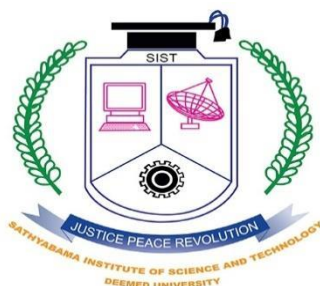


**EXPLORING ECOCRITICISM AND EXISTENTIALISM:
UNRAVELLING NATURE'S DEPTHS IN AMITAV GHOSH'S
*THE HUNGRY TIDE***

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of
Master of Arts degree in English

by

**MADONNA SHEELA J
(42970002)**



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES**

SATHYABAMA

**INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(DEEMED TO BE UNIVERSITY)**

CATEGORY - 1 UNIVERSITY BY UGC

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APRIL 2024



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BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that this Project Report is the bonafide work of **MADONNA SHEELA J (42970002)** who have done the Project work. She has carried out the project entitled "Exploring Ecocriticism And Existentialism: Unravelling Nature's Depths In Amitav Ghosh's Novel 'The Hungry Tide'" under my supervision from **June 2023 to April 2024**.


[Dr. L. M. SOWMIYA]

Internal Guide

HOD
Department of English
Sathyabama Institute of Science
& Technology

20/4/2024

HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

(DR. J. AMUTHA MONICA, M.A., M. Phil., Ph. D.,)

Submitted for Viva voce Examination held on 20.04.2024


Internal Examiner


External Examiner

DECLARATION

I, MADONNA SHEELA J hereby declare that the Project Report entitled Exploring Ecocriticism and Existentialism: Unravelling Nature's Depths in Amitav Ghosh's 'The Hungry Tide', done by me under the guidance of Dr. Sowmiya. L. M, M.A., M. Phil., Ph. D. , is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts degree in Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology.

DATE: 20.04.2024

PLACE: Chennai

J. Madonna Sheela .

SIGNATURE OF THE CANDIDATE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am pleased to acknowledge my sincere thanks to The Board of Management of Sathyabama Institute of Science and Technology for their encouragement in doing this project and for completing it successfully. I am grateful to them.

I convey my thanks to **Dr. Rekha Chakravarthy, M.E., Ph.D.**, Dean, School of **Science and Humanities** and **Dr. J. Amutha Monica, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D.**, Head of the Department, Dept. of English for providing me necessary support during the progressive reviews.

I would like to express my sincere and deep sense of gratitude to my Project Guide , **Dr. Sowmiya L. M, M.A., M. Phil., Ph.D., Assistant Professor** for her valuable guidance, suggestions and constant encouragement paved way for the successful completion of my project work.

I wish to express my thanks to all Teaching and Non-teaching staff members of the Department of English who were helpful in many ways for the completion of the project.

ABSTRACT

The multidisciplinary approach in this project combines Existentialism with Eco-criticism in Amitav Ghosh's "The Hungry Tide." It breaks down how the Sundarbans are portrayed, analyzing it as a metaphor for life on Earth. Through the perspectives of the characters Kanai, Piya, and Fokir, existential questions and ecological concerns are interwoven. Piya's scientific curiosity is juxtaposed with Kanai's intellect, while Fokir embodies a deep connection to the natural world. Their journeys unveil human agency, a sense of belonging, and environmental stewardship. The narrative underscores the symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment. Ghosh skillfully intertwines these philosophical themes to propose that nature actively influences human existence, rather than being a passive backdrop. This endeavor aims to elucidate Ghosh's adept fusion of existentialist principles and eco-criticism, prompting reflection on humanity's place within the broader ecological framework.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Existentialism, Sundarbans, Marginalization, Environmentalism.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The greatest stories have no endings; the greatest journeys never end."

-Amitav Ghosh

As he embarks on the journey of literary analysis, he finds himself drawn to the intricate interplay between ecological concerns and existentialist themes within the pages of "The Hungry Tide" by Amitav Ghosh. This project seeks to unravel the nuanced layers of meaning and significance in Ghosh's work, utilizing the lenses of ecocriticism and existentialism to illuminate its profound insights. Through Ghosh's captivating narrative, human existence becomes intertwined with the intricate ecosystems of the Sundarbans, a region steeped in ancient histories and modern challenges. Ecocriticism lies a profound recognition of nature as a central protagonist in literary narratives.

In "The Hungry Tide," the Sundarbans emerge as a character in their own right, a dynamic force that shapes the existential challenges faced by the novel's protagonists. Through the ecocritical analysis, the AI delves into Ghosh's portrayal of the intricate interdependence between humans and their environment, highlighting the delicate balance that defines life in this biodiverse yet precarious ecosystem. The Sundarbans, with its dense mangrove forests and shifting tides, serve as a crucible of existence, testing the limits of human agency and resilience. Through the eyes of characters like Piya Roy, an American marine biologist, and Kanai Dutt, a Delhi-based translator, Ghosh delves into the complex dynamics of human-nature interactions.

Piya's quest to study the endangered Irrawaddy dolphins brings them face to face with the ecological challenges of conservation and the ethical dilemmas inherent in scientific inquiry. Meanwhile, Kanai's journey into the Sundarbans uncovers layers of personal and collective histories, confronting them with questions of identity and purpose in a world shaped by environmental forces. Existentialist philosophy offers a complementary lens through which to view "The Hungry Tide." Ghosh's characters not

only grapple with external threats posed by natural forces but also wrestle with internal struggles of identity, belonging, and existential angst.

The Sundarbans, with its ever-shifting boundaries and elusive truths, becomes a metaphor for the existential condition, where certainty gives way to ambiguity, and the quest for meaning becomes a journey of self-discovery. Through the existential lens, the individual delves into the inner landscapes of Piya and Kanai, tracing their journeys of self-realization amidst the vastness of the Sundarbans. Piya's encounters with the dolphins and interactions with local communities challenge her preconceived notions of progress and conservation, leading them to question the human impact on fragile ecosystems.

Similarly, Kanai's exploration of their family's past and encounters with the enigmatic Nirmal propel them into a quest for truth that transcends mere factual knowledge. This project embarks on a multifaceted exploration of "The Hungry Tide," drawing on ecocriticism and existentialism to illuminate its thematic complexities. Through close reading and analysis, they aim to uncover how Ghosh intertwines ecological concerns with existential dilemmas, weaving a narrative that transcends conventional boundaries of genre and perspective.

The foundational principles of Ecocriticism and Existentialism, providing a theoretical framework for the subsequent analysis. It delves into the portrayal of the Sundarbans as a dynamic ecosystem and a metaphorical landscape of existential exploration. This focuses on the characters of Piya and Kanai, examining their journeys in light of ecological and existential challenges. It delves into ethical considerations raised by human interventions in natural environments, drawing connections between environmental degradation and existential crises. Finally, It offers a synthesis of findings, highlighting the novel's contributions to contemporary discourses on ecology, identity, and human-environment relationships.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, the expert aims to deepen the understanding of "The Hungry Tide" and contribute to broader conversations on literature, ecology, and existential philosophy. By bridging the gap between textual analysis and

philosophical inquiry, the expert seeks to unveil the enduring relevance of Ghosh's work in an age marked by environmental uncertainty and existential introspection. Each chapter of the project will focus on key themes such as human-nature relationships, environmental ethics, identity formation, and the quest for meaning, delving deep into the text to extract its philosophical resonances.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Amitav Ghosh's novel "The Hungry Tide" weaves ecocriticism and existentialism together, providing a comprehensive analysis of humanity's relationship with environment and the existential difficulties that arise as a result. Ghosh's work combines ecocriticism, a literary theory that investigates the relationship between literature and the environment, and existentialism, a philosophical movement concerned with individual existence and freedom, to shed light on the intricacies of human-nature interactions. The Sunderbans, a distinct and ecologically diverse region where people such as Piya, Fokir, and Kanai's lives mix with the natural world, is a significant element in "The Hungry Tide."

Ghosh depicts the Sunderbans as a character in its own right, emphasising its force, beauty, and unpredictable nature through vivid descriptions and intricate tales. This ecological perspective is consistent with ecocriticism, which emphasises the interdependence of humans and non-human entities, as well as the environmental impact of human actions. Furthermore, Ghosh explores existentialist issues through the characters' psychological conflicts and search for meaning. Piya, an American marine biologist, sets out to research dolphins in the Sunderbans, motivated by a sense of purpose and curiosity about the natural world. Fokir, a local fisherman, is dealing with existential problems about identity, belonging, and the fleeting essence of existence.

Kanai, an Indian-born translator, faces his own existential crisis while negotiating cultural boundaries and personal aspirations. The novel's narrative structure, which alternates between the past and the present, emphasises existentialist concepts of time, memory, and the search for authenticity. Ghosh uses symbolism, such as the tide motif, to emphasise the cyclical aspect of life and the ongoing flux of human existence within the greater context of nature's rhythms. Through ecocriticism and existentialism, Ghosh asks readers to consider humanity's place in the natural world, ethical obligations for environmental preservation, and the importance of individual agency in moulding one's fate.

"The Hungry Tide" is a captivating literary canvas that prompts deeper insights on environmental stewardship, human resilience, and the interdependence of all life on Earth. Ghosh uses ecocriticism and existentialism to encourage readers to ponder humanity's place in the natural world, ethical commitments to environmental preservation, and the importance of individual agency in shaping one's fate. "The Hungry Tide" is a gripping literary canvas that elicits deeper insights into environmental stewardship, human resilience, and the interdependence of all species on the planet.

The multidisciplinary approach employed in analyzing "The Hungry Tide," combining existentialist themes with eco-criticism to unravel the portrayal of the Sundarbans as a metaphor for life on Earth. Through characters like Kanai, Piya, and Fokir, the abstract elucidates how existential questions and ecological concerns intersect, with Piya's scientific curiosity juxtaposed against Kanai's intellectual pursuits and Fokir's intimate connection with nature. The characters' journeys reflect human agency, a sense of place, and environmental responsibility, emphasizing the interconnectedness between people and the natural world.

Ghosh's narrative mastery is evident as he weaves these philosophical threads together, suggesting that nature actively shapes human existence rather than serving as a passive backdrop. It delves into the growing awareness of environmental issues represented in literature through eco-criticism, emphasizing the bond between humanity and nature as explored in "The Hungry Tide." Ghosh's portrayal of the Sundarbans as a fragile ecosystem beset by environmental degradation due to human activities resonates with contemporary concerns about global warming and ecological collapse.

It highlights the role of literature, particularly Ghosh's novel, in prompting reflection on the consequences of human actions on nature and the imperative of conservation in the face of globalization. It becomes evident that "The Hungry Tide" serves as a rich tapestry that intertwines existentialist philosophy with ecological consciousness, prompting readers to contemplate humanity's place in the greater ecological framework. Ghosh's narrative craftsmanship not only illuminates the intricacies of human-nature

relationships but also underscores the ethical imperative of environmental stewardship and the need for harmony between human aspirations and ecological sustainability.

It underscores the significance of Ghosh's novel as a profound exploration of ecocriticism and existentialism, inviting readers to engage critically with pressing issues of environmental ethics, human agency, and the interconnectedness of life on Earth. This project provided offer a glimpse into the multifaceted exploration of ecological themes and cultural encounters in Amitav Ghosh's novel "The Hungry Tide." It highlighting the nuanced interplay between human existence, ecological resilience, and cultural identities depicted in the narrative.

The amalgamation of Existentialism and Eco-criticism in analyzing Ghosh's portrayal of the Sundarbans as a metaphor for life's complexities. Through the perspectives of characters like Kanai, Piya, and Fokir, the abstract elucidates existential questions and ecological concerns interwoven in their journeys. Ghosh skillfully blends Piya's scientific inquiry, Kanai's intellectual prowess, and Fokir's intimate connection with nature to reveal human agency, a sense of place, and environmental responsibility.

This exploration emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between humans and the natural world, challenging anthropocentric views and highlighting nature's active role in shaping human existence. It delves into the ecological narratives and cultural encounters depicted in "The Hungry Tide," particularly focusing on themes of environment, migration, and identity. It examines the dichotomy between anthropocentrism and ecological resilience, where human activities impact the delicate ecological balance.

It emphasizes the societal belief in human superiority and its consequences on the environment, juxtaposed with the intricate interplay between humans and nature, characterized by love, emotional bonds, and mutual dependence. Ghosh's novel serves as a rich tapestry that intertwines ecological concerns with cultural complexities, showcasing displaced communities, human-animal interactions in dangerous ecosystems, and the contemporary challenges of dislocation and destabilization. The

novel's recognition as a reputable ecological narrative underscores its significance in blending environmentalism, anthropology, migration, and human-nature relationships.

It highlights the thematic richness of "The Hungry Tide" in exploring ecological narratives, cultural encounters, and existential inquiries. Ghosh's narrative prowess and thematic depth invite readers to contemplate humanity's interconnectedness with nature, the repercussions of human actions on the environment, and the imperative of fostering harmony between cultural identities and ecological sustainability.

Amitav Ghosh's novel "The Hungry Tide" intricately weaves together themes of ecocriticism and existentialism, offering a profound exploration of humanity's relationship with nature and the existential dilemmas faced within this dynamic. This literature review synthesizes insights from the given abstract, highlighting the thematic depth and narrative complexity of Ghosh's work. It illuminates a multidisciplinary approach that combines existentialist theory with eco-criticism to analyze the portrayal of the Sundarbans, a vast archipelago of islands in the Bay of Bengal, as a metaphor for life on Earth.

