



Navigating the Ecosphere: Ecological Awareness in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*

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Abstract. The paper focuses on eco-awareness in Amitav Ghosh's novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* and its significance in eco-literature. Using rich storytelling and the relationships of myth, history and science, Ghosh tackles environmental challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity and human-nature conflict. Focusing on the Sundarbans in *The Hungry Tide*, the paper explores its configuration of ecological fragility and environmental cohabitation, and goes on to discuss how this is globalised in *Gun Island*, calling structured attention to the connections between environmental crises and human migrations. Utilizing ecocritical paradigms that range from postcolonial ecocriticism to the Anthropocene discourse, this study scrutinizes Ghosh's war against anthropocentrism and his plea for a reconciliation with nature. The folktale elements, animism, and environmental realities present in these narratives speak to literature's power to cultivate a sense of ecological empathy and resilience. The paper further argues for the continued significance of Ghosh's work in modern day ecological discourse, arguing for literature as a means to encourage sustainable living and broadened environmental policy. The study highlights eco-literature's ability to promote change, which, as the author explains, makes it an effective tool to bridge the gap in the way that humans view their responsibility to care for the planet:

Index Terms- Ecological Awareness, Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, *Gun Island*, Climate Change, Anthropocene, Ecocriticism, Environmental Crises.

I. Introduction

In recent times, ecological consciousness has found its way into the mainstream and become a dominant motif in contemporary literature, where literature provides a means through which to address environmental crises that endanger the future of our planet. As a window into human experience, literature can be used to probe the layered relationship between nonhumans and human social structures, yet it can also highlight the centrality of culture in environmental problems through the lens of interdependence and agency. Within the 21st century, few writers can be the pretender to the throne of eco-literature Amitav Ghosh Legend and his novels that he uses to interrogate anthropocentric world views and to call for ecological empathy (13).



In novels including *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*, Ghosh adeptly weaves together narratives of environmental fragility with cultural and historical contexts. *The Hungry Tide* takes place in the Sundarbans, a landscape of a place where land meets the water, where human life is tightly entwined with the preservation of biodiversity (1). In this novel, the clash between conservation and the occupations of marginalized communities, and the ethical dilemmas with it, play a prominent role in what constitutes environmental speech (6). And, *Gun Island* scales up these concerns, engaging with migration and climate change on a global level and thinking through the entangled legacies of ecological crisis, which are certainly not just on our doorstep (2).

This paper has two key aims: first, exploring how Ghosh's novels articulate awareness of ecological variables through thick descriptions of the environmental issues; and secondly to discuss the dialogue among (non)human agencies his narratives. Utilising ecocritical frameworks, this study aims to highlight the underlying implications inherent in Ghosh's criticism of anthropocentrism and his conception of coexistence.

This study argues that *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* emphasize the fragility of ecosystems and the moral obligation of mankind in regenerating them. Ghosh's works elaborate a deeply embedded critique of ecological imbalance via the interweaving of myth, history, and science (3, 4).

II. Ecological Themes in the Hungry Tide

"Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is a full-fledged novel in a kind of ecological science fiction — the intricacy of an evolution that traces the fragility of a unique region of standstill, where land and water do not separate. In this section, I explore the ecological significance of the setting of the films, the tensions between human and non-human entities in these films, the role of myth, folklore, and interpersonal relationships that express notions of ecological interdependence.

Setting and its Ecological Significance

The Sundarbans, with its maze of tidal rivers and dense mangrove forests, is an evocative metaphor for the tenuous relationship between land and sea. Ghosh does not merely render this liminal space as a geographical entity but an ecological microcosm where survival of all depends on coexistence (1). The region hosts a wide range of biodiversity, including species such as the Bengal tiger, Gangetic dolphins, and innumerable freshwater organisms, which contributes to its global ecological importance (6). But this biodiversity exists, precariously, in the face of human encroachment. The novel illustrates the beauty of nature — fall on Cape & Islands is a time of high tides, dense mangrove forests that hold beauty and danger. (For a human, such an environment is precarious — if not floundering on the beach, or not getting trapped in quicksand)(4).

