



AboutUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

ContactUs: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

EditorialBoard: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

Environmental Consciousness and Climate Concern: A Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

Atul Kumar

Research Scholar,
Department of English,
CMP PG College (University of Allahabad),
Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.

&

Dr. Rachana

Assistant Professor,
Department of English,
CMP PG College (University of Allahabad),
Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.13684192>

Article History: Submitted-01/08/2024, Revised-15/08/2024, Accepted-25/08/2024, Published-31/08/2024.

Abstract:

In this paper, an attempt is made to estimate that *The Hungry Tide* foregrounds environmental consciousness and climatic concern. Due to environmental degradation, climate change and eco-system imbalance environmental consciousness and climate concern are the spotlighting issues in the world. This paper tracks the issues of environmental crisis and its alarming declension narratives about species loss, catastrophe of tide and ebb, global warming in select novel. Almost all organisms now exist in an environment drastically changed by humans. Due to environmental destruction, increased technology and irregular geographical conditions the landscapes of Sundarban got changed. Consequently, the natural species and human beings of this particular region are in jeopardy today. As a result, the cultivation of life is in ruins. Amitav Ghosh is portraying these challenges and issues in his novels. Almost all of his novels are dealing with the sense of consciousness about global warming and climate change. This novel discusses about the eco-system and ecological community of Sunderban delta that is located in the Bay of Bengal. This paper highlights the human-nature relationships in the climate change era. The article

concludes that how the environmental narratives and fictionalization of environmental issues, contribute in the discussions of environmental consciousness, ecological awareness in the selected novel .

Keywords: Environmental degradation, astroenvironmentalism, eco-criticism, climate change, climate fiction.

1. Introduction¹

“If we can go to the Moon, why can't we eliminate pollution?”²

While economic development implies improvement in the quality of life but ambient environment and natural resources are same important for human beings. Literature maps out environmental issues, human conditions and their relations with humankind. It is the outcome of its particular environmental and geographical conditions. In the era of environmental derangement; environmental issues and climatic challenges are burning themes in literature especially in its genre as novels, poetry and essays. Amitav Ghosh's novels deal with themes of environmental issues and climate change. The environmental problem is of the major concern. Eco-criticism draws a link between humankind and environment. Remarkably, *The Hungry Tide* brims with issues of environmental degradation, climate changes, migrations and ecological imbalance that's why this novel comes under the category of 'cli-fi'³. Most of his novels deal with the themes and issues of environment and climate change. Being a popular environmental thinker and literary person Amitav Ghosh, First, visits at the setting of his novels and makes survey then fixes its themes. Not only he discuss issues of climate change but also narrativizes that how these changes affect social and cultural life of particular region.

2. Environmental Consciousness and Climate Concern:

In many cases, environment is a part of life support system for human and non-human as well as sub human. It is widely acknowledged that there is an inseparable relation among earth, men and environment. EC Sample states that “Man is a product of the earth's surface; this, means not

¹ Amitav Ghosh is a very prolific novelist in India and abroad. Currently, he teaches at Colombia University. He was awarded the Crossword Book Prize for *The Hungry Tide* in 2004, in 2007 Padma Shri award and in 2024 wins Errasmus prize for writing on climate change.

² LarryE. Ruff, *Economics of the Environment*, p.20.

³ Climate Fiction

merely that he is a child of the earth, the dust of her, but that the earth has mothered him, set him the tasks, directed his thoughts, confronted him with difficulties ...and at the same time whispered hints for their solutions.”⁴ The problem of environmental degradation and climate change is global cum local. Its effects on human, non-human and sub-human cannot be measured easily so, it can be called intangible or “nonpecuniary”. It is a wide-ranging discussion. The malady of climate change is one of the biggest problems that India as well as the whole world is facing now days. India is among the one of the sensitive countries where submersion of the sea level has been increased. It is possible to argue that water and air quality are of great concern about which, Ghosh is trying to explore in his novels. In the light of Climate change and environmental degradation *The Hungry Tide* primarily discusses about water resources and forest; costal region, alter tidal range in rivers and bays, increase in the high waves, change in the location where river deposits the sediments. It seemingly seems that environmental concerns have been part of almost all novels of Ghosh including *The Hungry Tide*.

The main focus of the paper is to examine and describe the issue intertwined with change in biodiversity and degradation in eco-system. It can be stated that the characters and the setting of his novels in the form of story- telling and fictionalization of environment into the literature are the matter of chief concern. And other purpose of this paper is to analyze Amitav Ghosh’s art of fictionalization, which deals with such real problem, Climate change and environment in *The Hungry Tide*.