Through the perspectives of characters like Kanai, Piya, and Fokir, the abstract delves into existential questions and ecological concerns interwoven in their journeys. Piya's scientific curiosity, Kanai's intellectual prowess, and Fokir's intimate bond with the natural world provide lenses through which human agency, a sense of place, and environmental responsibility are explored. Ghosh's narrative craftsmanship is evident as he deftly interlaces these philosophical threads, suggesting that nature is not merely a passive backdrop but an active force shaping human existence.

It also emphasizes the mutually beneficial link between humans and the natural world, challenging anthropocentric views and encouraging consideration of humanity's role in the greater ecological framework. In juxtaposition, the abstract provides a vivid description of the Sundarbans as a perilous yet captivating environment teeming with wildlife and natural beauty. It introduces the character of Daniel Hamilton, an eccentric Scotsman who attempts to create a utopian society in this challenging terrain, highlighting themes of human ambition and the resilience of nature.

It acknowledges Ghosh's adept blending of existentialist themes and ecological consciousness in "The Hungry Tide," inviting readers to contemplate the intricate web of human-nature relationships, the ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship, and the profound impact of nature on human existence. Ghosh's narrative serves as a compelling exploration of the intertwined fates of humanity and the natural world, urging us to reflect on our place within the greater ecological narrative and our responsibility towards environmental conservation and harmony.

The novel "The Hungry Tide" stands as a testament to the power of literature in addressing complex issues of our time. Through its exploration of ecocriticism and existentialism, the novel delves into the intricate relationships between humans and their environment, highlighting the urgent need for environmental ethics and cultural harmony. Ghosh's narrative prowess and thematic depth not only engage readers in critical reflection but also inspire a deeper understanding of our interconnectedness with nature. As we navigate the challenges of the modern world, "The Hungry Tide" serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of fostering sustainable practices and embracing a holistic approach to life on Earth.

For instance, a significant portion of South Asian literature, both in Indian and English, has long focused on capturing the feeling Hyder's Sindh, East Bengal, and Lucknow; Attia Hosain's Lucknow; Salman Rushdie's Bombay; Kamila Shamsie's Karachi; and Siddhartha Deb's (unnamed) Shillong. The Hungry Tide by Ghosh is a place of place. Some literary constructs of place that instantly spring to mind include Qurratulain -making narrative, although it concentrates on the rural and periphery of the Sundarbans, unlike a lot of post-1980s Indian-English fiction that has a tendency to conjure and construct urban metropolitan locations.

It highlights two of the Amitav Ghosh's book The Hungry Tide in the context of the larger issues Nixon and Buell bring up regarding relocation and attachment to place. Set in the rural and marginalised Sundarbans islands on the border between Bangladesh and India, The Hungry Tide is a potent work of postcolonial environmental fiction that simultaneously demonstrates a strong commitment to the fragile but ecologically rich

deltaic region of the Sundarbans (Buell) and invites us to comprehend stories of displaced people who are viewed as disposable beings (Nixon). It shows that there is no need for postcolonial and ecocritical concerns to be mutually exclusive.

In fact, we need to critically examine the fundamental distinction Nixon makes between "ethics of place" as an ecocritical issue and displacement as a postcolonial one. Place making and the affirmation of place against place eroding historical forces like war and ethnic/religious violence also continue to be important concerns in postcolonial fiction, particularly in narratives of displacement and dispossession. Displacement has undoubtedly been a major theme among some prominent metropolitan postcolonial critics and cosmopolitan writers. It interpreted *The Hungry Tide* as a crucial environmental justice story that prioritises the suffering of marginalised and deprived people in the Global South over other considerations of ethics and beauty.

It looks at Ghosh's portrayal of the Sundarbans as a downtrodden area marked by disaster and human misery; specifically, talks about the book's powerful indictment of wildlife and wilderness preservation initiatives like Project Tiger that are carried out with little consideration for the human cost. The novel by Ghosh demonstrates that environmentalism need not be antihuman, since the definition of environmentalism has broadened in tandem with the growing prominence and legitimacy of environmental justice movements. But *The Hungry tide* is also a potent work of ecocentric fiction, whose inventive description of the tidal nation speaks "to the state and fate of the earth and its nonhuman creatures" (Buell, *Future* 127).

We look at Ghosh's portrayal of the Sundarbans as an intriguing location with an astounding array of flora and fauna, but one that is extremely susceptible to the whims and peculiarities of the daily tides, the constant threat of cyclones and storms, and, most importantly, to human conceit and carelessness. We contend that the novel's tide country serves as a compelling setting that enables Ghosh to address both the novel's crucial questions about the fragility and vulnerability of the nonhuman world of the Sundarbans and his environmental justice concerns regarding the horrifying treatment meted out to impoverished East Bengali refugees in the name of tiger conservation.

By describing and establishing the Sundarbans as a location, he hopes to arouse concern among his multicultural audience regarding this vulnerable area and the impoverished people who live there. Mostly from the viewpoints of two foreigners to the Sundarbans: Piya Roy, an Indian-American of Bengali descent who works as a cetologist and does study on the once-teeming population, and Kanai Dutt, a wealthy upper middle-class Bengali man who manages a translation and interpretation agency in Delhi of dolphins in the tide country: The storylines of Kanai and Piya, who both had life-changing encounters in the tide country—known to its locals as the "bhatir desh"—swap throughout the book.

At his aunt Nilima's request, Kanai is travelling to the made-up island of Lusibari to retrieve and peruse a diary that Nilima's late husband Nirmal, a former Marxist whose decision to give up political activism and go to the Sundar-bans many years ago, left behind. Ghosh's novel illustrates how the affective encounters of its two central characters with the islanders and the natural world of the Sundarbans lead to an uncanny awakening of self in both (although the transformation is much more marked in Kanai's case). It does this by interweaving Kanai's reading of Nirmal's diary with Piya's search for the Irrawaddy dolphin. By the time their individual narrative trajectories come to an end, Piya and Kanai have managed to establish a sense of place-connectedness to the tide country and its people in ways that correspond with Buell's understanding of place-sense as comprising many different patches besides home and Nixon's idea of a transnational ethics of place.

Amitav Ghosh's novel "The Hungry Tide," analyzed through an ecocritical lens, reveals a profound connection between **humans and nature**. Ghosh portrays **nature** as a central character, showcasing how human interactions with the environment reflect existential dilemmas and emphasize the inseparable bond between humanity and the natural world. The novel underscores **the urgent need for environmental stewardship** and addresses the **repercussions of ecological imbalances on human lives**. Through Ghosh's masterful integration of ecocriticism and existentialism, readers are encouraged to contemplate their roles as custodians of the environment and stewards of their own existential journeys, highlighting the essential role of literature in shaping attitudes towards nature and promoting sustainable coexistence.

CHAPTER 3

ECOCRITICAL AND EXISTENTIAL PERSPECTIVES

Ecocriticism is a branch of literary studies that attempts to analyse the interconnection between literature and nature by looking into the representation of environment and how the characters interact with their habitat and most importantly how the environment impacts the character and their story. Degradation of the environment is one of the most important issues the world faces today. The first wave Ecocriticism focused on nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction. The second wave Ecocriticism is concerned with environmental justice of degraded landscapes.

As pointed out by many critics, one of the reasons that ecocriticism continues to grow as a discipline is the growing global environment crisis and the threat it poses to the beings on this planet. Ecocriticism aims to show how the authors and their works can play a crucial role in influencing the readers to build a mindset that help them view nature as more than just a source to be exploited. India is known for its diversity in ecosystems which ranges from Himalayas in the north to plateaus of south and from the dynamic Sundarbans in the east to arid Thar of the west.

With time, however, these ecosystems have been adversely affected due to increasing population. Anthropocentric thinking in mankind has alienated humans from nature and caused to lose the connection between them. There are not many novels in Indian fiction that deals with the theme of ecocriticism, where it is given significance, nature has been used as a backdrop against which the story unfolds. This shows that a serious concern with ecology seems to be lacking in the works of earlier writers. as time progressed literature evolved, writers developed a sense of social responsibility and concern towards their environment.

They began to criticise how nature was treated and spread awareness on the consequences of human actions that damaged the planet's basic life support system. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is work that looks at nature from a different light. The book is about one of the most dynamic ecological systems of the world. The 'tide country'

is not presented as a mere setting or background to the story. It is depicted as a significant character around which the story and its characters revolve. This novel clearly brings out the wrath of nature and fragility of humans at the mercy of nature.

The Hungry Tide opens with the train journey of Kanai and Piyali to Sundarbans or as referred to as 'tide country' in the novel. Kanai meets Piya in the train that take him to his aunt Nilima and collect the package left for him by his uncle, Nirmal. The package, he discovers is an account of his uncle's last days in Morichjhapi. It involved Kusum and her son Fokir, who are the victims of eviction from the island of Morichjhapi. Ghosh weaves two narratives together that unfolds parallelly.

One of them unravels through Nirmal's journals recounting the episodes in Morichjhapi and the other through Piya's expedition, to study the endangered species of dolphins that could be found in the rivers of the 'tide country'. It is interesting to note that one is from the past and the other is from present and at some point these two merges into one another. The first narrative involves the historical event of Morichjhapi from the perspective of the victims. In the narrative involving Piya and Fokir the author shows that the past infused in the present, through the past of Fokir.

These two narratives are juxtaposed to highlights the issues of wilderness conservation and its related social costs in areas populated by the socially and economically unprivileged both in the past and the present. In a way he was rewriting the history in the language of plight of the victim. The story of the novel is centred on the 'tide country' that includes the villages such as Lusibari, Garjontola and Morichjhapi. The author gives many insights into their plight that has become a way of life for them. Hunger, poverty, death, unpredictability are some major attributes of life in the 'tide country'.

Widowhood has become so normalized into their lives that they shed their marriage symbols every time their husbands go fishing and hunting. When the men folk went fishing it was the custom of their wives to change into she garments of widowhood.

They would put away their marital reads and dress in white sarees; they will take off them bangles and wash the vermillion from their head sit was as though they were trying to hold misfortune at bay by living through it over and over again. (Ghosh 85-86)

Amitav Ghosh intends to propose that if individuals from both privileged and unprivileged poverty stricken backgrounds come together, the world's poor would have a better future. Piya and Fokir's connection represents the merger of two spheres of culture and class. This class difference is highlighted in the way they perceive tigers, for Piya tiger is just an animal but for Fokir, tiger invokes the deep rooted trauma in him. The people have suffered a lot due to the tigers as it took lives for many men throwing young women into widowhood.

The government authorities have imposed the restrictions over killing tigers and initiated the conservation of these animals with no concern for the people who are prone to the attacks from wild. Piya, who is an outsider, is not accustomed to the state of people. The act of killing the tiger appears to be brutal and cruel on the part of these people. She thinks that Fokir may oppose the tiger killing but she finds that Fokir himself is involved in the act of killing the tiger. This incident reveals the cultural difference and she thinks that she has misinterpreted the Fokir.

The plot centers primarily on Sundarbans which is one of the suburbs of India. Ghosh depicts the entire story as an ecological witness in the West Bengal area after 2004, which is fully encircled by mangrove forest. The narrative has effectively emphasized the essential role of each aspect of nature throughout the entire story, such as the crocodile, tiger, and several other creatures. The features and elements play an important role in justifying environmental events and the trajectory of transformation.

There are several occasions in the story that highlight the need and reliance on nature for survival. The entire picture takes place in the Sundarbans, a region rich in coastal biodiversity. "Ecology found its voice by studying the properties of species, their distribution across space, and their adaptive discourse in time" writes William Howarth in *Ecocriticism Reader*. This corresponds to the lives of the characters in the narrative.

Piyali Roy is a cetologist who spends her days researching the nature of Irrawaddy Dolphins. Amitav Ghosh has portrayed this character as a person of strength and courage, capable of overcoming man's challenges, such as the government. She possesses the characteristics of an ecofeminist. In the narrative, she acquires the title of

feminism due to her ideas and her strong attachment to and desire to research this specific breed.

As Karen J Warren asserts in her study, women and the environment have a deeper relationship. They have interests that are related to their stroll with nature since they have a deep connection with nature. Piyali Roy's profession as a cetologist helps in understanding of marine species. Thus connection established between her and the environment is evident in these lines: There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea.

The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater only to re-emerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily some days the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbanks where there were none before. This study of the novel *The Hungry Tide* is based on the assumption that the novels depict a conflux of history and human understanding.

The voice of the common man, his difficulties and sacrifices that went unheard in historical records began to take centre stage in the fiction. Amitav Ghosh cleverly uses ecology to highlight this aspect of history. He speaks about the plight of the marginalised and oppressed by exposing the power structures. There is a reflection of both profound ecological ideas and an intrinsic exposition of social ecology in this present study of the novel, *The Hungry Tide*, which brings forth the many issues, conveyed through distinct characters and images. History no longer remains an unchangeable construct.

This novel explores environmental policies, which are detrimental, disregard the material reality of the landscape and the living of the socially and economically backward classes like indigenous people, forest dwellers and tribals. In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh predicts an impending worldwide ecological catastrophe and attempts to offer solutions through the voices of fictitious people. This study carefully researched and focused on the fundamental necessity of the day to protect the fauna and flora, as well as the aquatic species.

The work of Amitav Ghosh, provides a deeper comprehension of the world around us as well as an understanding of the past by juxtaposing the growing existential crises. This novel is analysed from the deep ecological perspective, focuses on the importance of merging the ecosystem and its preservation along with the perspective of native people and their culture is explored through social ecocritical perspective. Social ecology investigates the relationships between social categories such as culture, politics, society organization, and economics and natural categories such as social, water, and forest.

The social ecological aspect of *The Hungry Tide* locates the underlying human-environmental predicament. Funds raised for the Tiger Conservation Project by various environmental organizations are used for the forest department's personal benefit. Through Nilima, the author presents an introspective perspective on conservation logistics: "Imagine that!" said Nilima. "They [the forest department] were giving tigers water! In a land where no one thinks twice about thirsty humans!".