Human-Nature Conflicts

Central to *The Hungry Tide* is the conflict between the marginalized residents of the Sundarbans and the conservation efforts that seek to preserve its



fragile ecosystem. Ghosh writes about the fate of the settlers who depend on the land and waters for their work. The Morichjhanpi massacre as depicted in Rajesh Kumar Rajan's novel is a powerful reminder of how the insistence of the government to conserve the environment at the expense of the lives and homes of thousands of refugees led to their eviction and brutal suppression (3). Such ethical concern brings up important questions of conservation versus social justice.

The plight for survival, human and non-human, is manifested in one of the Sundarbans' best known animals — the Bengal tiger. While conservationists like Piya argue for letting the tiger live under the same protections that apply to endangered species, the local people, personified in Fokir, regard the tiger as a threat to their lives and livelihoods (2). Ghosh's nuanced examination of this conflict requires readers to grapple with the ethics of the environmental regimes within which the survival of one species frequently means the obliteration of another.

Role of Myth and Folklore

As Ghosh wends Bon Bibi, the goddess of the forest, into the narrative's fabric, she uses it as an indigenous meaning system to disclose the region's ecological balance. Bon Bibi's myth, woven into the lives of those who live in the Sundarbans, speaks to concepts of coexistence and coexistence with nature. Pagli's tale of battling Dokkhin Rai, a tiger demon, embodies the struggle that continues between human encroachment and the wild's right to autonomy (5). As a moral guide, this legend reminds the locals how to interact with the natural world.

It is by using Bon Bibi symbolically that the importance of cultural narratives in inspiring ecological consciousness is brought forth.] Through this myth, Ghosh emphasizes the interconnectedness of human and non-human lives, implying that to live in harmony with nature, man must acknowledge its value in itself rather than see nature purely as a resource for his exploitation.

Key Relationships

The themes of ecological interdependence in *The Hungry Tide* permeate the interpersonal relationships depicted in the book. Kanai, Piya, and Fokir — three of the main characters from vastly different backgrounds — hold opposing views about the ecological and cultural significance of the Sundarbans.

Piya, a marine biologist, embodies a scientific and conservationist worldview. It is praiseworthy for her to study the Irrawaddy dolphins (7), reflecting a deep understanding of the region's biodiversity. But her means often conflict with the lived experiences of locals like Fokir, a fisherman whose fate relies on the bounty that the environment provides. Nevertheless, the relationship between Piya and Fokir illustrates that the diversity in ecosystems can be bridged to tackle environmental issues through cooperation.

Kanai, as an outsider with urban sensibilities, is a bridge between these perspectives. And through his relationship with Piya and through Fokir, he transcends his Western, post-industrial bias and begins to understand the nuances of human-nature entanglement in the Sundarbans. His changing viewpoint reflects the



reader's path to comprehension, underscoring the need to have empathy and be flexible in the face of ecological crises.

Conclusion

With *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh renders the Sundarbans not only as landscape but as a being itself, where life human and not human ceaselessly interweaves. A multidimensional view of ecological awareness is offered through the novel's modes of setting, conflict, myth and relationship. Through Ghosh's attention to the thanks of cultural narratives, which inform the ethical dilemmas at play in human relationships with the environment, readers are forced to interrogate what it means to have a relationship with the surrounding world and to exist in the environment. The Sundarbans portrayed in the novel becomes not just a setting but a microcosm of the larger ecological crises threatening our planet, reminding us (as if we need it) that we're running out of time to envision (and implement) solutions based on coexistence and sustainability, rather than annihilation.

III. Ecological Themes in Gun Island

Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* builds upon the ecologies addressed in *The Hungry Tide* — expanding its concerns into more global issues of environmental catastrophe — bringing in the logic of ecosystems across the world. Through entwining narratives of climate change, displacement, mythology, and nonhumans agency, the novel is a sharp commentary on the entanglements of ecological histories and human histories.

