

# Colonial Exploitation and Environmental Resistance in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction

Srinivasan Prakash<sup>1,2</sup> Dr. K. Sathya Devi<sup>2\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of English, Arignar Anna College (Arts & Science), Krishnagiri – 635 115, Tamil Nadu, India.

<sup>2</sup>Department of English, Government Arts and Science College, Tittagudi – 606 106, (Affiliated to Annamalai University, Chidambaram – 608 002), Tamil Nadu, India.

\*Corresponding Author Email ID: elavarasa1@gmail.com

## Abstract

This article explores the intersection of ecology, colonialism, and environmental justice in Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* and *The Hungry Tide*. Through an ecocritical lens, the paper analyzes how colonial exploitation disrupted traditional agricultural systems, degraded ecosystems, and displaced marginalized communities. In *Sea of Poppies*, the forced cultivation of opium under British rule illustrates the environmental and human costs of imperialism. In *The Hungry Tide*, the fragile ecology of the Sundarbans and the political violence of the Morichjhapi massacre underscore the conflict between conservation policies and human survival. Ghosh presents indigenous knowledge, spiritual relationships with nature, and subaltern voices as counter-narratives to dominant ecological and colonial discourses. The study argues that Ghosh's fiction foregrounds the agency of nature and critiques environmental injustice, offering an urgent call for a more inclusive and ethical ecological consciousness.

**KeyWords:** Ecocriticism, Colonialism, Environmental Justice, Indigenous Knowledge, Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies*, *The Hungry Tide*, Morichjhapi, Opium Trade, Ecological Displacement, Postcolonial Ecology

In recent years, ecocriticism has gained prominence as a literary framework to interrogate the relationship between literature and the environment. Amitav Ghosh, one of the most celebrated Indian novelists, integrates ecological themes with socio-political concerns in his fiction. His works highlight how environmental degradation is deeply entwined with historical forces like colonialism and capitalism. *Sea of Poppies* and *The Hungry Tide* are particularly notable for exploring how colonial policies altered landscapes and affected vulnerable populations.

The flowering poppy plants in the novel's opening scene give us the impression that opium would play a significant role in the lives of the novel's protagonists. As he puts it:

It happened at the end of winter, in a year when the poppies were unusually slow to shed their petals: for miles and miles from Benares onwards, the river was flowing between twin glaciers, both banks blanketed in thick drifts of white-petaled flowers, as if the high Himalayan shows had descended on the plains to await the arrival of Holi and its springtime profusion of colour

(Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 3)

The cultivation of opium has resulted in the abolition of the cultivation of consumable food crops. Deeti recalls how edible crops were cultivated in the past, providing not only food but also material for shelter. It was a perfect life before opium farming forced them to either starve to death or flee to Mauritius.

Deeti distinguishes the changes in their lives brought on by the shift in cropping pattern. Opium was grown between the main crops of wheat, masoor dal, and vegetables.

Due to the production of opium, the variety of crops has become extinct, and those who fail to cultivate opium are constrained, resulting in debt and migration. Not only humans become addicted to heroin in this book, but all living things in the world are affected as well. Kalua, the main character, used to feed opium to his ox. And then would it be able to unwind. Deeti pays Kalua with opium because she doesn't have any money to offer him. According to Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies*, insects that drink the nectar of the poppy flower become inebriated and behave abnormally. He also claims that the sweet odor of the poppy pod fascinates insects such as bees, grasshoppers, and wasps, which are then attacked by the liquid fluid released by the pod after a few days. He claims that as the sap becomes dark, their bodies dissolve into it and become part of the heroin sold in the market. The following is a description of opium's influence on butterflies:

The sap seemed to have a pacifying effect even on the butterflies, which flapped their wings in oddly erratic pattern, as though they could not remember how to fly. One of these banded on the back of Kabutri's hand and would not take wing until it was thrown up in the air (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 28)

The impact of opium on the behavior of monkeys living near the Sundar opium factory; they never babbled, clashed among themselves, took things or food from others, or came down; instead, they just came down to eat and then climbed back up, just like other monkeys. Ghosh puts it this way:

Unlike others of their kind they never chattered or fought or stole from passers-by; when they came down from the trees it was to lap at the open sewers that drained the factory's effluents after having sated their cravings, they would climb back into the branches to resume their stupefied scrutiny of the Ganga and its currents (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 91).