Sundarbans is represented as a living entity with all human qualities with a strong mythical background. Goddess Ganga who descended from heaven is tamed by Shiva by 'tying it into his ash-smeared locks', with a 'heavenly braid'. Shiva's hair is unlocked when his 'matted hair is washed apart into a vast, knotted tangle'. The Sundarbans is the only habitat of the Bengal Tigers, the government had declared Morichjhapi as a reserved area and engaged in stringent activities to remove the inhabitants and convert the area into a sacrifice zone. Tigers might be grown after indigenous people are evacuated, with little regard for what happens to these people once they are removed.

This dilemma is mirrored in ecological criticism of movements that declare greater worth of animals over human-inhabited areas because it ignores the links between marginalization and impoverishment of human populations and environmental exploitation and deterioration. It is shocking to know that many of the "islands were forcibly depopulated in order to make room for wildlife conservation projects". The author reiterates the plight of the poor whose lives are no matter to the world, which "can feel the suffering of an animal, but not of human beings".

He mocks at the futility of the plans of the people belonging to the comfort zones who make “. . . a push to protect the wildlife here, without regard for the human costs”. Ghosh paints a rich landscape. The people who have lived there for extended periods of time have endured marginalization and hardship as a result of political activity. Kusum represents the displaced community who longs for the touch of native land: “Walking on iron, we longed for the touch of mud; encircled by rails, we dreamed of the Raimangal in flood”.

They express their nostalgia thus: “By night we remembered, we talked and we dreamed - by day coal and metal were the stuff of our lives”. They do not want to turn their future into “A lifetime of toil, in a city of rust” when rivers ran in our heads; the tides were in our blood. The roots of poverty, injustice and environmental degradation lie at the heart of the land which is split by political boundaries and cordoned off as national wilderness areas. Ghosh presents a world of nature not just as a setting of picturesque beauty also as a character hungry for human blood.

A major concern of social ecologists is anthropocentric conceit, and the Sahara Project in the Sundarbans is a metaphor of this in terms of modern development. In order to build flotels, restaurants, shops, business centres, cinemas, and theatres as part of Sahara India Parivar's massive tourism project, large portions of the Sundarbans would have to be taken over, upsetting the delicate ecosystem and endangering the area's already threatened biodiversity.

Ghosh seems to follow socio- ecocritical view that the modern environmental crises “can be managed, solved or perhaps overcome by new myths or improvements in thinking that would reconceptualise the boundaries as well as the content of our understanding of humanity and nature”. In other novels like *The Circle of Reason* and *In an Antique Land* also one finds the weaving image of the importance of the ecological strands but with unrealised potential of a fully developed eco-critical narrative.

All of nature's destructive and hostile features are represented by *The Hungry Tide*. Numerous individuals drown, and many more are eaten by crocodiles and sharks. Tiger assaults are quite frequent. When we carefully read the book, we find that Kusum's

father's death is the only one that is mentioned among all the animal deaths. The force of nature is shown in this scenario to be greater than human might, rendering humans powerless.

Ghosh writes, "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". These great cats of the tide country are like ghosts who never reveal their presence except through marks, sounds and smell. The wild cats of the tidal country are like ghosts that only leave behind markings, noises, and smells. Tigers and crocodiles in the story are engaged in planning, stalking, and then attacking their prey.

These natural attackers appear to be aware that humans are defenceless in the face of their gusts. When Kusum's father was attacked, he exposes the tiger's nature in its raw form. It had such absolute confidence in its abilities that, in the last stretch, it actually came out from hiding and raced along the coast in plain view of the distant shore. '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.'

The storm is mentioned that destroys an embankment that is one kilometre long. The people in the island are feeling the brutality of this storm. The storm takes away the hope of the people and isolates them to despair and grief. "They had even managed to grow a few handfuls of rice and vegetables. After years of living on stilt- raised platforms, they had finally been able to descend to earth and make a few shacks and shanties on level ground. All this by virtue of the badh".

These people struggle to build a town despite all obstacles. Although it is impossible for individuals to build a house there, the reality is that these people have nowhere else to go. Since they have nowhere else to go, they make a living off the salty, desolate tracts of that land with a determination to live. Majority of the population are fishermen who live off of fish and crabs. Their survival is dangerous as their life or in reality their existence is unpredictable.

These people are always in struggle and there is always incessant battle against beasts, storms and tides. Their efforts are utterly destroyed by the storm in a matter of seconds, leaving them rootless and roofless. Ghosh draws a parallelism between the jaw of tiger and the gaping maw of the tide to expose the innate patterns within the web of ecosystem. He gives an elaborate account of a furious storm in the novel. It is the first known instance of two catastrophes- earthquake and storm happening together.

The calamity is impossible to comprehend: "The waters rose so high that they killed thousands of animals and carried them upriver and inland". The storm is so fierce the bodies of heavy rhinoceroses and swift tigers was discovered kilometres distant from the river in rice fields and village ponds. The feathers of dead birds covered the entire landscape. Ghosh brings out the symbiotic and homogenous relationship that exists between nature, humans and other living creatures. In order to maintain existence, the world's flora and animals are continually interconnected.

Each organism's place in the ecosystem is well defined. Every living thing has a relationship with humans. This eco-critical reading shares a common motivation, awareness of environmental crisis caused by human actions, which damage earth's ecosystem. The *Hungry Tide* by Ghosh inspires readers to support environmental restoration through literary depiction. Ghosh ties people and environment together and depicts the spatial and topographical dilemma that affects both human and animal existence.

He frequently talks about the natural disasters that constantly reshape the tide country. The conservation of endangered animals like dolphins and tigers, as well as the problem of human habitation in the Sundarbans forest, are the main topics discussed in the book. The *Hungry Tide* illustrates the essential interdependence that must be maintained between humans and non-humans in Ghosh's web of interconnectivity. Aside from the overarching fictional plot, Amitav Ghosh has also implicitly advocated for the importance of other environmental concerns of the Sahara Ecocriticism Project, which will only pose a threat to the region.

Through the character of Horen Naskor, a fisherman who lives in an island called Satjelia Ghosh highlights the true wealth of the Sunderbans and how it benefits the locals. At the age of fourteen, Horen was married, and by the time he was twenty, he had three kids. His life is dependent on the forest and he looks at it with a deep reverence, as Nilima said: “what are you doing in canning, Horen?” He replied “Jongolkortegeslam, I went to do jungle yesterday, Mashima, and Bon Bibi granted me enough honey to fill two bottles. I came to sell them”. Through these lines Ghosh beautifully describes man’s interdepending on the forest and for their day to day needs.

The people not only have an affinity to nature and but also attribute divinity to nature and this is maintained through mythical stories like that of Bon Bibi, worshipped as the goddess of forest. Bon Bibi is the guardian deity of the forest. Through the wonderful depiction of Bon Bibi, Ghosh transports the readers to a mythical world where human had a close relationship with nature when Horen mentions the name Bon Bibi, Kanai becomes curious and asks Nilima “who is Bon Bibi?” “the Goddess of forest” Nilima had whispered back.

“People believe she rules over all the animals of the jungle”. The goddess Bon Bibi is given a spiritual significance in this place and is worshipped as a natural divinity. She also serves as a protector of the jungle and remains a cultural symbol who creates a bond between culture and conservation which is helpful in promoting an ecological balance between man and nature of a particular region.

Ghosh shows that myths play an essential role and it enables humans to understand and connect with nature more intimately. Ghosh hopes to achieve a balance between humans and the natural world through this tale. Additionally, the locals there hold the belief that Bon Bibi uses the river dolphins, known locally as “shushuk” as her eyes and ears. These Bon Bibi messengers are said to help fisherman by directing them to fish and crabs. Here, Ghosh discusses habitual concerns using this ancient fable.

The ecocritical analysis demonstrates that Ghosh has done justice to nature. His contributions through his works are in defence of the environment and its concerns. As Ghosh emphasizes through the character Kusum, the ancestral tradition of honouring

nature as divine power and their traditional spiritual and cultural belief systems are seen through the detailed representation of Bon Bibi, the forest goddess who rules over the jungle, the tigers, crocodiles and other animals.

The integrated way of life of the natives, who consider dolphins as messengers of the forest goddess Bon Bibi, has been highlighted by Ghosh. Native Americans think that dolphins that move in waterways deliver signals about tides and approaching danger. Kusum, a native of the tide forest, considers dolphins to be reliable companions on her watery travels: When the day breaks, you'll see it is time for low tide; cross the island and go to the northern side.

Keep your eyes on water, be patient and you'll see... they'll keep company till the water arise... Anyone can see Bon Bibi's messenger if they know where to look. These remarks make it clear that the Sundarbans has a huge, untamed ecology that serves as the narrative's core. Ghosh exposes human desire for land in the guise of modernisation in the Hungry Tide. Through the persona of Sir Daniel Hamilton, Ghosh illustrates the human desire for land, its natural resources, and the ecological balance between humans and the environment.

The wealth of the region left him astounded. Ghosh describes his colonial mindset thus "when this Scotsman looked upon crab- covered shores of the tide country, he saw not mud, but something that shone brighter than gold, 'look how much this mud is worth', he said "A single acre of Bengal's mud yields fifteen mounds of rice". He was fascinated by the rich natural environment and the fertile soil, so he disregarded all the forest department's regulations that kept the region under his protection.

Anthropometric arrogance is a central theme of social ecologist and this is what is symbolised by modern terms of development like the Sahara project in the Sundarbans. Urbanization and economic expansion are a new form of feudal tradition that take advantage of those who are most in need of resources. Instead of colonial powers, this is represented by contemporary political power structures that direct exploitation on grounds of national interest.

CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING NATURE AND HUMANITY

4.1 ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism examines the relationship between literature and the natural world. Ecology is the study of how living creatures inhabit their environments (Armbruster 28). This involves investigating how plants and animals survive and reproduce in specific environments or climates. According to **Callicott** (1998), the term '**environment**' encompasses not only soil and climate, but also other living things such as plants and animals. Environment is derived from the **French** terms **environ** and **environer**, which mean 'around', 'round about', 'to surround', or 'to embrace' (Ibid 98). These in turn are derived from Old French *virer* and *vuiron*, meaning 'to circle', 'to turn about', 'around', 'the country around', or 'circuit' (Ibid 98). The etymology suggests that the term "environment" refers to the things or events surrounding something else. Furthermore, environment is the most important aspect of ecology.

According to **Cohen** (39), most living things are influenced by their surroundings, whereas humans, on the other hand, manipulate their surroundings to meet their demands. The natural environment refers to the environment that existed before to human intervention or administration. Unfortunately, humans have a tendency to manipulate nature for their own objectives, which are fleeting in compared to the eternal aspect of nature. This definition has two flaws. First, it implies that the natural world is static and unchanging, and that humans have distributed and altered it in some way. Callicott (1999) suggests that our definition of nature should reflect our present understanding of its dynamic and changing nature.

The definition suggests that the forest or wilderness was pristine prior to human intervention. Then humans emerged and transformed nature into something different. This obsolete approach situates indigenous people in nature and emphasises the impact

of westerners on their lives. Ecologists acknowledge that natural communities of plants and animals existed prior to human emergence. However, the presence of indigenous humans has a significant impact on these ecosystems once they are integrated into the landscape. Humans manipulated plants and animals through food, fire, and forest structure, resulting in the loss of delicate and huge species.

Human impact is not a new phenomenon, but it is now more widespread and has catastrophic consequences than ever before (Callicott 99). According to Ron Charles' review of *The Hungry Tide*, the book explores political, social, and environmental themes via a romantic, suspenseful, and poetic plot (Charles 55).

"Ghosh's handling has established this gorgeous, hazardous and dynamic area as a provocative icon of the modern world" (Ibid 55). According to him, "The work unfolds as a complex collection of stories, legends, myths, and history. Charles believes that Ghosh has highlighted such difficulties with extraordinary earnestness. Self-awareness akin to that of a teacher as opposed to a novelist (Ibid., 55). Renowned reviewer Sandip Roy describes Ghosh's dazzling prose *The Hungry Tide* as "more of an epic than a struggle of man against beast." "Piya's environmentalism seeks good solutions either for the predicament of the Fokirs of the world, or the poorest of the poor, and the dispossessed," asserts Roy fiercely (Charles 57).

One of Kanai's thoughts is, "Isn't that a horror too -- that we can feel the suffering of an animal but not of human beings?" Piya expresses her fear at the destruction caused by tigers. According to Roy, "Ghosh is a master storyteller, whether he is writing about the teak forests of Burma or the deserts of Egypt." However, in his native Bengali environment, as in his earlier book *The Shadow Lines*, he is simply at ease, capturing the emotional and physical terrain with vividness and specificity as though he were viewing this clash of class and culture through Piya's dolphin-watching binoculars (Roy 84).

Roy believes that "*The Hungry Tide* is a more straightforward novel of fish and tigers, of a perfect storm and murky backwaters, but it may not have the grand historical sweep of Ghosh's *The Glass Palace* or the imaginative splicing of history and science in his *The Calcutta Chromosome*" (Ibid 84). Alfred Hickling appreciates Ghosh's daring river

voyage, *The Hungry Tide*, which explores India's contemporary identity. "Ghosh's book is about more than the pursuit of a disappointing dolphin," in his opinion. Between Western presumptions and Indian realities, it is a Forsteresque collision and a Conradian voyage (Hickling 28).