Exploration of Climate Change

A dominant theme in *Gun Island* is the effects of climate change on human and non-human life. Ghosh renders rising sea levels and unpredictable weather patterns and environmental degradation in vivid and urgent terms. Deen Datta, the protagonist, observes examples of environmental devastation (2) including submerged areas and displaced people, all indicating the environmental degradation caused by higher temperatures in the real world. The novel points to how vulnerable populations are the first to face these changes, leading to a wave of environmental migration.

Ghosh also draws similarities between historical migrations and contemporary, climate-driven displacements. Through an allusion to the Legend of the Gun Merchant, who represents the stubborn repetition of efforts of men to combat forces of nature (5) the novel ties the fights of past movements to present day obligations in order to disrupt ecological breakdowns. Focusing on this connection also reminds us that climate change isn't simply a modern phenomenon, but a battle humanity has fought since the dawn of time, even if it is more desperate in the Anthropocene.

Blurring Boundaries Between Myth and Reality

The story of the Gun Merchant is also at the core of what one would call this novel's ecological story. Based on ancient Bengali folklore, it is a myth of human displacement and attempts to survive hostile environments. It was a reminder that Ghosh expertly weaves magical realism into modern ecological worries, the Gun



Merchant's odyssey standing in for the kind of climate migration facing humans (4). That merging of myth and reality gives Ghosh a way to talk about the abstract, often incomprehensible magnitude of climate change.

In the novel, magical realism serves as an essential narrative device. The surreal phenomena that befallen Deen — sightings of snakes and notes of cryptic symbols — show how a rainstorm can set off a chain of miracles borne of conversation, the cosmological forces that can be knocked loose by a single rainstorm. These elements narrate the complications of ecological crises, and imply that their resolution requires scientific comprehension, but also cultural sensitivity (7).
Representation of Non-Human Agents

The novel emphasizes the interdependence of all life forms; grammatically, it is built on the ecosystem services provided by non-human entities. Creatures like dolphins and snakes aren't background details but engaged players in the story. Example 1 The returning Irrawaddy dolphins remind us how delicate marine ecosystems are and how they are affected by human actions. Likewise, snakes—creatures often seen through the lens of fear—become totems of survival and tenacity, reflecting the natural world's battles in the face of shifting environments.

Ghosh's insistent portrayals of non-human agents challenge the anthropocentric worldviews that engendered that shallower approach. By giving agency and importance to these entities he carves out a new relation between human subjects and the environment. This approach is consistent with ecocritical approaches that highlight non-human life forms as a significant part of ecological narratives (3).

Global Perspective

Unlike *The Hungry Tide*, which draws its networks around the localized ecological problems of the Sundarbans, *Gun Island* is transnational in its perspective. *Anti-Ground* is a novel that examines how localized environmental catastrophes—like rising sea levels in Bangladesh—are connected to global processes like industrial emissions and climate policies (6). It is this connected view that emphasizes the internationalized nature of climate change, where actions in one area of the world affect outcomes in distant locations.

Ghosh also looks at culture, history and environment in intersection. The novel's varied settings, from the Sundarbans to Venice, highlight how environmental problems know no geographical boundaries. The flooding in Venice, which has long been associated with art and culture, is a bitter reminder that nowhere is insulated from the impacts of climate change (5).

Additionally, Ghosh intertwines cultural and historical accounts as a message for the ecological argument. Fusing myths, migration stories and historical events, he develops a multilayered narrative that bridges past and present and local and global. This perspective highlights the intricacy of ecological problems and the necessity for multidimensional approaches.

Conclusion



Gun Island is a serious exploration of ecological concerns; it interests itself not only in climate change, migration, and the agency of nonhuman entities. (Training data goes up to October 2023.) By resisting anthropocentric narratives and privileging non-human agency, the novel celebrates the complexities of ecological interdependence. Through connecting localized crisis to global implications, Ghosh emphasizes the necessity of collective action in combating climate change. Gun Island ultimately stands as a warning as well as an invitation to reimagine humanity's role in the natural world.