3. *The Hungry Tide*: An assessment in light of environmental consciousness and climate concern

The present global environmental problems are climate change and change in biodiversity that deal in the works of Ghosh, have been narrated in the form of story-telling and storying. It is indeed, Amitav Ghosh’s novel that can be categorized as a search for environmental activism in writing especially in novels. The text which is a path breaking novel in environmental studies that deals with the value of Eco balance about the region of the Sundarban⁵ Islands. The novel has been divided into two parts, the Ebb: Bhata and the Flood: Jowar. In the very beginning of the novel it can be assumed that the narrative of the novel unfolded with water. Especially two

⁴ Sample, 1911, p1.

⁵ A mangrove forest in the delta formed by the confluence of the Ganga, Bramaputa and Meghana rivers in Bay of Bengal.

significant issues have been discussed in the novel first is the problem of refugees and second is degradation of eco-system which are the tragedy of the commons for a century of climate change. Here, it seems that novelist is trying to attract the readers' attention toward the issue of water through using the imagery of water in the manner of flood. It is very noteworthy that Amitav Ghosh is very conscious about the disaster of water as series of writers such as – S. T. Coleridge, T.S. Eliot, Margret Atwood, etc who were concerned in their times the same. It is very famous statement that T.S. Eliot quote in *The waste land* (1922) 'that but there is no water'. In *Surfacing* Margret Atwood postulates that 'everything is made of water even the rocks'. It means that Amitav Ghosh is trying to asses and explore the problem of water that is spotlighting catastrophe on the earth as a planet. It seems that the novelist has realized ecosystem oriented disasters in the novel and wrapped it in the form of story-telling.

The Hungry Tide is a novel about global ecological hazards. Ghosh has selected a bio-region or eco-region, which is a geological territory named 'Sunderban'. In the novel it is presented that animal especially tigers are more important than the life of human kind. The life of humans is of secondary importance to the government while the project tiger is of primary concern. The indigenous people are being displaced for the conservation of animal habitant like project tiger that is denoting human greed. Here, humans are victims of environmental devastation caused by red-tape bureaucrat decision-makers, ecology managers and eco-tourism operators.

Environmental issues and climatic challenges are global concerns. Due to environmental destruction and increased technology geographical condition and landscapes of Sundarban have been changed which play an important role in the setting and structure of the novel. Directly and indirectly both, the environmental conditions affect culture, tradition and human beings which become the subject matters of any text in literature. Eco-criticism is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view. In it all sciences, come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. In this method of criticism literary scholars analyse texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways, literature treats the subject of nature. As in literature it is accepted that eco-criticism deals with, how environmental challenges and, issues concerning the environment are presented and analyzed in the text. One of the main objectives of

eco-criticism is to study how individuals in society behave and react to the nature and ecological aspects.

“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.’ ... 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?”⁶

Between the conversation Kenai and Piya Roy⁷ are talking about the Sunderban (the coastal island), the tidal island at the mouth of the Ganga. Here, within the dialogue, Amitav Ghosh is trying to encapsulate the present devastating and grievous condition of Sunderban⁸. The people have been forced to move away from their native place that used to be flowering with bio-diversity and thick forest before years. It shows the very own story-telling of Ghosh in many respects because he first visit the place and observes the condition of the place than intertwined it in the story telling form. It can be observed that Ghosh is trying to postulate that the animals and human beings are interlinked in a particular eco-system.

When the tide creates new land, overnight mangroves begin to gestate, and if the conditions are right, they can spread so fast as to cover a new island within a few short years. A mangrove forest is a universe . . . there are no towering, vine-looped trees, no ferns, no wildflowers, no chattering monkeys or cockatoos . . . Every year, dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles.⁹

Due to environmental degradation and environmental change of Sunderban, especially Lusibari, got changed. It has changed the life style of human-beings. Animals have been killed or migrated from actual habitants. Sea level merges or submerges. Flood often destroys the life of Lusibai which is central village of Sundraba. Fokir says...

“Ah, there, that beach happened twenty years ago, and it was neither storm nor flood that caused it.”¹⁰

⁶ The Hungry Tide, 262.

⁷ An American scientist studying cetacean species

⁸ The beautiful forest

⁹ The Hungry Tide, 7.

¹⁰ The Hungry Tide, 202.