According to **Jeremy Worman**, "Ghosh interweaves a complex pattern of narratives, embracing such themes as myth, politics, colonialism, other forms of life, family history, and the drama of individual survival as it battles with extreme forces of nature in the form of man-eating tigers, dangerous rivers and forests, and hurricanes" (Worman 49). *The Hungry Tide* by Ghosh is a book about a place and the voiceless, downtrodden, and marginalised residents of far-off islands. One of these Sundarbans islands, Morichjhapi, is thought to have served as a large haven for illegal squatters during a string of violent incidents. Thousands of Sundarbans perished in a terrible catastrophe known as "the Morichjhapi incident" in the late 1970s.

This tumultuous occurrence claimed the life of Kusum, the novel's central character. Furthermore, the episode at Morichjhapi served as a clear denunciation of the injustice and cruelty meted out to the settlers and refugees. This disastrous incident is demonstrated by the unfair resource distribution between the islanders and the Royal Bengal tigers of the Sundarbans to preserve the forest. Ghosh had a firm opinion about the government's dominance over the environment and its use of force in Morichjhapi, particularly when he talked about the terrible deaths of thousands of refugees. The Sundarbans islanders saw this as "a treason not only of the Bengali *nimnobar* personality, but also of the refugees and the poor and marginalised in general" (Tiwari 89).

The people of Morichjhapi described in great detail how the potential occupants of the island were promised this land and how they were misled. The concept that islanders and refugees shared a boundless spirit of camaraderie and solidarity because of their shared experiences of marginalisation, which united them to fight for a niche for themselves, was one of the details that were presented. Another was that the concept was that it was "an experiment, imagined not by those with learning and power, but by those without" (Ghosh 258). This statement, "the worst part is to sit here and listen to the

policemen making announcements that our existence is worth less than dirt or dust," is sufficient evidence of Kusum's indignation and fury (Ghosh 259).

When Kusum tells Nirmal Bose, "Saar, 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, and it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all over the world," Ghosh describes the situation of those refugees and islanders. The words were heard repeatedly every day while they sat there, their stomachs growling. The question arose in their minds, "Who are these people that love animals so much that they would kill us to save them?" Were they aware of the actions taken in their names? Where did these people live? Did they have moms and dads, as well as children?

As they considered these ideas, it appeared to them that the entire planet had turned into an animal habitat, and that they were only humans attempting to survive like they have always done—from the soil and the water. No person could consider this illegal unless they have forgotten that fishing, clearing land, and cultivating soil have always been the means of human subsistence. (Ghosh 261-262) In addition to the environment, Ghosh also addresses related topics including the effects of technological advancement (IT) on the situation of the underprivileged.

As he puts it: Does caring for the environment imply that one doesn't care about the suffering of people, particularly the poor? He has embarked on his storytelling voyage to Sundarban, the location of this particular captivating book. As he correctly states, his care for the environment is evident: Climate change is an especially pressing issue if one lives in a particular region of the planet. The deltas of the Nile, Ganges, and Brahmaputra would be the most affected by global warming (Ghosh 266). Concerned about the biological destruction in the Sundarbans, Ghosh says in the interview, You hardly see any birds at all. The observer recalls seeing large flocks of birds, but that entire mass of bird life has simply vanished. In the past, when one visited the mudflats, they were covered in crabs.

The crabs are vanished. Similarly, the Sundarbans are named after a type of tree called the sundari tree. According to Ghosh (p. 265), these trees are becoming

increasingly scarce. Ghosh differs from other wildlife authors such as **Jim Corbett, Kennith Anderson, Salim Ali, Kailash Sankhala, and M. Krishnan**. Corbett has a strong eye for describing trees, birds, and hills. Anderson's portrayal of animal behaviour is excellent, but Corbett is particularly interested in the drama of woodland life. Salim Ali's experience as a scientist and conservationist sets him apart from other nature authors.

He explains how male birds create nests, which their mates inspect before selecting one. The ability to establish a nest is crucial for romantic success. Ghosh explains how the State uses deception to maintain power over marginalised groups. However, the unique margin occupies the centre. The margin is not pushed to the background in this case, but rather becomes a critical component that must be focused on, discussed, and disputed. The peripheral life is the rich domain of this tale. He has globalised the local.

4.2 EXISTENTIALISM

The modern world is fraught with anxiety, envy, mental anguish, unrest, and stress, making life tough. Moral principles have been eroded as man has evolved into a more mechanical being. There is a disconnect between one's self-perception and actual actions. Absurd situations can lead to psychosocial problems and damage mental health and harmony. Existential literature emphasises the problem of finding meaning in one's own reality. Individual freedom is correlated with self-creation and living authentically. Interpersonal experiences impact a person's existential feelings as they search for themselves. Existential feelings shape our perceptions, thoughts, and emotions. These elements have a significant role in shaping our emotions and actions in various situations. These sentiments exist in the background of our experience and are not related to specific events. Instead, they focus on our emotional state and affective stage.

Amitav Ghosh employs the stream of consciousness approach to depict the characters' running thoughts and feelings, as well as the workings of their mental landscape. In his writings, all information is associated with knowledge and distinguished by a sequence of occurrences. Amitav Ghosh's novels are distinguished by their value;

they are also disseminated, accumulated, and set in a different social context than the present world. He utilises characters from various levels of society and the world. Ghosh paints a picture of the characters' lives as they navigate power hierarchies and the ever-changing nature of time. His stories combine imagination, history, politics, and economics.

He creates realistic characters for his stories. The story is set in Sunderbans, a place where the tides transform the land and create a new cosmos covered in mangrove trees. It also serves as a source of longing for Amitav Ghosh. He portrayed human existence. The image depicts individuals whose hearts are filled with love for those close to them, while their interactions with others are limited to the human bond. The novel's protagonists engage in a complex interplay of emotions, identity, and ideology. In *Hungry Tide*, the author depicts a relationship between Piya, an Americanized cetologist, Kanai, a professional translator, and Fokir, an uneducated fisherman. Piya, the cetologist, likes Fokir.

The unlettered guy falls in love with the tangible entity of science, represented by the woman. Kanai, the translator, describes him as bare-bones and battling a tiger in the marsh. Piyali Roy, an Indian-American scientist from Seattle, and Kanai Dutt, a Delhi businessman and translator, are both outsiders. Piya is conducting research on Irrawaddy dolphins. Kanai was invited by Nilima to review his uncle Nirmal's works, which provide insight into the region's past. Sir Daniel Hamilton, a visionary Scot, purchased a part of the area with the goal of creating a utopian community where people could live together without discrimination based on caste, creed, or religion. Refugees settled on one of the islands and established an organised micro-society. Nirmal, Nilima, his wife, and Kusum became involved in the refugee struggle, but it was short-lived.

The contrast of feelings, background orientations, and interpretation of the scenario varied among all the characters in the narrative. Nirmal disregarded Nilima's social work because he believed in revolution; for him, social service exploited the essence of the materialistic society, and revolution was the only way to change it. Nirmal

is inspired by Rilke's writings on transformation and nature, which he interprets as pertaining to socio-political ideals. This led him to participate in the revolution with the expectation of a revolutionary transformation of the place.

However, he lives in a world translated through stories and fails to accurately interpret the practical reality surrounding him. The two characters are binary opposites. Nirmal and Nilima are poetic and prosaic, respectively, with Kanai and Fokir providing contrast between rural and urban life. Kanai relies on language for communication, but Fokir is illiterate and a child of nature. This creates a dilemma for Piya, which is a key element of existentialist philosophy. Fokir's ability to forecast the location of Irrawaddy dolphins via instinct and observation aided Piya's research on dolphins.

The intertwining of pleasure and pain brought Nirmal and Kusum together. Nirmal, a lover of poetry and revolution, became enraged by Kusum's involvement with Morichjhapi refugees and made an existential choice: "I felt myself torn between my wife and the woman who had become the muse I'd never had; between the quiet persistence of everyday change and the heady excitement of revolution - between prose and poetry." (216) Nilima, on the other hand, is more pragmatic and adopts a different approach. She sympathises with migrants but does not actively participate in the revolution as it may jeopardise her long-term goal of assisting the impoverished. Building the Badabon trust took time, and she relied on the government's backing to achieve her objective. She could not afford to defy the government. The novel explores the existential problem of conserving wildlife. A big part of the island was set aside for tiger protection, to which numerous organisations contributed, but no attention was paid to human life.

Piya explains to Kanai that she is willing to give up her life for the safety of dolphins in her area, highlighting the irony that refugees also want to be in their natural habitat but are not allowed to do so. Kusum embarks on a perilous adventure against the government, which unites her with the location and becomes the source of her freedom. Her need to exist led her to become a revolutionary and fight for the sake of the refuge. Amitav Ghosh expresses the importance of humanistic feelings, stating that the worst part was not hunger or thirst. The police announced that our lives were worthless and that the

island should be saved for its trees, animals, reserve forest, and tiger conservation project funded by global citizens.

Every day, with hunger in our tummies, we would listen to these words repeatedly. Who are these people who love animals so much that they are willing to slaughter humans for them? Do they understand what is being done in their names? Do these individuals have children, moms, or fathers? Where do they live? As I reflected on these thoughts, I realised that the planet has become dominated by animals, and we, as humans, are simply attempting to survive on the earth's resources. Humans have always lived by fishing, clearing land, and growing soil, therefore considering it a crime is illogical. (262). Piya's existential feelings shift her perspective on life, causing her to empathise with refugees and dedicate her life to assisting the Lusibari community.

Her initiative on dolphin sightings, sponsored by Badabon Trust, drew interest from other environmental groups and resulted in funding. She shared profits with the trust. Moyna and fisherman. She rents the upper floor of the Guest House to set up a Data Bank and an office for Moyna to work after her hospital duties and teach Piya Lusibari, allowing her to interact with the community. Her effort and courage helped her complete the mission. She built a new home out of love and sympathy, rather than with boundaries.

Writings from the postcolonial era frequently incorporate existentialism. It is a philosophical phrase with historical and cultural roots in Europe. Nonetheless, the prevalent western philosophy acknowledged in the middle of the 20th century has had a "substantial and significant impact on literature" (Chatterji 10). Existentialism examines a person's state of being as well as their emotions, behaviours, and thoughts. During the nineteenth century, the term "existentialism" was commonly linked with esteemed writers and philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard, Gabriel Marcel, Jaspers, and Martin Heidegger.

Existentialism is successfully explored by Indian English novelists. They have tried using existentialism to investigate the personal identity of the individual. A person's identity is presented in general terms to highlight how they fit into various societal categories, such as gender, class, and race. In postcolonial societies, the yearning for one's identity

through a quest becomes more evident to illustrate the relationship between the inner self and the materialistic society, as well as the struggles, cultural values, and issues that an individual faces due to the exploitation of the colonisers, their adoption of Western culture, and their situation as migrants.

Homi Bhabha created the term "mimetic" to characterise Indians in contemporary discourse, depicting them as devoid of wealth and success. Therefore, socialists and nationalists continue to use Indian history as a prop. In Indian history, the creation of legendary kingdoms and imaginary past and future are seen as merely procedural, normative proof for the stories. Such an anti-modern and anti-historical topic cannot be demonstrated to be a theory by the text or by the established university's procedures. It is taken directly from the expertise of anthropologists. Ghosh is a writer and anthropologist who traverses the world.

The transition narrative that will always ultimately favour the contemporary (i.e., Europe) is the only means by which a subaltern phrase can have quoted existence in a broader statement that belongs to the anthropological alone, as Spivak correctly pointed out. As an anthropologist and writer of Cosmopolitanism, Ghosh journeys throughout the world to confront and adapt to obstacles by establishing connections beyond national borders. Through his understanding of the causes and effects involved in the creation of storytelling talent and imagination, he amasses a feeling of precise historical facts and chronology throughout his whole collection of novels.

According to **Harris** (A Post-Colonial Reader 357), "a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the art of imagination." The author challenges the conventional wisdom of the widely acknowledged narratives and certainties of the postcolonial frontiers by weaving a diverse and self-reflexive vision of the world. In an effort to reorganise the cosmos and find a place for himself and other humans, Amitav Ghosh is deeply engaged in the search for "narrative significance."

In his works, this search is more overtly social and political. He presents the mission as a difficult task and puts a certain person in the story mode. His fictional

personas possess the ability to narrate and convey reality to their audience. Each and every one of his novels is based on an actual event in his life. These are the tales that deal with human concerns. According to Ghosh, "all spiritual yearnings, human yearning, and emotions create humanity as we know it" (Prasad 57). His importance to the story is demonstrated in both of the novels, *The Hungry Tide*.

In Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*, the isolated Sunderbans Islands serve as the backdrop. "With its thick mangroves, the man eating tigers, snakes, sharks, ebb and flow of water, rocking the islands," is how the island is described in the book (105). The incomprehensible setting of the book suggests death. Ghosh provides historical context for Daniel Hamilton, the Englishman who bought 10,000 acres in the Sunderbans in 1903 from the British Government. As a thank you to all the Indians who are willing to settle there, he distributed it to them all. And thus, Bhatirdesh, the new Tide Country, is born.

Jamespur, Annpur, Emilybari, Lusibari, Canning, and other English names were given to the Bhatirdesh Islands in honour of Hamilton's ancestors (Revisiting History in the *Hungry Tide*). Individuals from several nations inhabited the islets. A few were underprivileged and impoverished. The individuals from various regions like Orissa, East Bengal, and Santhal Paryanas began to reside on the islands. These individuals represented the marginalised and lived on the periphery of civil society. Hamilton envisioned an equitable society where "there would be no Brahmins or untouchables, no Bengalis and no Oriyas," and where he would make history. Everyone would have to live and work together"(*Hungry* 51).