IV. Comparative Analysis of the Novels

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* are both literary investigations of ecological crises that cohere thematically but differ in how they engage with representation, narrative style, and the nature of agency. As a set, these novels present a complex, multifaceted view common in literature that has raised environmental awareness, which mirrors Ghosh's evolving engagement with ecological literature.

Shared Themes

Sisters share a response to one of the defining issues of our age, the realities of climate change and its socio-political fallout. In *The Hungry Tide*, climate change appears in the unpredictable tides of the Sundarbans, threatening human and non-human life alike. The plight of vulnerable communities that rely on these worlds to exist often leads to contextual problems and ethical dilemmas regarding conservation strategy and human welfare, which Ghosh argues (1). In a similar vein, *Gun Island* explores global warming as an engine of environmental migration, depicting a world further and further shaped by climate-induced displacements (2).

The interconnectedness of people and the environment is a dominant theme. The interwoven lives of Kanai, Piya, and Fokir in *The Hungry Tide* serve as examples of the symbiosis between people and nature. Their relationships underscore the need to coexist, even in conflict (6). In *Gun Island*, Ghosh scales this up, writing about the survival of species—him referencing the Irrawaddy dolphin and snakes among others—and how these species are interwoven into broader ecological systems that have been impacted by humans (3).

Folklore and myth are also major components of ecoconsciousness. In *The Hungry Tide*, the legend of Bon Bibi acts as a cultural filter through which the Sundarbans' residents interpret their relationship to the natural world. Such a myth offers a moral framework for sustainable living by emphasizing balance and coexistence (5). And in *Gun Island* the Gun Merchant legend operates in just this way, as it connects historical accounts of survival with modern environmental catastrophes. The parable exposes contemporary challenges, blending them with folklore, and highlights the timelessness of such important cultural narratives (4)

Contrasting Elements

Despite their common subject, the novels stand very differently in scope and emphasis. *The Hungry Tide* is firmly grounded in the local environmental conflicts



of the Sundarbans. It offers an intimate portrait of what ecological fragility means for the quotidian, from the lives of gilt-edged fishermen to the ethical questions raised by efforts to save tigers (1). Concentrating on place (with a capital “P”), Eastwood makes room for a geopolitics of survival through both ecological and anthropological lenses. In contrast, *Gun Island* takes a more transnational approach. The novel roams continents, pulling connections between ecological crises in the Sundarbans and interconnected stresses like rising sea levels in Venice. This broad catalogue is a reminder that climate change is itself a complex tissue, one where local problems are often symptoms and reflections of larger, more systemic problems (2). While *The Hungry Tide* plunges readers into the pressing problems of a specific region, *Gun Island* removes the locale from the politics of climate change, using environmental devastation as a global backdrop.

Narrative Techniques

In both novels, Ghosh uses unique narrative strategies to evoke environmental consciousness. The descriptive imagery of *The Hungry Tide* captures both the raw beauty and danger of the Sundarbans. In Ghosh’s vivid descriptions of tidal rivers, mangroves, and other wildlife, readers are immersed in the ecological dynamics of the region, with a sense of awe and urgency (6). Scientific discourse is also integrated into the narrative through Piya’s research in marine biology, immersing the novel’s ecological concerns in empirical knowledge (7).

Gun Island merges very descriptive imagery with elements of magical realism to tackle ecological ruin. Snake sightings and cryptic messages evaporate the line between myth and reality, capturing the nuance of ecological crises in their complexity. Ghosh’s use of hallucinatory realism enables readers to approach the abstract, and often unintelligible, scale of climate change from a more legible position (4). And the novel’s structural strategy—rooting personal stories in the frame of global events—highlights the interdependence of human and environmental histories (5).

Both novels look at human feelings in the context of ecological catastrophe, but differently. *The Hungry Tide* is very concerned with the intimate stories of its individuals: the characters are a lens through which the novel explores the big environmental picture. For example, we can see opposite but complementary approaches in the silent endurance of Fokir and scientific curiosity of Piya in understanding nature (1). In *Gun Island*, the protagonist’s progression from skepticism to ecological awareness mirrors humanity’s gradual realization of the urgency that climate change demands (2).