A forced act of cruelty by Kalua with a ware as punishment given by the three drunken Zamindars of the village occurs in the book. It depicts the human manipulation of an animal. In the book, Paulette Lambert is a child of nature. Fitcher Penrose, a French botanist, is her father. The writer justifies it by pointing out that the name she was assigned was inspired by an epiphytic orchid that her father found three years earlier and called Dendrbuim paulette. Her father refers to her as an "angel of nature" since she has never prayed to any other god but nature. Her book was her tutor. He expresses his fear that colonial rule will degrade her because Europe hides its greed in these colonies. In the book, his father says:

.... a child of nature that is what she is, my daughter Paulette. As you know I have educated her myself, in the innocent tranquility of the Botanical Gardens. She has had no teacher other than myself, and has never worshipped at any altar except that of nature; the trees have been her scripture and the Earth her Revelation. She has not known anything but Love, Equality and Freedom: I have raised her to revel in that state of Liberty that in Nature itself. If she remains here, in the colonies, most particularly in a city like this, where Europe hides its shame and, its greed, all that awaits her is degradation, the whites of this town will tear her apart, like vultures and foxes, fishing over a corpse. She will be an innocent thrown before the money-changers who pass themselves off as men of god.... (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 136).

Paulette is comparable to Lucy in Wordsworth's poem "*Three Years She Grew,*" in which nature serves as Lucy's mother, tutor, and guide (Wordsworth). She knows everything there is to know about plants, and she addresses all of Munia's questions while on the Ibis.

Deeti's mind is soothed by the force of nature: It rained hard that night and the whole house was filled with the smell of wet thatch. The grassy fragrance cleared Deeti's mind: think, she had to think, it was no use to weep and bemoan the influence of the planets (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 37).

When Deeti defines the meeting of Ganga and Karamnasa as "destroyer of karma," she is implying that the touch of water will destroy a lifetime of hard-earned value. The change in environment experienced by the Ibis as it moved through the Sundarbans is defined as follows:

The flat, fertile, populous plains yielded to swamps and marshes: the river turned brackish, so that its water could no longer be drunk; every day the water rose and fell, covering and uncovering vast banks of mud; the shores were blanketed in dense, tangled greenery, O a kind that was neither shrub nor tree, but seemed to grow out of the river's bed, on roots that were like stilts: of a night, they would hear tigers roaring in the forest, and feel the pulwar shudder, as Crocodiles lashed it with their tails

(Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 246).

Sarju, a character in the novel who gives seeds of poppy bhang, dhatura, and some spices to Deeti before her death, emphasises the role of seeds in human life.

She says to Deeti while giving the seeds of poppy, "There is wealth beyond imaginations, guard it like your life" (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 450), they are the seeds of best Benares poppy. She instructs Deeti to distribute only the seeds of some spices and dies saying, "They are worth more than any treasure" (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 450).

The captain of the ship says, "Nature gives as fire, water to the rest-it demands to be used with the greatest care and caution" (Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* 436). It is the voice of the writer to the readers of the novel to be a part of nature and should not try to control it.

The novel attempts to illustrate historical events and economic practices set against the background of colonial India, as well as how lands were used to construct factories in order to expand opium cultivation and export to various countries. This novel also requires readers to read in terms of pre-colonial ecocriticism, showing how the British used natural woods for their own conveniences while cutting down countless trees for the development of roads, buildings, and trains.

*Sea of Poppies* is a study of nature writing in which Ghosh paints a pen image of the physical world and human encounters with it; he depicts the beauty of nature and scenery in the countryside.