The refugees also settle down in the tide country in order to escape from the political oppression. Some of them moved in 1947 and some in 1971. Thus, *The Hungry Tide* picturizes the unforgettable years of human history to represent the cruel assassination of human beings. As **John C. Hawley** opines: "such a setting makes adapt symbol for the ebb and flow of history and the uprooting of populations, both of which have to come to be seen as "Ghosh-ian themes".

The encounter between 42-year-old Delhi businessman Kanai Dutt and American cadaver Piyali Roy establishes the links with historical events that are required to ascertain the future. History only becomes objective and meaningful when it creates a logical connection between the past and the future, according to **E.H. Carr**. Kanai's uncle and aunt, Nirmal and Nilima, are native of Kolkata and moved to Lusibari Island in the Sunderbans in 1950. Nirmal, being an activist, found his political activity problematic, leading him to resign from his position as a college lecturer in Calcutta and take a teaching position at Lusibari School.

Through her tireless efforts, Nilima founded the Badabon Trust, a women's union that thrived and eventually grew to be a large organisation. In order to continue Nirmal's notebook, which he had left for Kanai prior to his passing, Nilima gave Kanai the command to travel to the island. Piya travels to the island to further her studies on dolphins. She also designates Fokir, a local fisherman from an island, for her additional research. Kanai is influenced by Nirmal's journal to comprehend the historical perspective. He travels back in time to the 1970s as he reads the journal, a time after the Partition of Bengal, a significant political catastrophe. The communal riots in Bengal had forced many individuals to flee during the crisis.

Due to the government's ludicrous actions in the resettlement camp, the Bangladeshi refugees had also managed to flee political persecution. The evacuees dispersed around Morichjapi, an island in the Sunderbans that the government had set aside for the conservation of tigers. Strong historical pressures had driven these settlers out of Bangladesh. These refugees were not well off, and the government had committed numerous crimes against them. Nirmal was pleased with his utopian visions until the settlers rebelled against the government's severity.

Nirmal cherished the idea of revolution because he was a leftist. "I felt something changing with me: how astonishing it was that I, an ageing, bookish school master, should live to see this, an experiment, imagined not by those with learning and power, but by

those without," the settlers' opposition and his vision were becoming real in front of his eyes.

Kusum, Fokir's mother, initially worked for the Badabon Trust before later joining the group of settlers as an informant. Nirmal made the decision to back them since they helped him achieve his goals in every way. But the bravery and resistance of the refugees was no different from their daily struggle.

Their battle had started to seem like a daily occurrence. Their unfair treatment, misery, and suffering had been recorded in history. In actuality, the spirit of adaptability that the ancestors bestowed upon them was the ability to endure any adversity in life. These exiles had extraordinary fortitude to endure hardships since they lived their lives according to religious tales and concepts of good and evil. With Fokir's and his wife Moyna's lives serving as models of simplicity, purity, and youth, Kanai captures the essence of the ordinary urban Indian male. Because he saw Moyna as a reflection of his own yearning, Kanai admires her. For the sake of her husband Fokir and kid Tutul, Moyna makes sacrifices in life.

She piques Kanai's interest: "It was crucial for him to feel that his ideals were fundamentally egalitarian, liberal, and meritocratic; it was as though her very existence were a validation of the decisions he made in his own life". Through drawing a distinction between the concepts and values to acknowledge, a form of life that could only be lived in Lusibari, Kanai makes it evident that Nirmal had led a meaningless life. He discovers who he is by exploring inside the settler's unwavering spirit ideology. He had observed how the settlers' cries of "we are the dispossessed..." represented their struggles.

It seemed as though the rivers and the waves were listening to the deepest fears in my heart. Who had I been? Where was my place? In the land of tides, or in Kolkata? Within India or outside its borders? either in poetry or prose?. As it plays out in front of them, Kanai, Nirmal, and Piya learn the causes of their doubts and anxieties. Their justifiable desire causes them to become aware of the brutality of city people. As a proficient translator and interpreter, Kanai deciphers the mysteries of the islands against the brutality of authority and the mysterious nature of life. Kanai became aware of the

ridiculous behaviour of the affluent people in Lusibari due to the challenges the islanders encountered in ensuring their survival. For the imperialists, the life of the impoverished is no more valuable than that of animals.

Piya responds to the peasants' killing of tigers. Swiftly following suit, Kanai says, "I mean, aren't we a part of the horror as well? And me and you, and others like us? Humans are killed by tigers on a weekly basis. and yet, it nearly passes unnoticed in this instance: these murders are never mentioned in the media or recorded in reports" Fokir, an illiterate fisherman, stands in for the historical motif. Because of his schooling, he appears to be less significant to them than Moyna. Nevertheless, his persona assumes importance in the book as it reveals the Sunderbans' historical legacy: "Piya realised too that this was a mirror through which a man like Fokir could never be anything else than a figure seen through a rearview mirror, a quickly vanishing presence, a ghost from the eternal past that was Lusibari".

Ghosh lists a new aspect of Nirmal, Kanai, and Piya's life. They give their lives in service of a cause. For example, Fokir's death is meant to protect Piya from a cyclone. Kanai and Piya's trip to the Sunderbans transforms them and creates a brighter future for themselves. In order to write in his uncle's notebook, Kanai makes the decision to go back to Lusibari. The concepts of truth and beauty are present in Kusum and Fokir's lives. This is the point that Ghosh aims to get across through the poetry of Rilke, who is introduced in order to highlight the significance of Nirmal's concept that "life is lived in transformation". The author uses common characters like Kusum, Fokir, and Moyna to show the relationship between the individual and universal ideas.

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He depicts the actual life experiences of common people and their ongoing identity struggles. To support his existential philosophy, Amitav Ghosh creates a timeline of diverse cognitive processes. "Every individual character as free and responsible agents determining their own development through acts of the will" is the emphasis of the term "existence." Although the characters lack the ability to judge what is good or terrible or right or wrong, they do act according to clear lines of reasoning. Existentialism is a literary and philosophical movement that places a strong emphasis on the existence, freedom, and choice of the individual.

It is a literary movement from the 20th century that emphasises the individual and how they relate to God's universe. In essence, it describes how people interpret their own meaning of life. Despite existing in an irrational universe, it attempts to make sensible decisions. Existentialism employs the perspective of human existence to demonstrate that existence is fundamentally meaningless. It establishes that people are free agents who bear personal accountability for their chosen course of action, thought, and volition. The goal of this study is to demonstrate how the novel's characters have free will, cognition, and action.

4.3 ENVIRONMENTALISM

One of the most well-known books written by Amitav Ghosh is *The Hungry Tide* (2004). The story takes place in the isolated region of eastern India known as the Sundarbans, which is made up of several small islands connected by various rivers. Ghosh investigates the tensions that develop when powerful political elites with vast fortunes decide to defend the environment from irresponsible human activity. The book gives a fictitious story of the horrific circumstances surrounding the forced relocation in order to establish a tiger reserve, which paved the way for the 1979 Morichjhapi massacre.

The story opens with Kanai, the rich outsider, unaware of the hardships and moral convictions of the underprivileged Sundarbans residents. Through the notebook kept by Kanai's late uncle Nirmal, historical events are revealed. This perspective on an ill-conceived conservation programme and its man-made losses is juxtaposed with Piyali Roy's attempt at doing scientific study on Irrawaddy dolphins. This article criticises the exaltation of unadulterated natural space and aims to highlight the dangers and irrelevance of Northern environmentalist ideologies in Global South situations.

This project aims to expose the largely Northern reductive and totalizing image of environment that excludes the Southern human-nature experiences through a close textual analysis of *The Hungry Tide*. The discussion then shifts to examples of contemporary human communities that are deeply ingrained in the environments around them. The next section illustrates how this entanglement is resolved by maintaining discussions on the environment in the north. The ethical considerations and consumption patterns that support a sustainable living are covered in the fourth section. Lastly, the case is made that a strong anti-human emotion is not necessary for environmentalism to be effective.

4.4 REJECTING THE REDUCTIVE VISION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Based on the idea that nature is "an Eden too perfect for the fallen progeny of Adam and Eve," Americans created national parks and reserve forests. Wilderness is praised for its unspoiled beauty because it has not yet been affected by humans. The love of pristine wilderness comes naturally to individuals who have large wallets and hearty appetites. A few tourists can enjoy their leisure and relaxation in a natural setting free of people. The topography everywhere is totalized in this approach to environmental preservation. Ghosh challenges the idealised notion that every natural area—in this example, the Sundarbans—is a gorgeous paradise.

According to **Aldous Huxley's** argument in "Wordsworth in the Tropics" (1928), William Wordsworth's love of serene nature and carefree pantheism would have been healed if he had experienced the harsh conditions of a tropical rainforest. The

Sundarbans is a region of extraordinary complexity and changeability. The islands are situated on the very edge of India, as described by the phrase "trailing threads of India's fabric, the ragged fringe of her sari. The representation of the Sundarbans' intricacy and mutability undermines the idea of an Edenic natural area. When the author states, "The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometres inland, and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater, only to re-emerge hours later, it emphasises the geological mystery.

The book illustrates nature's malleability and contradicts the overarching general conception of passive and benign natural beauty. Mangroves start to grow overnight when the tides make new land, and given the correct circumstances, they may spread quickly enough to blanket an island in a few of years. Mangrove limbs are twisted, the foliage is frequently impenetrably dense, and the leaves are rough and leathery. The air is still and foul-smelling, with limited visibility. Apart from these geophysical intricacies, the interplay between humans and nature is anything but a tranquil tourist experience. Severe cyclones, storms, floods, and famines are common in the area: "[t]he novel confounds its urban, bourgeois characters with the alterity of the tide country—based on a romanticised urban vision of nature and wildlife—and disrupts the dominant bhadralok image of the Sundarbans as a beautiful garden devoid of human beings."

Living in the area is challenging due to the unnavigable canals and extensive mangrove woods that limit visibility. The location defies the residents' best attempts to cultivate the available land. Initially, the geophysical obscurity turns out to be a barrier. Second, the region is unusable for cultivation due to the scarcity of freshwater. When the author asserts that the environment rejects human efforts to cultivate the soil and rewards them with "hunger and catastrophe," he utterly rejects the Western picture of weak and subdued nature. To get by, people have to labour and battle nature itself. They turned to hunting and fishing out of hunger, frequently with tragic results. Many people drowned, and crocodiles and estuarine sharks killed a great number of others.

4.5 AN INDESTRUCTIBLE HUMAN-NATURE BOND

The uncontrollable nature of the landscape raises concerns about celebrating pristine natural regions. Many Southern Indians rely on ecology for survival and are closely connected to their surroundings. Isolating humans from nature can have severe consequences, as many people rely heavily on local ecosystems. India's highly populated agrarian populace maintains a delicate balance with environment. However, the preservation of wilderness areas has led to a direct transfer of resources from the poor to the wealthy. The interconnectedness of humans and their surroundings is frequently highlighted. Kusum refers to the inhabitants of Sundarbans as "the tidecountry people."

The ancient 'tinai theory' proposes a shared oikos or area of habitation that includes the inner landscape and outer geophysical space, connecting the environment, humans, nonhumans, and the sacred in a continuous continuity. In her article, **Swarnalatha Rangarajan** says that "identity in tinai theory is therefore not to be defined in isolation but through the integral bonds that the member shares with other citizens of this integral oikos."

The ethereal relationship is described as "rivers ran in our heads and tides were in our blood." The connection is both spiritual and material, as most people rely on their surroundings for survival. The novel's characters, including Fokir, Horen, and Moyna, are 'ecosystem people' who rely on their local ecosystems for survival and suffer the most when they are damaged or separated. Due to the salinity and complexity of the tide-country, they relied on catching fish and crabs for survival.

4.6 SEVERING THE CONNECTION

The rich elites have associated wilderness preservation with environmentalism, leading to a disregard for environmental goals in Southern nations. Environmental challenges affecting lower-income communities, such as resource shortages, soil erosion, and pollution, are often overlooked. The preservation of wilderness is crucial to global environmentalism. In a sparsely populated Northern nation, declaring certain areas as conserved forest for nonhuman beings and tourists may not be a significant worry. He cautions that "the wholesale transfer of a movement culturally rooted in American

conservation history can only result in the social uprooting of human populations in other parts of the globe."

Agencies like as WWF and IUCN often sponsor these programmes. National parks and protected forests are seen as signs of ecological development in Southern countries by economically developed nations. The need for approval from the North disrupts the delicate equilibrium between humans and environment. This preservation technique is similar to neocolonial attempts to legally separate tribes from their native territories. The pursuit of aesthetic pleasure often disregards the concerns of Indigenous people. Residents have challenges due to a lack of essential utilities such as water, food, and electricity.

According to **Justin McBrien**, "beauty hunger" takes precedence over true hunger and related difficulties. According to **Annu Jalais**, portraying the Sundarbans as a natural, human-free environment, whether for wildlife preservation or global marketing, can lead to increased alienation between locals and wildlife. When the Sundarbans tiger reserve was established, the Indigenous population lost access to the entire territory. Policies aimed at protecting an animal species failed to consider the socio-economic and material impact on the region's people.

The poorest individuals bear the burden of this careless preservation programme. The implementation required physical displacement of the Sundarbans' inhabitants. An exclusive approach to conservation isolates humans from ecological, labelling the underprivileged as 'disposable beings' and excluding them from national development efforts. The residents of the region were forcibly evacuated and transported to detention camps in Madhya Pradesh.

According to **Rob Nixon**, these individuals were considered 'surplus people' and were forced to leave cities due to their lack of value to the labour market or national progress. People who had toiled as fishermen for generations were compelled to relocate to the arid Dandakaranya region. Kusum expresses concern that they are considered

'human trash' and must be appropriately disposed of. Nixon referred to them as "unimagined communities." They attempted to alter their life by returning to their 'tidecountry' and making uninhabited islands habitable. Morichjhapi was an island where 'nowhere people' attempted to start their lives from scratch. In a few of days, the state used violence to eradicate all human life.