Representation of Agency

In Ghosh’s novels, characters have agency, but agency is not restricted to human protagonists. *The Hungry Tide* features two significant nonhuman beings besides the moon — the Bengal tiger and the Irrawaddy dolphins — and they are not mere token players, as moonlight is. Their existence is a powerful reminder of how interconnected all forms of life are and how inappropriate it is to view the world through an anthropocentric lens (3).



In *Gun Island*, nonhuman agents are even more central. When considering changes in environment, animals like snakes and dolphins serve as a symbol of adaptability and survival. In giving these entities agency, he reconstitutes the anthropocene, remaking the human-nature relation and posing a model for a more inclusive understanding of ecological interdependence (4).

Likewise, the human characters in both books offer different paths for addressing issues of ecology. One good example of this is the novel *The Hungry Tide*, in which Piya's scientific rationalism is opposed to Fokir's grounding in more traditional knowledge; and such collaborations can give birth to participatory frameworks (6). Cetschwayo — his relevance to Deen's evolution from a disinterested academic to an engaged advocate for environmental awareness is directly inverse to people affected by climate change, who are arguably rendered invisible (2).

Conclusion

By delineating their thematic parallels and bifurcations, narrative style, and agency, *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* together present two different faces of the coin of ecological awareness. *The Hungry Tide* is a localized, near-intimate exploration of people's relationships with nature, while this particular book expands the scope to consider our interconnectedness as a broader world. The vividness of Ghosh's imagery, his use of folklore, the very question of non-human agency enriches these narratives, which serves up a challenge to readers — rethink what your role is in the natural world. These novels are important for their own sake for the vindication of ecological awareness but reactive as well, urgent implications after the fact of ecological tragedy.

VI. Ecocritical Frameworks

Two novels by Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *Gun Island* (2019), provide rich ecocritical readings and profound reflections on the interconnectedness of human and non-human worlds. Ghosh's works help to illuminate the complexity of how ecological crises are shaped by environmental degradation, cultural narratives, and historical contexts, as well as the need for interdisciplinary approaches to tackle them.

Application of Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a critical approach that takes a good look at how nature and the environment is depicted in literature and what is its relation to the cultural history of humanity. Ghosh's books are doing this very thing, mapping the tenuous balance between ecosystems and human activity. What they conceal, in effect, will be dialed-up in *The Hungry Tide*, where the Sundarbans is represented as a contested space between its inhabitants and their environment, (1) even that of marginalized communities struggling to make history. This tension highlights the ethical complications of ecological preservation, a discussion central to ecocritical scholarship.

Ghosh's narratives in particular are relevant to postcolonial ecocriticism, which concerns itself with the voices of marginalized communities in ecological



discourse. The Hungry Tide, for instance, sheds light on the historical injustices experienced by refugees (3), exposing the depravity they were met with — one that is connected to a wider narrative of environmental justice — during the Morichjhanpi incident. In a similar vein, Gun Island gives space to climate refugees and makes apparent how vulnerable communities are uniquely affected by ecological crisis (2).

The Anthropocene

Ghosh's novels are increasingly rooted in the Anthropocene, a geological epoch defined by the extraordinary impact of human activity on Earth's ecosystems. The human-centered cosmology that Ghosh warns of in Gun Island fights itself for its obsession with the improvement of the human condition — ever for the sake of stability. The portrayal of rising sea levels, extreme weather events and biodiversity loss in the novel strongly reminds us that humanity has played a hand in creating those crises (2).

The Hungry Tide mirrors the Anthropocene's problems within the precarious living of its Sundarbans' inhabitants living lives governed by the region's precarious ecological conditions (1). Ghosh's stories invite the reader to contend with the fallout of human endeavor and make a case for sustainable economy and ethics of care.

Interdisciplinary Approach

One of Ghosh's great contributions to ecological discourse is his ability to knit history, anthropology and environmental science into his narrative. In The Hungry Tide, Piya's scientific study of Irrawaddy dolphins who inhabit the region is counterpoised with Fokir's Indigenous empirical knowledge, making Piya's scientific expertise a part of an Indigenous practice (7). Gun Island expands on this interdisciplinary style by connecting historical migrations to current climate crises, emphasizing the cyclicity of human struggles with environmental realities (5).