It's a place where the sea, river, land, humans, and animals all coexist peacefully. This coexistence is often peaceful, but it is also often antagonistic. The Sundarbans are a wide area of Sundari trees, also known as mangroves that can withstand extreme temperatures. The indeterminate, temporary space in which Ghosh chose to set his novel *The Hungry Tide* is the Sundarbans, where land and sea perpetually belong to each other in a regular structural loop. The novel was published in 2004. West Bengal's flora is made up of a diverse range of plants that can withstand saltwater temperatures. Ghosh focuses a glorious eye on a micro-culture inside the Sundarbans, or tide country, the Ganges delta islets south of Kolkata and east of the West Bengal/ Bangladesh border. At the Ganges' mouth, this delta, which extends 335 kilometers across Bangladesh and West Bengal, is the world's biggest mangrove forest. It was cut in half by a complex network of tidal rivers, mudflats, and isolated islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests. The flora of the city is made up of salt water environmental conditions.

The novel's title alluded to the difficulties of living in such a desolate place, which is vulnerable to the destructive effects of rogue tidal waves and tropical cyclones. The Sundarbans' environment is described by Annu Jalais as a position of ecological and political authenticity:

On the southern tip of West Bengal in eastern India, just south of Calcutta, the great river Ganges fans out into many tributaries over a vast delta before ending a journey that began in the distant Himalayan north with a plunge into the Bay of Bengal. The mouth of this delta is made up of about three hundred small islands, spread over an area of about ten thousand square kilometers and straddling India's border with Bangladesh. It is one of those areas of the world where the lie of the land mocks the absurdity of international treaties, because it is virtually impossible to enforce border laws on a territory that constantly shifts, submerges and resurfaces with the ebb and flow of the tide.... These are the Sundarbans- the forests of beauty. (Jalais 108)

This river delta contains of incalculable islands which appear and disappear according to whims of tides and seasons, “a terrain where the boundaries between land and water are always mutating, always unpredictable” (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*).

The contours of the land in the Sundarbans are continuously changing due to the ebb and flow of water. River channels are strewn around the landscape like a fine-mesh net. Any of these rivers are massive lakes that are so large that one shore can't be seen from the other. When the oceans engulf numerous islands, thousands of mangrove trees merge and re-emerge every day. The strong tidal currents will travel up to 300 kilometres off shore, causing thousands of acres of forest to vanish. There are no lines separating fresh water from salt water, or a river from the sea. There is no clear border between land and water in this tide country.

The Sundarbans the charm, as the name of the forest implies, comes with threats and perils on a land that is so precarious and unpredictable. Many endangered species, such as the Royal Bengal tiger and Irawaddy dolphins, call the Mongrove forest or Sundari trees home. Ghosh discusses the Sundarbans' ecology, which is diverse and beautiful. Ghosh's portrayal of the tidal country is strikingly similar to a landscape described by Salman Rushdie in his novel *Midnight's Children's*. Rushdie portrays the tidal land as exotic. His macroscopic visual representations often show the uninhabitability of the Sundarbans. His depiction of the Sundarbans is that of a mystical realist, who sees the tidal country as a vast jungle filled with alien monsters and mysteries.

The tidal land oscillates between the semiotic play of mystery and enchantment in *Midnight's Children*, while the land in *The Hungry Tide* appears to be caught by microscopic and ecologist's photo prints. The scene opens with a pen drawing of the actual world and human contact with it.

*The Hungry Tide* opens with a map of the Sundarbans juxtaposed against a scene of travellers orienting themselves to the city. It follows Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy (Piya), two Sundarbans travellers, as they engage with the culture of tidal country people and with one another. Kanai, a middle-aged Delhi businessman, travels there to see his idealistic aunt, Nilima, an NGO activist who runs the Badabon Trust, which includes a charity, a hospital, a guest house, and educational facilities on one of the islands, Lusibari. They've been in the Sundarbans for a long time.

Nilima's work focuses on women's rights, children's schooling, and providing basic health services to residents of the tidal land. Kanai has come to retrieve a package from his late uncle, Nirmal. The parcel seems to hold a notebook, with fragments scattered throughout the book. The packet he finds is an account of his uncle's final days, which revolves around Kusum and her son Fokir, who are depicted as victims of eviction from Morichjhapi's island. Ghosh tells the tale of the Sundarban Island, its geography, origin, vegetation, waterscape, and skycaps, as well as the story of people whose lives are intertwined with the Sundarbans' ecology. As a result, Ghosh portrays Nirmal as someone who is well-versed in history, geography, and geology. It's the product of Ghosh's inability to draw a clear line between fiction and nonfiction in his prose.