According to **Ngugi Wa Thiongo**, "colonial mappings divide land into three categories: the border, the centre (metropole), and the outside" and, finally, "We either receive the privileges associated with the centre, or the genocidal policies and erasures associated with its periphery."

It explores colonial control over national narratives, including character introductions and control mechanisms. In a neocolonial context, these inhabitants' lifestyles were deemed uncivilised, undesirable, and irrational due to perceived failures to advance national interests. They so became 'uninhabitants', or people hidden from public gaze. They were evacuated not merely from the land, but also from public consciousness.

The militarised approach to land protection stems from colonial forestry practices that emphasised rescuing land from indigenous populations. People are isolated, malnourished, and face violence. Houses are torched, people drown, and boats are destroyed. Kusum expresses their displeasure and anguish: The worst thing wasn't being hungry or thirsty. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the police make announcements. We were told that our lives and existence were worthless. "This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for 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."

Despite our hunger, we would again hear these remarks. Who are these people who love animals so much that they are willing to slaughter humans for them? Do they understand what is being done in their names? Where do these individuals live? Do they have children? Do they have moms or fathers? As I reflected on these thoughts, I realised that the planet had become dominated by animals, and we, as humans, were only

attempting to survive on the earth's resources. It is not a criminal to fish, clear land, and plant soil, as this has always been done by humans.

"Spatial amnesia," as defined by Nixon, "communities are physically unsettled and imaginatively removed, evacuated from place and time and thus uncoupled from the idea of both a national future and a national memory." These people were turned to statistics and denied basic survival rights. The conservation policies may have had noble intentions, but their use of violence and dehumanisation suggests underlying aggressiveness. Conservation policies that ignore human communities' socio-economic realities can lead to "accumulation by dispossession," which involves suppressing rights, controlling natural resources, and rejecting indigenous knowledge and production.

The classification of a 'reserved forest' excludes human communities from the area. The state and a few tourism elites take control of resources, knowledge, and production from previous occupants. Prior to actual displacement, they lose access to limited natural resources. The scream of stubborn refugees, "Amra kara?" is applicable in this context. Bastuhara. Who are we? "We are the dispossessed." Nixon defines displacement as "the loss of territory and Loss of land and resources can leave populations trapped and vulnerable. characteristics that made it hospitable." Nilima's novel highlights how conservation policies fail to reflect the unique characteristics of tidal ecosystems.

The daily submersion of portions of the forest during high tide can confuse tigers' territorial instincts by washing away scent imprints. When tigers are confused, they become more aggressive, which can lead to clashes with humans and casualties. The conflict between humans and animals is exacerbated by the state's preference for tigers over disadvantaged human settlements. However, no action is taken to address the needs and growth of the local community. There is no official data on tiger-related human deaths over time. Tigers have access to pools of fresh water for drinking, but people struggle to get basic necessities including water, electricity, education, and medication.

The deprived community bears the cost of constructing a tiger reserve. The state creates an inadvertent negative image of tigers by prioritising their interests over human populations'.

Tigers are put higher in the hierarchy, while humans are disregarded. This strategy has proved destructive not only to people, but also to the animal species it aims to safeguard. According to Jalais, the state's investment in tourism and wildlife sanctuaries led to an unfair distribution of resources between islanders and wild animals. Tigers became 'tourist tigers' and were no longer protected by islanders, leading to attacks in communities.

4.7 LIVING SUSTAINABLY WITHIN A SPECIFIC GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The elite environmentalists' totalizing discourse undermines Indigenous populations' understanding and wisdom. The neocolonial mindset is seen in wilderness preservation programmes that dismiss native knowledge and ethical ideas as primitive. Northern environmentalists want to 'civilise' a territory by promoting sustainable life for generations. Guha is of the view that "many agricultural communities do have a sophisticated knowledge of the natural environment that may be equal (and sometimes surpass) codified 'scientific' knowledge".

The novel highlights Indigenous people's connection to environment through spirituality. The author emphasises the significance of the divinity 'Bon Bibi', who maintains harmony between humans and nature. Her tale is well ingrained in the Sundarbans and has a significant impact on people's daily lives. The region's residents strictly follow the moral values outlined in Bon Bibi's legend. They follow forest boundaries and avoid areas referred to as 'Dokhin Rai' or the land of the king of tigers, as per folklore. The locals are adamant about protecting the wilderness from human interference.

Even when collecting forest produce, they honour the deity and respect the forest's holiness. They do not harm the region with spit, body faeces, or other items. The concept that violating boundaries may result in the wrath of Bon Bibi, such as tiger attacks or storms, is more effective in limiting human avarice than institutionalised rules or

punishments.

This fable exemplifies how nonhuman nature pervades human life. Northerners view animals and nonhuman beings as 'objects of study' to be examined, despite their aesthetic value.

Blyth, a British scientist, "reduced" two Irrawaddy dolphins to "perfect skeletons" for research and classification. The tide-country people venerate these critters as Bon Bibi's messengers, despite their simple lifestyle. The narrative motivates the locals to "incorporate natural entities into their sense of moral community." This eco-system enables a sustainable living even in challenging circumstances.

According to **Jim Cheney**, 'mythic thinking' involves deliberately integrating one's own activities with those of others. The locals collect only enough forest products and fish to support themselves. Large firms' usage of nylon nettings to maximise earnings is criticised for harming eggs, small fish, and prawns. Sundarbans residents embody Indigenous wisdom via their daily routines. Ethical views shape individuals' lives and behaviours.

4.8 HUMAN-CENTERED ENVIRONMENTALISM:

The Hungry Tide raises social justice concerns against antihuman environmentalism, which typically seeks to impose green agendas driven by wealthy nations and western non-governmental organisations (NGOs). However, the portrayal of the conflict between anthropocentric and ecocentric concerns remains balanced. The article highlights the possibilities for symbiotic relationships between humans and animals, challenging the notion of human intelligence as superior. Piya marvels at the sight of dolphins assisting Fokir in catching fish.

"Did there exist any more remarkable instances of symbiosis between human beings and a population of wild animals?" Ghosh accurately portrays tidal ecology throughout the tale. The novel portrays nonhuman entities as having active agency, similar to human characters, rather than simply providing a backdrop for their actions. The narrative highlights the biological relevance of wetlands and mangroves, in addition

to their material value. These areas are home to diverse ecosystems. Their role in absorbing cyclones and tidal surges is significant. The focus on social justice does not overshadow the rich information regarding nonhuman beings, including their habitats, plants, and water bodies.

Ghosh outlines Piya's approach to environmentalism, which challenges the concept that nature should be conserved without human intervention. In her studies on Irrawaddy dolphins, she takes into account the local population's material and cultural interests, as well as their intimate knowledge of the ecosystem. Personally, I don't want to contribute to conservation efforts that disproportionately affect low-income individuals. If I were to take up a project here, I would seek sponsorship from the Badabon Trust to involve local fisherman.

Myths and legends have an important part in safeguarding the ecosystem. The Bon Bibi legend's moral imperatives provide more effective societal restrictions than institutionalised regulations. Fear of being eaten alive by a tiger is more effective than imposing fines. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing defines "community-based conservation" as an approach to environmental protection that involves the local population. The native populace is reinterpreted as culturally distinct and naturally wise.

4.9 PIYA'S JOURNEY IN THE SUNDERBANS: A TALE OF TRANSFORMATION

Ghosh's 2004 book, *The Hungry Tide*, delves into the 1979 Morichjhapi evictions, which he also mentions in "Folly in the Sundarbans." Ghosh's work explores a forgotten time of dispossession and grassroots resistance in the rural Sundarbans, unlike much contemporary Anglophone fiction that focuses on metropolitan settings. Ghosh's novel questions environmentalist politics by examining the state's role in Morichjhapi, rather than focusing on corporations like Sahara India Pariwar. The novel highlights the importance of acknowledging human histories in regions considered nature reserves. In *The Hungry Tide*, one of the protagonists, Kusum, is killed when the state forcibly

removes villagers for tiger protection. Kusum, a Dalit refugee from Bangladesh, chose to reside on the Indian side of the Sundarbans due to her deep connection to the region's nature and culture, known as the "tide country."

Her death while resisting eviction affects many characters, including her son Fokir, who becomes a fisherman with strong ties to the region; her Marxist friend Nirmal, who is a long-time resident of the Sundarbans by the time of the Morichjhapi evictions; and Nirmal's Delhi-based nephew Kanai, who comes to the islands in the early 2000s at the same time as Piya, an Indian-American cetologist and environmentalist. Kusum's story connects two generations of urban and rural individuals in the Sundarbans, creating a "network narrative." Ghosh's use of the network structure in contemporary globalisation narratives allows for shifting perspectives and connecting people across time and geography. The story of Nirmal, Kanai, and Piya intersects with the daily remaking of the islands by the tides, which serves as a metaphor for their altering internal states. Nirmal's encounters with Morichjhapi settlers, such as Kusum, shape his political consciousness. Kanai's uncle's account of Morichjhapi also has a similar impact.

Piya's collaboration with Fokir teaches her to incorporate social justice concerns into her biocentric environmentalism. Nirmal, Kanai, and Piya's transformations reflect Ghosh's concept of radical politics that demands a shift in perspective and collaboration across class and cultural boundaries. The novel's network structure suggests that human subjectivity is fluid and influenced by the environment. However, it also highlights a tension between fluidity and fixity, as well as processes of transformation and idealisation. The juxtaposition between the changing identities of the city characters and Fokir's unchanging subjectivity highlights this tension. Kusum's influence on Nirmal's consciousness leads to a transition in the following generation of metropolitan characters, Piya and Kanai. The plot's vitality is driven by the internal transformations of the metropolitans, while the rural characters facilitate these transformations while remaining relatively stable.

Fokir, in particular, serves as an anchor; his intimate knowledge of the islands' topography makes him appear virtually ageless, and his final death in a storm brings the story to a close. The fixity provided by his character in a text that not only thematizes

subjective connectivity and transformation but also reflects these traits in its network narrative alludes to some of *The Hungry Tide's* startling internal inconsistencies. What, then, are the implications of Ghosh's construction of this figure of fixity in a novel that imagines a more fluid relationship between environment and subjectivity for its metropolitan characters? In what follows, I consider the countervailing forces that shape the novel and reflect on the possibilities and constraints of its environmentally conscious critique of rural dispossession.

CHAPTER 5

THE HUNGRY TIDE

5.1 ENCOUNTERS IN THE ENIGMATIC SUNDARBANS: A JOURNEY BEGINS

The novel introduces us to Kanai, who encounters a foreign girl at a commuter station in Kolkata. He observes her unusual appearance and demeanor, deducing that she's likely not Indian by birth. Curious about her presence there, he overhears her struggling with the Bengali language while asking for directions to Canning, a station near the Sundarbans. Despite being immersed in his own plans, Kanai assists her in securing a better seat on the train, showcasing his persuasive abilities. The narrative then delves into the landscape and mythology of the Sundarbans, an archipelago of islands characterized by its intricate network of rivers, dense mangrove forests, and the ever-shifting boundary between land and water. The description emphasizes the harsh and unforgiving nature of the environment, where human survival is constantly threatened by wildlife and the relentless forces of nature. Despite its formidable reputation, the Sundarbans are paradoxically known as "the beautiful forest," a name that belies the dangers lurking within. Overall, the passage sets the stage for a journey into the mysterious and treacherous world of the Sundarbans, while also introducing the contrasting experiences of Kanai, a seasoned traveler, and the foreign girl, whose presence in this unfamiliar environment hints at a deeper narrative yet to unfold.

The novel revolves around Piya, an American cetologist traveling to Canning, a station near the Sundarbans, for a marine mammal survey. On the train, she spills tea on Kanai Dutt, a knowledgeable and somewhat haughty translator, leading to an awkward encounter. Despite initial tension, they engage in conversation, discovering shared connections to Kolkata. Kanai invites Piya to visit his aunt in Lusibari and provides directions. As the train arrives at Canning, they part ways, exchanging contact information with hopes of meeting again. The passage highlights cultural differences, linguistic misunderstandings, and the beginnings of a tentative friendship amidst the backdrop of their journey through the Bengal countryside. Nilima and Kanai Together, they had watched as Horen returned with his boat, a small, weather-beaten vessel with a single

outboard motor. Horen had expertly maneuvered the boat to the muddy embankment, where they had clambered aboard with Nilima's luggage. Once everyone was settled, Horen had revved up the motor, and they had set off down the river. As they traveled along the winding waterways of the Sundarbans, Nilima had pointed out various landmarks and told stories of her work with the Badabon Trust. Kanai had listened intently, fascinated by her tales of conservation efforts and community development projects in the region. Despite the challenges they faced, Nilima's passion for her work shone through, and Kanai couldn't help but admire her dedication.

Eventually, they had reached Lusibari, a small village nestled among the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. The village was a far cry from the bustling city life Kanai was accustomed to, but he found himself captivated by its natural beauty and the warmth of its inhabitants. As they disembarked from the boat, Nilima had introduced Kanai to the villagers, many of whom greeted him warmly and expressed their gratitude for the Trust's efforts in the area. Over the following days, Kanai had settled into life in Lusibari, immersing himself in the rhythms of village life and assisting Nilima with various projects. He had also had the opportunity to meet Kusum, the young girl whose story had intrigued him. Despite the hardships she had endured, Kusum had retained a quiet resilience, and Kanai had been struck by her determination to build a better future for herself. As he sat on the veranda of Nilima's house, watching the sun set over the mangroves, Kanai reflected on his time in Lusibari. Despite his initial reluctance to visit, he had found himself drawn to the simplicity and beauty of life in the Sundarbans. And though he knew he would eventually return to the hustle and bustle of city life, a part of him would always remain in Lusibari, among the whispering trees and the gentle lapping of the river.

