans, the novel's location, is a major character and takes up the whole section. It is well-known for its wetlands, tidal flats, and tidal channels. It also has an extensive network of islands that are home to hundreds of species, including the Gangetic River Dolphin and the Royal Bengal Tiger.

The narrative centres on the courageous lives of Piyali Roy and Kanai, who travel to the Sundarbans for personal reasons. Kanai, an older Delhi businessman, goes to Lusibari at the behest of his aunt Nilima, the Philonthorpist's founder. Nilima wants him to read the journal she left behind when her late husband, Nirmal, the school's headmaster, passed away. The notebook, which also describes Kusum and her son Fokir's forced departure from the Island of Morichjhapi, chronicles his uncle's dying days. Ghosh provides an account of the history of Sundarban Island in this journal, encompassing its geography, genesis, landscape, waterscape, and inhabitants whose livelihoods are closely connected to the island's ecology.

The Morichjhapi event from Indian history is featured in Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*. The division of our country and the events that followed it are inextricably linked to the history of the Sundarbans. Colonial forces gave rise to India, and the country's political leaders drew up plans to divide it into two nations. In 1947, those are India and Pakistan. East Pakistan gained roughly forty percent of the

mangrove forests as a result of this division, forcing the region's minority Hindu population to leave. There were mostly Muslims who spoke Bangla there, whereas West Bengal is home to Hindus. Calcutta's affluent friends and relatives provided homes for the upper-class Hindus. Due to their inability to find safety, the lower-class Hindus took over both public and private land. In an attempt to make amends, the government relocated them hundreds of kilometres from Bengal to a hostile and desolate area deep in the Madhya Pradesh jungles.

The forest department has safeguarded the environmentally favourable Morichjhapi territory for Project Tiger. In Morichjhapi, the refugees attempted to construct Utopia. Refugees built roads, reinforced embankments, and cleared woods in a matter of months. Side by side huts were also constructed. After then, the island was split up into five zones, with five acres of land assigned to each household. A blacksmith shop and pottery were put up, pipe wells were installed, fish farming water was dammed, and salt pans were constructed. They were told to leave their land by the government, which viewed them as thugs, squatters, and land grabbers. This resulted the conflicts between government troops and refugees.

Through Nirmal's diary, Amita Ghosh interweaves this history in *The Hungry Tide*. The settlers' tube wells, cottages, boats, food, and water are all taken away by the police, and everything, they own is destroyed or flooded. Afterwards, the government and the forest service announced that this area will be preserved for 'Project Tiger'. Ghosh says, conveying the importance of the heavily guarded area with the voices of police personnel. "This island must be preserved for its wildlife, trees, and reserve forest. It is also a part of a tiger conservation project that is funded by donations from the local community" (THT 261). Ghosh hopes to emphasise the value of animal life through this. Animals need the right ecosystem, climate, and temperature to exist, whereas people can dwell anywhere they find a place to reside.

Ghosh highlights the cruelty that humans impose upon marine life through the depiction of Piyali Roy. Piya is an Indo-American cetologist with a focus on investigating marine life. Despite being born in Calcutta, she spends her early years in Seattle, Washington, in the United States. She returns to India because of her professional interest in aquatic creatures. Her tidal flat journey is a component of a dolphin study that is now underway. The difficulties Piya faces in locating a rare species of dolphin, whose numbers were formerly abundant, is only one of the numerous instances of the way individuals negatively affect the environment. People's disregard for the climate is demonstrated by the story's description of the declining fish population, shallow rivers, and catastrophic cyclones. With the use of Piya's character, Ghosh discusses the decrease of dolphin populations for the production of oil and diesel fuel for use in boats and motorcycles. The poem Kit Wright's 'Song of Whale', which details the killing of whales for the purpose of manufacturing lipstick and shoe polish, has similar conditions.

- A massive whale begging to stay alive
- Weeping for your generosity I know
- How we could utilise you're passing for our benefit
- Lipstick for our faces caked in makeup
- Shine on our sneakers. (4–10)

The poet depicts a guy in the aforementioned words choose lipstick and polish above lines instead of life. Linking this back to the original topic, Ghosh describes an incident in which Piya comments to Fokir while they are out on the water and claims that the dolphins are being killed in their natural habitats by the recklessly hitting them by motorboats carrying so-called environmentalists. With the help of the book's characters, Ghosh expresses his worries about the senseless devastation that is causing the extinction of wildlife. When marine animals start to vanish from a known environment, Piya says, "something has gone very wrong" (THT 266–67). When people see dolphins swimming sometimes, they can guess the way the dolphins will be doing. As a result, many motorboats will start to mobilise, and the dolphin species will eventually go extinct.

The Hungry Tide is only one example. Earth has a number of additional ecosystems that are in risk of disappearing. It is everyone's moral obligation to protect the environment. The reader can become more conscious of and sensitive to the need to safeguard the environment by reading Ghosh's writing. People would be able to form their opinions towards safeguarding and conserving the planet Earth for future generations while also developing an understanding of the places, their surrounds, and the environment by including these books into the curriculum.

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