Ghosh has always combined the roles of a novelist, journalist, scholar and historian. Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, argues that ecocritics explore literary texts as, “refractions of physical environments and human interactions with those environments, notwithstanding the artifactual properties of textual representation and their mediation by ideological and other socio-historical factors” (Buell, *Future* 30). By including a concise overview of human-nature relationships, Ghosh positions nature as the main protagonist. Buell goes on to say, correctly, in *The Environmental Imagination*:

The salient feature of environmental literature is that “nature is not merely a setting or backdrop for human action, but an actual factor in the plot, that is, a character and sometimes even a protagonist” (Buell, *Imagination* 282).

Similarly, in *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh portrays landscape as a vitalizing medium from which human lives arise and through which those lives are connected and weighed, rather than as scenery or a delicate stage set. Despite her Bengali roots, Piya, an Indo-American scientist from Seattle, arrives in Sundarban as an American. Piya is a cetologist, a scientist who studies marine mammals. About the fact that she was born in Kolkata, she was raised in Seattle, Washington, from a young age. Her professional fascination with aquatic mammals takes her back to India. Her trip to the tide nation is part of her continuing dolphin studies. She is conscious that river dolphins such as *Orcaella brevirostris*, also known as the Irrawaddy dolphin, live near the Sundarbans in the Bay of Bengal. She has a rangefinder, a depth sounder, clip charts, pens, and a console with a GPS (Global Positioning System) link to the satellite, as well as the dolphin drawings. Ghosh takes up the fact that a study showed that the Sundarbans had more fish species than the whole continent of Europe. According to him,

This proliferation of aquatic life was thought to be the result of the unusually varied composition of the water itself. The waters of river and sea did not intermingle evenly in this part of the delta; rather, they interpenetrated each other, creating hundreds of different ecological niches, with streams of fresh water running along the floors of some channels, creating variations of salinity and turbidity. These micro-environments were like balloons suspended in the water, and they had their own patterns of flow. . . . Each balloon was a floating biodome, filled with endemic fauna and flora. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 125)

In this microcosm of the earth, the abundance of the mingled ecosystem is responsible for the development and maintenance of a sparkling range of underwater life forms, according to the novels above excerpt. Piya hires an illiterate fisherman named Fokir to act as her guide through the area's canals, creeks, and rows. Fokir takes her to Garjontola, where she encounters a swarm of dolphins. In his acquaintance with the tide country and its animals, Ghosh empowers Fokir on many occasions. His mother, Kusum choking with pride says, "see saar: the river is in his veins" (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 245). Even Piya, an outsider praises his power while being out in water. He seems to be constantly monitoring the river, even though he isn't aware of it. She claims she's dealt with a lot of seasoned fishermen in the past, but she's never seen someone with such a strong instinct. Fokir seems to be able to see straight through the river's center. His talents as a natural observer are exceptional. He has adapted to the natural patterns that surround him. Piya considers the following:

It was surprising enough that their jobs had not proved to be utterly incompatible—especially considering that one of the tasks required the inputs of geostationary satellites while the other depended on bits of shark-bone and broken tile. But that it had proved possible for two such different people to pursue their own ends simultaneously—people who could not exchange a word with each other and had no idea of what was going on in one another's heads—was far more than surprising: it seemed almost miraculous. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 141)