Piya, a researcher, navigates bureaucratic hurdles to obtain permits for a survey in a forest area. She reluctantly agrees to hire a guide and a forest guard for the journey, feeling uneasy about their behavior. Meanwhile, Kanai revisits Lusibari, an island rich in history, and reflects on its significance, particularly the house built by Sir Daniel Hamilton, named after Lucy Hamilton, a woman whose ship capsized before reaching the island. Piya's story reveals her frustration with bureaucracy and her discomfort with the guide and guard accompanying her. Despite her misgivings, she proceeds with the journey,

realizing she has no other viable option. Kanai's narrative explores the historical background of Lusibari, shedding light on its namesake and the significance of Hamilton House. Overall, the text juxtaposes Piya's contemporary struggles with bureaucratic obstacles against Kanai's reflections on the island's historical legacy, offering insights into both present challenges and past significance.

In "The Fall," Piya, a researcher, is on a boat in a remote area, searching for dolphins in the rivers. After hours of unsuccessful surveillance, she spots a distant fishing boat. Despite Mej-da's reluctance, she insists on approaching it to show flashcards to the fisherman. However, as they draw closer, the fisherman and a child with him become alarmed and attempt to escape. Piya realizes that the guard on her boat is armed and realizes the gravity of the situation. The guard forces the fishing boat to stop, accusing the fisherman of poaching. Piya tries to intervene but is rebuffed by the guard. She eventually manages to communicate with the fisherman, who indicates that he has seen six Irrawaddy dolphins. As the guard abuses the fisherman and confiscates money from him and a child, Piya tries to help by throwing money, but ends up falling into the water.

The first narrative revolves around S'Daniel, a Scottish man who becomes immensely wealthy in India through hard work and business acumen. He purchases land in the tide country, an area prone to flooding and inhabited by dangerous animals, with the intention of creating a new society based on cooperation and equality. However, despite his efforts, the dream of creating a utopian society in the tide country remains unrealized. The second narrative follows Piya, a woman who finds herself disoriented and in danger after falling into silted water. She is rescued by a fisherman who takes her to Lusibari, a place she seems to be familiar with. Despite encountering obstacles and hostility from a forest guard, she manages to pay off the guard and his friend, ultimately achieving her goal of leaving the boat. Overall, the passage explores themes of ambition, idealism, and resilience in the face of adversity. While S'Daniel's dream of building a utopian society remains unfulfilled, Piya demonstrates determination and resourcefulness in navigating unfamiliar and potentially dangerous situations.

It comprises two intertwined narratives set in the tidal country of the Sundarbans. The first narrative focuses on Kanai's visit to the island of Lusibari, where he reunites with

Nilima, an old acquaintance, and learns about the disappearance of Moyna's husband, Fokir. Nilima also reveals that Fokir is the son of Kusum, Kanai's childhood friend, who was killed years ago. Kanai then discovers a sealed packet in his uncle Nirmal's study, containing a notebook with writings about Morichjhāpi, penned by Nirmal. The second narrative follows Piya, a researcher, who embarks on a journey in the Sundarbans to study a rare species of dolphins. After a mishap with a guard, Piya finds herself aboard a fishing boat with Fokir and his son Tutul. Despite initial mistrust, Piya forms a bond with them, and Fokir refuses payment for their services until they reach Lusibari. Overall, the passage introduces themes of memory, loss, and connection, as characters navigate the complexities of human relationships and the unpredictable environment of the Sundarbans.

It follows two intertwined narratives. The first focuses on Piya, an oceanographer, who finds herself on a small boat with Fokir, a local fisherman, navigating through the Sundarbans mangrove forest. Piya reflects on her surroundings, the makeshift boat, and the gestures of kindness from Fokir. As they travel, Piya uses her equipment to search for dolphins, reflecting on her passion for her work and the challenges she faces. The second narrative delves into the backstory of Nirmal and Nilima Bose, a couple who arrived in Lusibari in 1950 seeking refuge. Nirmal, an intellectual, and Nilima, from a privileged background, are initially shocked by the poverty and hardships faced by the people in the tide country. They become involved in social activism, particularly focusing on the plight of widows, eventually leading to the establishment of the Mohila Sangathan (Women's Union) and the Badabon Development Trust. Overall, the text juxtaposes Piya's present-day experiences with Fokir in the Sundarbans with the history of Nirmal and Nilima Bose's activism and social work in the same region, highlighting themes of resilience, social justice, and the complexities of life in the tide country.

It describes two separate scenes involving Piya and Fokir on a boat in the river, and Kanai's memories of his time in Lusibari, particularly his interactions with Kusum. In the first scene, Piya observes a cluster of fishing boats anchored in the river, reminiscent of villages she's seen on other rivers. However, Fokir steers their boat away from the cluster, indicating his desire to avoid interaction. They eventually anchor in a sheltered

creek, where Fokir demonstrates to Piya the boat's facilities, including a makeshift bathroom. Piya reflects on the unexpected amenities provided for her, including shampoo and a towel, and realizes their significance as gestures of hospitality from Fokir. In the second scene, Kanai recalls his time in Lusibari, where he lived in a bungalow with Nirmal and Nilima. He describes the primitive conditions of the bungalow, including the makeshift cot enclosed in mosquito netting and the hazards posed by wildlife. Kanai becomes intrigued by the meetings of the Women's Union held in the courtyard, where he first encounters Kusum. Despite their initial standoffishness, they eventually engage in conversation, during which Kusum playfully startles Kanai with a grasshopper. Overall, the passage highlights themes of hospitality, survival in challenging environments, and unexpected connections between individuals from different backgrounds.

5.2 CONNECTIONS IN THE SUNDARBANS: STORIES OF SURVIVAL

It describes various interactions and experiences of the protagonist, Piya, as she spends time with Fokir on a boat in the Sundarbans, a region of Bangladesh. Piya attempts to communicate with Fokir, learning the Bengali word for a checkered towel - "Gamchha" - and reflecting on her past experiences with the Bengali language and her troubled relationship with her parents. As Fokir prepares a meal of crabs and rice, Piya observes his cooking methods and declines to eat due to her past digestive issues and unfamiliarity with such food. She recalls memories of her mother cooking in their small apartment and the domestic smells that accompanied her childhood. Piya and Fokir settle in for the night on the boat, with Piya choosing to sleep at the bow despite Fokir's warnings about potential dangers from predators. They share a moment of communication through gestures and expressions, with Piya asking Fokir to sing, and he obliges with a song that surprises her with its melancholy tone.

The narrative then shifts to a separate storyline involving a girl named Kusum from the nearby island of Satjelia. Kusum's father died, and her mother was lured into trafficking by a man named Dilip Choudhury, prompting a relative named Horen Naskor to rescue Kusum and place her in the care of the Women's Union. Kusum becomes a mentor to Kanai, who learns about the story of Bon Bibi, a tale of twin siblings from Medina who travel to the Sundarbans to confront a demon king and establish order in the land. It

intertwines Piya's experiences with Fokir on the boat in the Sundarbans with the backstory of Kusum and the tale of Bon Bibi, highlighting themes of communication, survival, and the clash between human and natural worlds.

We encounter several interconnected storylines unfolding simultaneously.

1. Dhona and Dukhey: Dhona, a man seeking fortune in the jungle, reluctantly takes Dukhey, a young lad, on his expedition. Dhona makes a pact with the demon-king Dokkhin Rai to fulfill his desires in exchange for Dukhey's life. When Dhona betrays Dukhey, Bon Bibi, a benevolent figure, intervenes to save him from Dokkhin Rai's attack.

2. Kanai and Kusum: Kanai attends a rustic theater performance with Kusum, where they both become emotionally invested in the story of Bon Bibi and Dukhey. Later, Kanai accidentally touches Kusum in a moment of comfort, revealing underlying tension and emotions between them.

3. Kusum's Trauma: Kusum shares her traumatic experience of witnessing her father's fatal encounter with a tiger, calling upon Bon Bibi for help to no avail. Her grief and unresolved trauma affect her deeply, leading to emotional outbursts.4. ****Piya and Fokir****: Piya, a researcher, wakes up to find herself on a boat with Fokir, a local guide, and his son Tutul. They encounter dolphins in the fog, highlighting Fokir's deep knowledge of the river and its wildlife. Each storyline explores themes of human nature, morality, and the interplay between the spiritual and natural worlds. The passage blends elements of folklore, drama, and personal introspection to weave a rich tapestry of interconnected lives and experiences.

It follows Piya, a researcher studying Orcaella dolphins in the Sundarbans, as she observes their behavior and tries to make sense of their unusual patterns. Initially uncertain about the dolphins' identity, Piya eventually confirms they are Orcaella and begins to observe their behavior closely. She notes their tendency to congregate in a specific area during low tide, which goes against typical behavior for both coastal and river dolphins. Piya's observations lead her to speculate that the dolphins may have adapted their behavior to fit the tidal cycle of the Sundarbans, compressing annual migration patterns into daily movements. This hypothesis, if proven, could have significant

implications for conservation efforts. However, Piya also acknowledges the complexity of the dolphins' behavior and raises questions about the physiological mechanisms behind their adaptation to tidal rhythms. Additionally, it also delves into the backstory of Nirmal, a character whose journal Kanai discovers. Through Kanai's conversation with Nilima, Nirmal's wife, the reader learns about Nirmal's involvement with the Morichjhāpi settlement and his estrangement from Nilima during that time. The journal potentially holds clues to Nirmal's motivations and actions during this tumultuous period, adding depth to the narrative.

It revolves around Piya's realization of the vast scope of her research on Orcaella dolphins in the Sundarbans and Moyna's aspirations to become a nurse despite personal challenges. Piya contemplates the interdisciplinary nature of her work, the years of research ahead, and the unexpected opportunity that has come her way. Despite being unambitious initially, she finds herself deeply committed to the research, seeing it as the work of a lifetime. On the other hand, Moyna, a trainee nurse, faces personal struggles as she pursues her dream amidst marital discord and societal expectations. Despite her husband's resistance, Moyna is determined to pursue her education and career, inspired by the hospital's impact on her life. The passage highlights themes of ambition, perseverance, and the transformative power of education and opportunity.

It describes an encounter between Piya, a researcher studying dolphins, and Fokir, a fisherman, as they observe and interact with dolphins in a river. Piya observes dolphins displaying playful behaviors, and she tries to communicate with Fokir, eventually enlisting his help in mapping the riverbed. She learns about Fokir's unconventional fishing method using crabs and gains insights into the ecosystem's dynamics. Despite their communication barriers, they find a harmonious way to coexist and pursue their respective interests. Through their interaction, Piya reflects on the interconnectedness of humans and nature, particularly through the role of keystone species like crabs in shaping their destinies.

5.3 REFLECTIONS ON RETIREMENT AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS

1. Kanai's Reflections:

Kanai, returning to the Guest House, indulges in a simple Bengali meal prepared by Moyna. He reflects on his life, particularly his impending retirement as a headmaster after thirty years. Kanai admits to his wife Nilima that he has been lying about writing and reading, feeling regret and remorse as retirement approaches. He then recounts a journey to Calcutta and receiving invitations to visit schools on other islands, eventually accepting one to Kumirmari. Unable to make the journey due to missing ferry connections, he serendipitously encounters Horen Naskor, who agrees to take him to Kumirmari by boat. During the journey, Kanai reads excerpts from Bernier's *Travels to Horen*, sparking discussions and sharing of local knowledge.

2. Piya and Fokir's Exploration:

Piya, aboard Fokir's boat, conducts soundings to locate a tidal pool suitable for Orcaella, or river dolphins. They discover an abandoned village called Garjontola and proceed to explore further inland. Fokir guides Piya through the dense mangrove forest, eventually reaching a grassy clearing with a makeshift shrine. Fokir and his son Tutul perform a ritualistic ceremony at the shrine, incorporating elements reminiscent of Hindu and possibly Muslim practices, intriguing Piya. Thus, intertwines themes of reflection, exploration, and cultural encounter, as characters grapple with personal and environmental challenges while navigating the complexities of their surroundings.

The characters Piya, Fokir, Kanai, Moyna, and Horen as they navigate through various events and emotions. Piya and Fokir, accompanied by dolphins, observe their surroundings and share a moment of tranquility. Kanai and Moyna discuss the unsettling sound of a distant roar, hinting at the presence of danger, possibly a tiger. Meanwhile, Horen and the narrator seek shelter from a sudden storm, encountering Kusum and her son Fokir. Despite the storm and unexpected reunion, they engage in casual conversation, highlighting the complexities of human interaction. Overall, the passage

captures moments of serenity, tension, and reunion amidst the backdrop of natural elements and interpersonal dynamics.

The conversation between the narrator (referred to as Saar) and Kusum, a woman who recounts her journey to Morichjhāpi, a new settlement. Kusum narrates her story of leaving her hometown due to personal tragedies, finding refuge with a kind man named Rajen in Dhanbad, and eventually settling in Morichjhāpi with her son Fokir. The passage also explores Piya's observation of dolphins hunting fish in a river, drawing parallels with her previous experiences studying dolphins elsewhere. Later, after a stormy night, the narrator explores the newly settled Morichjhāpi and is struck by the organized and industrious nature of the community. He expresses a desire to be involved in their efforts and meets with the leader of one of the wards, witnessing firsthand the progress and organization of the settlement. It highlights themes of resilience, community, and the desire for a better life, as well as the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature, as seen in the dolphins' hunting behavior. It also underscores the transformative power of collective action and the hope for a brighter future in the face of adversity.