These frameworks approach Ghosh's works not only as producing a deeper understanding of ecological issues but also as the means to cultivate a more inclusive and holistic approach toward addressing them.

Implications for Contemporary Ecological Discourse

The Hungry Tide and Gun Island by Amitav Ghosh, offer invaluable insight into modern ecological crises, and the news it is possible for literature to rise to the challenges of global environmental crises. Drawing on rich narratives and cross-disciplinary motifs, Ghosh links these environmental and social degradations to our collective human experience, rendering abstract catastrophes material and pressing.

Particular Relevance to Current Environmental Crises

All of Ghosh's narratives are about climate change and rising sea levels and biodiversity loss. In Gun Island, it is a harsh reminder of the devastating impacts of global warming and the human toll of environmental neglect as flood waters and extreme weather force communities from their homes (2). The Hungry Tide is similarly attuned to the way the inhabitants of the Sundarbans are vulnerable to the



changing tidal patterns, and points to the connection between the ecological and the social crises (1).

In doing so, Ghosh emphasizes the interdependence between the human and the non-human in these places, prompting readers to grasp the wider consequences of ecological disruption. Based on this multifaceted investigation of environmental issues, blending the narratives of science with those of culture and history, he invites a deeper appreciation of the interconnections among Natures (7).

Influence on Readers

One of Ghosh's greatest contributions to contemporary discourse is his ability to bring forth ecological empathy. Through characters like Piya and Fokir from *The Hungry Tide*, he reminds readers of the need to seek from both scientific and traditional ecological knowledge in efforts to conserve (6). In *Gun Island*, Deen's moving from indifference to ecological awareness and a new sense of his relationship to the environment (3) tracks an individual's potential for re-envisioning his place in it.

Fiction, Ghosh shows, holds great power in forming environmental awareness. He transgress both the restrictive genre of scientific reports and the lens of data by intertwining and embedding narrative, myth, and reality, promoting emotional and intellectual engagement with ecological entanglements (5)

Call to Action

Ghosh's books go further by advocating for sustainable living and inclusion in ecological policy-making. By conceptualizing global and local crises as interrelated, he calls for integrated fighting of the environmental apocalypse. His narratives are a pep talk of the highest order; they call upon all of us in the trenches and in the halls of power to take conservation and our ethical obligations seriously (4).

Ultimately, Ghosh's novels highlight the imperative for literature in dealing with ecological crises, and their ability to empower readers to imagine a world of hope and coexistence.

VII. Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* provide an indelible literary confrontation with eco-concern in a timely wrestling with progressive environmental struggles of the day. Both novels underscore the fragility of ecosystems and the mutuality of human and non-human worlds through vivid examples of rising sea levels, species extinction and human displacement. With its weaving together of myth and history and scientific discourse, Ghosh's prose adds depth and nuance to these narratives, making abstract ecological crises something palpable and relatable.

As these examples suggest, literature underpins the awakening of ecological consciousness. Incorporating elements of narration and facing the facts of ecology,



Ghosh spins a thread that encourages empathy and intellectual investment, ensuring that we look to how we relate in the world around us. His characters — whether it's Piya's scientific rigor or Fokir's traditional wisdom — show the power of disparate perspectives in the fight against ecological crises.

Ghosh's eco-literature gives us timely and transformative notes that challenge us to usher in the era of sustainable living and inclusive environmental policies that can fill the void of the past few decades. His writings prepare a field that is expanding beyond just ecological / environmental studies, leading for future ecocritical studies to possibly explore new inter- and transdisciplinary approaches that merge literature, science, and culture.' (Drew) A story we can only tell ourselves As a result, *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island* urge us to accept the stubbornness of our stories — their refusal to change, their determination to keep us coming back, to try to get it right — to imagine a handful of whales singing like T.S. Eliot in the vastness of the endless ocean.

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