Ghosh depicts Fokir in full spirit in the sea, rather than the glum, resentful creature he seems to be on shore. Piya recognises and respects Fokir's expertise. On Piya's GPS camera, his embodied awareness of the river becomes a map. Throughout the book, Fokir's intelligence and bravery help her in her quest for Orcella. Fokir's wife, Moyna, and Kanai, who see his experience as a relic of little merit in the modern economy, disagree with the decision. The global environmental problem is exacerbated by prevailing epistemologies' rejection of information, which weakens local knowledge of locations. Ghosh helps readers to grasp and comprehend the prevalent epistemologies' rejection of information contributes to the global environmental problem by weakening local knowledge of locations by including different viewpoints on Fokir. Fokir, according to Rajinder Kaur, "lives in idealised harmony with the tide country's rhythms" (Kaur 135). He is a member of a group that has been forced by the state to live in an environmentally hazardous location. In the act of guiding Piya safely across the mountains, he loses his life

and becomes a survivor of seasonal cyclones. He is the archetypal hapless and illiterate resident, vulnerable to the tide country's man-eating lions, sharks, crocodiles, reptiles, waves, and cyclones. In the destructive storm in which Fokir is killed, wind and water prove to be a deadly mix.

*The Hungry Tide* depicts how difficult it is to coexist in an ecologically challenging climate for humans and non-humans. The novel depicts the difficulties of defending vulnerable habitats and wildlife while also putting the livelihoods and lives of local residents in jeopardy. Ecocide, deep ecology, social ecology, environmental injustice, and environmental justice are all explored in the book.

*The Hungry Tide* is an environmentally conscious piece that asserts that human history is intertwined with natural history. The novel depicts the difficulties of defending vulnerable habitats and wildlife while also putting the livelihoods and lives of local residents in jeopardy. Ecocide, deep ecology, social ecology, environmental injustice, and environmental justice are all explored in the book.

*The Hungry Tide* is an environmentally conscious piece that asserts that human history is intertwined with natural history. It paints an image of animals versus human misery in pen and ink. The book explores the fate of humans and their struggle for life in an endangered world where they coexist with animals and the tides. In response to the book, A.A. Mondal writes:

*The Hungry Tide* is a plea as well as a testimony to the many other songs of the earth, sung by the many different peoples who live on it and claim some portion of it as their own; a plea that they do not go unheard, that they are not swamped by *The Hungry Tides* of either development or environmentalism.

(Mondal, *The Hungry Tide* 19)

*The Hungry Tide* represents many of nature's destructive and violent elements. Many people drown, and still more are eaten by crocodiles and sharks. Tiger attacks are very common. When we look closely at the book, we can see that Kusum's father's death is the most detailed of all the animal deaths. This scene renders humans powerless and depicts nature's strength as being greater than human power. According to Ghosh,

"The animal too was upwind of its prey and they could see its coat flashing as it closed in; because of the distinctiveness of its own order, it was skilled in dealing with the wind and it knew that the people on the other bank were powerless against these gusts" (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 108).

These great cats of the tide nation are like ghosts that only leave signs, noises, and smells to indicate their existence. Ghosh depicts tigers and crocodiles plotting, stalking, and attacking their victims. These natural attackers seem to be aware that the citizens are helpless in the face of their winds. When Kusum's father is threatened, he thoroughly reveals tigers' nature:

So great was its confidence that in the last stretch it actually broke cover and went racing along the shore, in full view of the far shore; intent on its prey, it no longer cared about concealment. This was in itself an astonishing sight, almost without precedent, for the great cats of the tide country were like ghosts, never revealing their presence except through marks, sounds and smells. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 108)

Environmental refugees are forced to settle in threatened areas, coexisting with killer waves, tigers, and crocodiles, as a result of the government's compulsion and oppression. Many of these environmental refugees flee to a variety of locations, including Morichjhapi Island, which is relatively easy to reach from the mainland. The refugees collaborate with other islanders to build huts, farm land, and earn money through fishing. They build tube wells, a fishing industry, salt pans, dispensaries, and colleges, among other things. The refugees demonstrate initiative and the desire to persevere in their search for survival. These refugees band together to carve out a place for themselves in the world. However, the effort put in is just temporary. Morichjhapi's settlement has been declared illegal by the authorities. The permanent settlement will also disrupt the forest's resources and ecological balance, according to the declaration.

