

Ecological and Environmental Concerns in Select Works of Amitav Ghosh

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Abstract- This paper examines the ecological and environmental degradation in Amitav Ghosh's Novels namely, The Hungry Tide, Gun Island and The Glass Palace. It also explores the relationship between human and nature. At the same time it also talks about exploitation of the natural resources and its impact on the climate change. Through these novels Amitav Ghosh has established himself as savior of environmental issues. His novels show brutal realities of industrialization and its impact on environment and human. This paper is also an attempt to persuade scholars to study his novels through environmental dimensions, which have been rarely explored. The objective of this study is to analyze and examine the depiction of environmental degradation due to human greed. Amitav Ghosh explores ecological concerns across The Hungry Tide, Gun Island and The Glass Palace by Intervening environmental degradation with human history, migration and colonialism. These novels highlight the fragility of ecosystem, human-nature conflicts, and the impacts of climate change and exploitation.

Keywords - Ecology, Environment, climate change, colonialism, displacement, sunderbans, mangrove.

Introduction - During recent times literary critics are focusing more and more on the hitherto ignored relationship between human and natural world. So many literary writers are writing on the environmental issues thus highlighting the problems of environmental destruction. Amitav Ghosh is one of such novelists who talks about environment and ecological concerns in his writings. Amitav Ghosh "The Hungry Tide" is a compelling exploration of the complex relationship between humans and the environment set against the backdrop of the Sunderbans. A unique ecosystem in the Bay of Bengal. The novel delves into the intricate ecological and environmental concerns that plague this fragile region, highlighting the delicate balance between human needs and the preservation of nature.

The Sunderbans, a vast network of mangrove forests and tidal waterways, serves as a microcosm of the environmental challenges facing the world today. Ghosh vividly portrays the region's vulnerability to natural disasters, such as cyclones and floods, which are exacerbated by climate change and human activities. The novel underscores the interconnectedness of the ecosystem, where the destruction of mangrove forests for human settlement or shrimp farming leads to increased erosion and heightened vulnerability to storms. "The Hungry Tide" explores the complex relationship between humans and animals in the Sunderbans, where both struggle for survival in a challenging environment. The novel depicts the constant threat of tiger attacks, highlighting the precariousness of

human life in this region. However, it also portrays the tigers as victims of habitat loss and human encroachment, emphasizing the need for conservation efforts to protect these endangered creatures.

The novel sheds light on the plight of environmental refugees, who are displaced from their homes due to natural disasters and environmental degradation. Ghosh portrays the struggles of these marginalized communities, who are often forced to live in precarious conditions and face discrimination. The novel raises questions about environmental justice and the responsibility of governments and individuals to address the needs of those displaced by environmental factors.

"The Hungry Tide" explores the tension between environmental conservation and the livelihoods of local communities. The novel depicts the challenges faced by those who depend on the Sunderbans for their sustenance, such as fishermen and honey collectors, who are often caught between the need to protect the environment and the desire to earn a living. Ghosh highlights the importance of finding sustainable solutions that balance the needs of both humans and the environment.

Through its vivid portrayal of the Sunderbans and its inhabitants, "The Hungry Tide" raises awareness about the importance of ecological conservation and the need for sustainable practices. The novel encourages readers to reflect on their relationship with the environment and to consider the consequences of their actions. Ghosh's work

serves as a call for greater environmental consciousness and a more harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019) explores environmental concerns through the lens of climate change, linking myths to real-world ecological devastation in regions such as the Sundarbans in India and Venice in Italy. The novel highlights how human actions exacerbate global warming, cyclones, habitat loss, and species displacement. These themes underscore the Anthropocene's planetary impact on both human and non-human lives. Ghosh's novel focuses on the indistinctive boundaries between water and land to represent the consequences of climatic disturbances. Ghosh in these novels travels from the wild and tangled Sundarbans (a mangrove region that spans between India and Bangladesh) to Los Angeles, parched by wildfires to the slowly sinking Venice. He depicts the impacts of the ecological chaos that had happened in the Sundarbans and highlights the same process of destruction that has been happening across the world.