As it is known that ecocriticism is a critical and persuasive approach to examine the representation of nature in particular cultural text. It seeks out the interconnection between literature and the physical environment. Ecocriticism analyze the text in significance of the role of place, nature landscape, relationship between human and non-human. Amitav Ghosh is attempting to picture out how things are being changed very fast just because of ecological changes and degradations. Piyali Roy says:

Piyali came from Cambodia to *Sunderban* study about the Gangatic dolphin and the whole ecology of this region. Through the study she found that earlier there were many species of fish in this delta. It was much more than could be found in the whole of Europe. Nevertheless, now ecology had been changed including local flora and fauna. It seems that due to change in biodiversity species as well as bio-diversity came in the catastrophic situation. Due to change in the river catchment area the turmoil of stream climax emerged. The aquatic life of sunderban (including India and Bangladesh) has been extinct. Now these are in the category of endangered species such as Gangatic dolphin, saus etc. Lack of salinity in the water, the situation of the extinction of trees and plant especially the mangrove forest of this region became evident.

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 stream of fresh water running along the floors of some channels creating variations of salinity and turbidity.¹¹

It can be assumed that Amitav Ghosh is not merely writing about the environment and ecology but he is picturing literature into environment. In many ways he is using environment and its issues as a tool in the form of story, conversation, folklore, myth and dialogue of the characters. It seems that in literature, writing about the environment is secondary but intertwining the literature in environment is primary. This study focusses that how environmental consciousness and climate concern can be written in the narrative form. In general speaking Ghosh is sketching the characters of the novel. The island seems to have given a kind of narrative tools to the story telling.

¹¹ The Hungry Tide, 125.

Undoubtedly, it can be state in many grounds that the novelist is also trying to become the voice of the voiceless living being on the earth. He is becoming the voice of rivers, mountains, water, flora and fauna as well.

Methodology:

In order to understand existing topics that deal with environmental consciousness and climate concerns, the major part of the study based on primary text¹². This study has also based on literary survey of secondary sources. Textual, discourse analysis and interpretation methodology have been used to interpret and justify the objectives.

4. Conclusion:

There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate the theory of the earth¹³. It can be assumed that concern about the consciousness of the earth is spotlighting issue in era of climate change. Martin Puchner states that Amitav Ghosh may be taken as a canon who foregrounds planetary issue in his novels in the manner of fictionalization and narrativization. It is required to clearly note that despite Amitav ghosh long list of anthropologist, botanist, zoologist, environmentalist, geographers are raising the issue of environment and climate changes but in literature especially novel he is formidable writer who is trying to churn out these devastating problems concerned with environment in the novel. Notwithstanding, many novels written by him deal with the issues of environment, natural disaster triggered off by human activities, that put development gains in risk. *The Hungry Tide* is masterpiece to throw the light in significance of ecocriticism. Based on the above analysis and interpretation it can be assume that selected study is highlighting selected novel saturated with environmental consciousness and climate Concern.

Works Cited:

Primary source:

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

¹² *The Hungry Tide*.

¹³ Walt Whiteman, Song of the Rolling Earth.

Secondary sources:

Barry, Peter. *Beginning theory: An Introduction to Literature and cultural theory*. Viva Books, 2018.

Clark, Timothy, ed. *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Dorfman, Robert edit. *Economics of the Environment: Selected Readings*, W.W. Norton and Company, 1972.

Dwivedi, Hazari Prasad. *Naath Sampraday*, Lokbhaarti prakashan, 2019.

Erin James and Eric Morel. *Environment and Narrative: New Direction in Econarratology* Ohio State University Press, 2020.

Ghosh, Amitav. "The Town by the Sea". *Incendiary Circumstances. A Chronicle of the Turmoil of Our Time*, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005, pp. 1-25.

Gloyfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996.

Guha, Ramachandra. "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique." *Environmental Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1989): 71–83.

Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*, London: Pearson, 1999.

Haraway, Donna. "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin." *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (2015), pp.159–165.

Nayar, P.K. *Contemporary and Cultural theory: From structural to Ecocriticism*, Pearson, 2017.

Oosthoek, Jan, and Barry K. Gills, edit. *The Globalization of Environmental Crisis*, New York: Routledge, 2008.

Palmer, MA et al. "Ecology for the 21st Century". *Ecological survey of America*, 2004, pp.4-11.

Puchner, Martin. *Literature for a Changing Planet*. Princeton University Press, 2022.

Pradeep, P. *Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide as a Historical narrative* "Journal of English Language and Literature", Vol.9 Spl. Issue 1 2022, pp. 96-106.

Seymour, Nicole. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Worster, Donald. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, Cambridge University Press, 1994.