Ghosh deftly depicts a postcolonial political struggle between wildlife protection demands and human needs. Ghosh, like Bookchin, is critical of environmentalists, who, in Bookchin's view, concentrate on the symptoms of the environmental crisis rather than the root causes. He argues that the environmental crisis is the product of specific social interactions, as well as society's hierarchical structures (Bookchin). Ghosh is a social ecologist who advocates for a better understanding of the role of hierarchy and dominance in the ecological crisis. Age gerontocracy, gender patriarchy, and class status are all intertwined in Bookchin's view of hierarchy. Similarly, Ghosh emphasises the class system in Morichjhapi, where the poor oppressed settlers are tortured and intentionally set against nature. He, like Bookchin, believes that the concept of dominating nature has its roots in the very real dominance of humans over other humans.

The settlers are denied food and water by the police. They are tear-gassed, and their tube wells, huts, vessels, and everything else they own are destroyed and sunk. Military occupation, persecution, and degradation of land, people, culture, and other life forms are all condemned by environmental justice. In her article "Dwelling on Morichjhapi," Annu Jalais claims that the settlers have been reduced to tiger food as well as ecological refugees:

It was often expressed that the government was happy as long as the tigers thrived and that in contrast, whether the islanders lived or died, as with the refugees, made no difference, because they were just "tiger food". It was also said that earlier both animals and humans lived in harmony and the animals did not harm the human beings. But after the incident of Morichjhapi, the tigers became "man eaters". (Jalais 1761)

There have been many killings in which nature and local people have been oppressed in the face of more dominant or centralised people. "She had subsisted on a kind of wild green known as Jadu Palong," Kusum, the mother of Fokir, a survivor of the Morichjhapi incident, describes the intense hostility and oppression that could be forced on hungry and helpless people during that time of military occupation. These leaves, though initially appealing, turned out to be deadly in the end, causing serious dysentery. Ghosh employs Kusum's voice to inform readers about the government's increased pressure on poor settlers. Police patrol the island, preventing refugees from accessing basic necessities of life such as food. People who are starving are brutally attacked and killed. Locals are intimidated and harassed by the police. Several hundred people are arrested, and their bodies are dumped into the water.

"thirty police launch encircled the island thereby depriving the settlers of food and water; they were also tear gassed, their huts razed, their boats sunken, their fisheries and tube-wells destroyed, and those who tried to cross the river were shot all"

(Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 279).

Ghosh also discusses the issue of housing. Though Lusibari thrives as a village, Morichjhapi's attempt to create a home is met with harsh and brutal opposition. Daniel Hamilton, an Englishman, is responsible for the exploration and establishment of Lusibari and several other islands. When poor environmental refugees attempt to create a settlement, they are evicted and resisted by the government, which refers to the area as Morichjhapi, a reserve forest belonging to a project to save tigers. They use environmental protection to justify their brutal expulsion of poor people from a small and inhospitable island. The government uses the tiger refugee as a justification for forcefully withdrawing the refugees. A.A. Mondal is correct in his assertion:

Ghosh mediates upon a core set of issues but each time he does so from a new perspective: the troubled legacy of colonial knowledge and discourse on formerly colonized societies . . . the formation and reformation of identities in colonial and postcolonial societies . . . an engagement with cultural multiplicity, and an insistent critique of Eurocentrism. (Mondal 2)

Despite the well-known fact that the Sundarbans' human-eating tigers kill hundreds of people each year, the preservation of this endangered species has always taken precedence over the conservation of the local

population. It is due to the fact that foreign funds are available for the former but not for the latter's security. As a result, these anti- environmentalists are trying to exclude human out of the sphere of nature which can erupt out as a big threat to both humanity and nature. Rajinder Kaur in "Home Is where the Orcella Are" views, ". . . the irrational logic of an environmental program, largely funded by the west, in which human beings live on the edge of survival, like these refugees of Morichjhapi, become the expendable species in favour of the treasured tiger" (Kaur 131).