Ghosh is of the view that along with swamping the buildings, global warming in the whole world posing a threat to the overall flora and fauna of Sundarbans and Venice. Due to increased temperatures, the bridges of Venice have fallen prey to shipworms. They are hollowing these bridges bit by bit. He calls them the monsters which are rolling the wood of the bridges.

Similarly, in the Sundarbans, burrowing crabs have also become a threat to the mangrove forests. Ghosh says that these burrowing crabs are digging and damaging embankments. The increased water levels has multiply their population. Ghosh argues that rising temperatures across the globe, caused by global warming is changing habitats of various kinds of animals such as spiders, shipworms, cobras, snakes and many others. Ghosh in *Gun Island* describes the long term consequences of Cyclone Aila, that hit the Sundarbans in 2009. This cyclone has damaged and destroyed hundreds of miles of embankments and thousands acres of land. The cyclone also caused millions of people to become homeless. The land that had long been the source of their livelihood become devourer as the water turned poisonous due to arsenic laced brew. The lives of the local were turned upside-down after Cyclone Aila, which resulting into their migration towards Bangladesh and the Gulf. Ghosh's *Gun Island* depicts that the ecological and environmental mishaps occurring in Sundarbans and Venice are largely due to human intervention. He sarcastically says that this beautiful planet called Earth is on the brink of environmental catastrophe.

Amitav Ghosh's *'The Glass Palace'* (2000) weaves ecological concerns into its historical narrative spanning colonial Burma, India, and Malaya, critiquing how imperialism exploits natural resources and disrupts ecosystems. The novel portrays nature's resistance against human domination, highlighting the commodification of

forests and land under British rule. British Colonial greed drives the ruthless logging of Burma's teak forests, transforming vast wilderness into export commodities and stripping the land's vitality. Rubber plantations in Malaya regiment landscapes imposing unnatural order through monoculture that endanger labors via floods and harsh conditions. Oil wells and resource extraction further commodify nature, fueling imperial ambitions at the cost of ecological harmony.

The Novel *'The Glass Palace'* spanning from the 1885 British annexation of Mandalay to World War II's upheavals, exposes imperialism's human and ecological tools via characters like the ambitious Rajkumar and the resilient Dolly. He portrays nature not merely as a setting but as a victim of 'ecocide' the systematic destruction of ecosystems for imperial profit. Ghosh describes the process of "girdling," (Cutting a ring around the trunk to kill the tree before felling) in violent, clinical terms. The falling of these giant is likened to a thunderclap explosion. The use of elephants to drag massive logs into the Chaungs (streams) represents the bending of animal and river life to serve the colonial machine. Ghosh critiques the transformation of biodiversity of jungles into sterile rubber plantations. The extraction of petroleum at Yenangyaung illustrates the physical scarring of the earth. He describes petroleum wells as "oil-sodden pits" and "small volcanoes" of excavated earth. The narrative thus links environmental damage to human suffering, noting how workers and children frequently fall into the slippery, toxic wells. Ghosh explores how ecological changes force the movement of people, a concept often termed environmental displacement. The clearing of forests for timber and plantations displaces indigenous communities and Indian indentured laborers. The novel also depicts the scorched-earth policies of the World War II, showing how both land and its inhabitants are casualties of political conflicts they did not initiate.

Conclusion: Amitav Ghosh's novels which are examined in this paper offer a new ecocritical perspective. These novels also focus on environmental and ecological concerns with broader sociopolitical issues. Through these novels Ghosh is able to portrays the connection between humans and the natural world. He is successful in showing how colonialism, displacement and identity are closely linked to environmental catastrophe. Amitav Ghosh *The Hungry Tide* shows that there must be a delicate balance between humans and ecosystems, *Gun Island* talks about the impacts of climate change. While the *Glass Palace* portrays historical environmental exploitation and its effect on borders.

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