The novel examines the plight of displaced people, as well as their struggle to find a place to call home and survive in an endangered ecosystem. These poor settlers face environmental injustice, undue suffering, and bigotry, prompting Kusum, a poor settler, to scream:

. . . the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than dirt or dust. This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 261)

As a result, Ghosh addresses the case of environmental inequality and prejudice. He argues that the idea of habitat protection and endangered species needs to be rethought because it ignores and undermines the lives and homes of the poor and minority communities. Michael Bennet, an ecocritic in "From Wide Open Spaces to Metropolitan Places" maintains, ". . . the mainstream environmental agenda was captive to classist and racist interests in issues like the preservation of wilderness and wildlife for the leisure and recreation" ( Bennet 304). Kusum vents her resentment of the government and the police force. She exposes the harsh truth that impoverished populations are the true endangered species. Her outrage at these skewed authorities is expressed in the following words:

Who are these people, I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is being done in their names? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? As I thought of these things it seemed to me that this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just human beings, trying to live as human beings always have, from water and the soil. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 262)

Kusum points out those humans have often interacted with the ground, clearing and planting it. Her emotions show that nature and humans have always shared a harmonious bond. Ghosh empathises with these poor environmental refugees, defending their basic need for land in order to survive.

The protection and restoration of flora and fauna at the expense of innocent and poor human lives is one of the novel's main themes. It is a case of unequal justice; we cannot put the human beings in an unknown corner in the vast stage of ecosphere.

Piya is astounded to see the horrifying brutality shown by humans towards a vicious yet silent animal as it strays into human territory. The sounds of a buffalo giving birth attract the tiger into a village late at night. It tracks the sounds to the animal's pen and enters through the roof. Since the tiger had killed two of their citizens and countless heads of cattle, the villagers take the chance to fight back. Angry villagers blind it by poking its eyes with a sharpened bamboo pole and then burning it alive. Piya protests with a raised voice. She hints, as a deep ecologist, that humans, with their monstrous egos, are still in a constant trial of dominating and killing other species. Deep ecologists claim that once humans have wiped out all other animals, they will turn on their own kind.

Here, Ghosh reminds readers that animal protection should not be achieved at the expense of human lives, since humans are an integral part of the entire ecosphere. He offers an intriguing ecological viewpoint on human-animal dynamics in the tide country. He claims that the authorities are providing water for tigers in a place where no one worries about thirsty humans. It's a shame that animals are given priority over

humans. In an article titled “Restoration of Human Spirit in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*,” Ambethkar writes:

The tigers are zealously protected by various international environmental groups who apply economic and diplomatic pressures on the Indian and Bangladeshi governments to maintain the tiger habitats by military or police force. But in the name of tiger preservation human lives are threatened; the tigers routinely maul and kill the islanders and their cattle.

(Ambethkar 6).

### Works Cited

Bennett, Michael. “From Wide Open Spaces to Metropolitan Places: The Urban Challenge to Ecocriticism.” *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, & Pedagogy*, edited by Joni Adamson, Mei Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, University of Arizona Press, 2002, pp. 305–318.

Bookchin, Murray. *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy*. AK Press, 2005.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Harvard University Press, 1995.

Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Blackwell, 2005.

Ghosh, Amitav. *Sea of Poppies*. Penguin Books, 2008.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. HarperCollins, 2004.

Jalais, Annu. “Dwelling on Morichjhapi: When Tigers Became ‘Citizens’, Refugees ‘Tiger-Food’.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 40, no. 17, 2005, pp. 1757–1762.

Kaur, Rajinder. “Home Is Where the Orcella Are: Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* and the Question of Belonging.” *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 3, no. 4, 2007, pp. 1–18.

Mondal, Anshuman A. “Allegories of Identity: ‘Postmodern’ Anxiety and ‘Postcolonial’ Ambivalence in Amitav Ghosh’s *In an Antique Land* and *The Hungry Tide*.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 38, no. 3, 2003, pp. 19–36.

Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight’s Children*. Jonathan Cape, 1981.

Ambethkar, V. “Restoration of Human Spirit in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*.” *International Journal of English Research*, vol. 7, no. 1, Jan. 2021, pp. 4–6.

<https://www.englishjournals.com/archives/2021/vol7/issue1/7-1-24>.

### Copyright & License:



© Authors retain the copyright of this article. This work is published under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), permitting unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.