The organized and burgeoning settlement on Morichjhāpi, with approximately thirty thousand people already residing on the island. The settlers have divided the island into zones and allocated land to each family, demonstrating a shrewd understanding of their needs and resources. Additionally, they have reserved a quarter of the island for newcomers from surrounding areas, fostering community support and cooperation.

The narrator, impressed by the settlers' vision and determination, offers his assistance to mobilize public opinion and garner support for their cause. However, he faces skepticism from the settlement leader regarding his usefulness. Despite this, the narrator suggests teaching the children of the settlement about their environment and encourages them to dream. Meanwhile, Piya and Fokir continue their observations of the dolphins, but their expedition takes a dangerous turn when they encounter a crocodile. Fokir's quick thinking and bravery save them from harm, but they decide to return to Lusibari after the harrowing experience. Overall, the passage highlights the resilience and resourcefulness of the settlers on Morichjhāpi, as well as the challenges they face in

establishing and defending their community. It also underscores themes of cooperation, education, and the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature.

Piya embarks on a journey to Lusibari, accompanied by Fokir and Tutul in a rowboat. Along the way, they encounter dolphins and narrowly escape a crocodile attack, highlighting the dangers of navigating the Sundarbans. Upon reaching Lusibari, Fokir and Tutul abruptly leave Piya at the doorstep of a house, leaving her feeling abandoned and uncertain. However, she is welcomed by an elderly woman named Nilima, who recognizes her from her nephew Kanai's mention. Piya recounts her journey to Nilima and Kanai, expressing her gratitude to Fokir for saving her life and guiding her to the dolphins. Nilima offers Piya accommodation in an upstairs guest house, where Kanai shows her to a room and assures her of his company. Piya, feeling grateful for the hospitality, settles in for a much-needed rest.

It revolves around two distinct narratives intertwined with each other: Nirmal's recollection of a feast in Morichjhāpi and Piya's reflections after a harrowing experience on a boat. Nirmal, intrigued by an invitation to a feast in Morichjhāpi, is torn between his enthusiasm for the settlers' project and his wife Nilima's apprehensions about potential harm. Despite Nilima's concerns, Nirmal attends the feast, witnessing the settlers' impressive achievements and reflecting on his own life choices and regrets. Meanwhile, Piya, recovering from a terrifying encounter with a crocodile, contemplates the recent events and her surroundings. She engages in conversation with Kanai, learning about Fokir's wife, Moyna, and the challenges she faces in pursuit of education and a better life for her family. As Kanai and Piya share dinner, Kanai provides insights into Lusibari's history and his own background, revealing himself as a translator and businessman based in New Delhi. Overall, the passage explores themes of ambition, resilience, and the complexity of human relationships against the backdrop of Morichjhāpi and Lusibari's lush, yet perilous, environments.

5.4 THE TIDE COUNTRY: LANGUAGE, CULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT

The provided passage depicts a conversation between Piya, Kanai, and Fokir, shedding light on various aspects of their lives and the environment they inhabit.

1. Language and Business: Kanai discusses his thriving translation business in New Delhi, highlighting the demand for language services in a city bustling with conferences, media activities, and multinational corporations. He shares his proficiency in multiple languages and his transition from literary aspirations to commercial success.
2. Cultural Exchange and Scholarships: Kanai's proficiency in French and Arabic, acquired through scholarships and opportunities, reflects the cultural exchange facilitated by educational initiatives. His experience underscores the value of language skills in navigating diverse professional landscapes.
3. Personal Reflections: Piya reflects on her father's memories of India and contrasts them with Kanai's cosmopolitan lifestyle. She observes the transformation of India into a dynamic hub of commerce and cultural exchange, symbolized by Kanai's success and diverse social interactions.
4. Environmental and Historical Narratives: Kanai shares stories with Fokir about the embankment ("bādh") and historical storms that shaped their island's landscape. Through these narratives, he illustrates the fragility of their environment and the inevitability of natural disasters, echoing broader themes of resilience and adaptation.
5. Social Dynamics and Interactions: Piya observes Fokir's discomfort in the presence of Kanai and Moyna, noting his withdrawn demeanor and contrasting it with his previous heroic actions. The scene highlights tensions between different social strata and the complexity of interpersonal relationships in the tide country. Overall, the passage intertwines themes of language, culture, environment, and social dynamics, offering insights into the characters' lives and the broader context of their interactions.

It describes a conversation between Piya, Kanai, Moyna, and Fokir regarding Piya's plans to conduct research on dolphins in the Garjontola pool. Piya expresses her gratitude to Moyna and offers a gift for Fokir's assistance. However, there is tension as Piya insists on giving the money directly to Fokir, while Moyna expects it to be given to her. Despite Fokir's initial reluctance to engage, Piya communicates her research plans through Kanai and offers Fokir a substantial payment for his assistance. Fokir agrees to help and arranges for a boat, despite the lack of motorboats in the area. Meanwhile, in

another storyline, Nirmal and Nilima argue about whether the Trust should get involved in providing medical aid to settlers in Morichjhāpi. Nilima refuses, citing political risks, while Nirmal questions her priorities. The passage ends with Nirmal reflecting on his own writing ambitions and the environmental changes in the tide country.

It follows two separate conversations between Piya, Kanai, and other characters, touching on themes of cultural differences, personal histories, and the natural world. In the first conversation, Piya and Kanai discuss Fokir's background and Piya's own experiences growing up without a mother. Kanai expresses admiration for Moyna, Fokir's wife, and her resilience in difficult circumstances. The conversation highlights the contrast between Kanai's admiration for Moyna and his lack of sympathy for Fokir. In the second conversation, Horen invites Kanai to join him, Kusum, and Fokir on a trip to Garjontola Island for a Bon Bibi puja. Despite Kanai's initial reluctance due to his past aversion to religious matters, he decides to go on the trip. The journey to Garjontola offers Kanai new insights into the significance of religious beliefs and the rapid transformations of the tide country's landscape. Overall, the passage explores themes of identity, resilience, and the interconnectedness of human life with the natural world, as seen through the interactions between the characters and their surroundings.

5.5 PREPARATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS: JOURNEY INTO THE SUNDARBANS

It revolves around Kanai's interaction with Horen, the owner of the boat Megha, and his aunt, Nilima, concerning his upcoming journey with Piya into the Sundarbans. Kanai and Piya hire Horen's boat, Megha, to track dolphins, with Fokir accompanying them. Horen, an acquaintance of Kanai's, reminisces about their past connection. Kanai introduces Piya to Horen, and they negotiate the terms for renting the boat. Later, Kanai informs Nilima about his trip, and she expresses concern about the dangers of the Sundarbans, particularly tiger attacks. Nilima shares the history of tiger attacks and the various unsuccessful attempts to mitigate them. She warns Kanai about the risks, emphasizing the unpredictability and ferocity of the tigers, even in the water. Despite Nilima's warnings, Kanai remains determined to go, though he hides his true motivation,

which Nilima suspects involves Piya. Overall, the passage highlights the preparations for the journey, the dangers of the Sundarbans, and Nilima's concern for Kanai's safety, contrasting his enthusiasm with her apprehension.

It revolves around a series of interactions between Piya, a researcher, and Nilima, a woman living in the Sundarbans, a region in India. Piya, lacking proficiency in Bengali, shares her upbringing, revealing that her father prioritized English to assimilate into American culture. Nilima reflects on her own experiences, particularly the longing for communication when a child was briefly in their home. She mentions Kanai, her nephew, who is described as driven and self-centered, cautioning Piya about his behavior towards women. The passage ends with Nilima advising Piya to be careful in the forest, hinting at potential dangers beyond just animals. Thus, highlights themes of communication, cultural identity, familial relationships, and the complexities of human behavior.

It recounts the narrator's experience during a tumultuous time in Morichjhāpi, where the government imposes a siege on the island under the Forest Preservation Act and Section 144, preventing movement and assembly of settlers. Rumors of police violence and deprivation spread, leading to concern for the settlers' welfare. Despite efforts to intercede, the situation worsens, with reports of starvation and disease. Eventually, legal action forces the siege to be lifted, but the aftermath reveals the toll on the settlers, particularly Kusum, who sacrificed her health for her son Fokir. The passage highlights the settlers' struggle for survival amidst government oppression and their resilience in the face of adversity.

Kanai and Piya prepare to leave Lusibari, a village where they have been staying. As they load their belongings onto a cycle-van, they are drawn to a crowd gathered at the embankment where Fokir, a local fisherman, and others are engaged in a dramatic struggle to catch a stingray. After the catch, a playful interaction between Fokir's son Tutul and his mother Moyna takes a tense turn when Moyna reprimands Fokir for not taking Tutul to school as promised. This incident leaves Kanai feeling uneasy under Fokir's scrutinizing gaze. As they depart on the Megha, a boat, Piya focuses on her research of marine life while Kanai observes her with admiration and curiosity. Despite interruptions caused by Fokir spotting a Gangetic dolphin and a crocodile, Kanai expresses skepticism

about Piya's compatibility with Fokir due to their differing backgrounds and lifestyles. However, Piya remains dedicated to her work, showing intense focus and determination, which evokes Kanai's memories of his own past intellectual pursuits and desires for understanding different realities through language. Overall, the passage highlights the contrasts between Piya's scientific approach and Fokir's traditional way of life, as well as Kanai's internal reflection on the nature of desire and the pursuit of knowledge.

Kanai discovers his uncle Nirmal's notebook and reads about Nirmal's involvement with Morichjhāpi, an island occupied by refugees from Bangladesh. Nirmal, despite his declining health, is deeply committed to helping the settlers and is determined to stay despite impending danger. Kanai learns from the notebook that Nirmal, along with Horen, attempts to rescue Kusum and Fokir, relatives of Horen, from the island before an anticipated attack. However, their efforts are in vain as the assault on Morichjhāpi by outsiders results in devastation, with many settlers killed or forcibly removed. The fate of Kusum, Fokir, and Nirmal remains uncertain. Kanai confronts Horen, seeking answers about his uncle's motivations and involvement in Morichjhāpi, but Horen evades the question, leaving Kanai with lingering uncertainty and unanswered questions about Nirmal's actions.

Kanai discusses his uncle Nirmal's notebook with Piya, revealing insights into Nirmal's character and his views on the world. Kanai describes Nirmal as a man deeply influenced by poetry and literature, particularly by the works of Rainer Maria Rilke. Despite being initially perceived as a radical due to his involvement with settlers in Morichjhāpi, Nirmal's motivations were more complex, driven by a desire for transformation and interconnectedness rather than purely political ideology. Kanai recounts one of Nirmal's stories about the town of Canning, named after Lord Canning, a viceroy of British India.

The story revolves around the construction of a new port on the banks of the Matla River, despite warnings from a shipping inspector named Henry Piddington about the region's vulnerability to cyclones. Piddington's warnings were ignored, and as predicted, the town of Canning was devastated by a cyclone in 1867, leading to its abandonment and becoming, in Nirmal's poetic interpretation, "a Sunday post office" - a metaphor for a

futile and abandoned endeavor. Overall, the passage highlights Nirmal's complex worldview, his appreciation for literature and poetry, and his belief in the interconnectedness of all things, as reflected in his interpretation of historical events through the lens of Rilke's philosophy.

Kanai, Piya, and others aboard the Megha, a boat anchored offshore, are awakened by commotion in a nearby village in the dead of night. They venture ashore with a local man named Horen to investigate, discovering that a tiger has attacked a livestock pen and is trapped inside. The villagers, fearing for their safety and seeking revenge for previous attacks, are mercilessly attacking the trapped tiger with sharpened bamboo poles. Piya, horrified by the scene, implores Kanai to intervene, but he hesitates, recognizing the danger of confronting the enraged mob. Despite his pleas, Piya rushes into the crowd to stop the violence, only to be restrained by Fokir, another local aboard the boat. As the situation escalates and the tiger is set on fire by the villagers, Piya is forcibly led away, distraught by the brutality she witnessed. Fokir, attempting to console her, suggests that the tiger's presence in the village signifies its desire for death, a notion that Piya rejects in her anguish. The passage highlights themes of human-animal conflict, mob mentality, and the moral complexities of confronting violence.

5.6 REFLECTIONS ON HUMAN COMPLICITY AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Piya reflects on the traumatic events she witnessed in the village the previous night, where a tiger was brutally killed by enraged villagers. She grapples with the horror of the situation, struggling to reconcile it with the everyday reality for locals like Fokir and Horen. Kanai engages her in a philosophical discussion about human complicity in the suffering of both animals and marginalized human populations. Piya defends her commitment to wildlife conservation, emphasizing the importance of preserving species in their natural habitats. Despite their differences, Kanai acknowledges Piya's bravery in pursuing her work, though she modestly brushes off the compliment. The passage explores themes of moral responsibility, the complexities of conservation efforts, and the personal sacrifices involved in advocating for wildlife protection.

As the Megha sailed through the Sundarbans, Piya stood at the bow, her eyes fixed on the water ahead. The sight of Garjontola in the distance filled her with anticipation, knowing that the dolphins would soon grace them with their presence. She signaled to Horen to drop anchor, a precaution for the safety of the dolphins as much as for their own. Kanai joined her at the bow, intrigued by her excitement. "Would you like to get a closer look at the dolphins?" Piya asked Kanai, her voice alive with anticipation. "Absolutely," Kanai replied, eager to witness the creatures Piya had dedicated herself to studying.

Together, they made their way to Fokir's boat, the anticipation palpable in the air. As Fokir rowed them towards the pool where the dolphins congregated, Piya felt a rush of joy seeing the familiar cow-and-calf pair she had encountered before. The connection she felt with these creatures was undeniable, as if they recognized her as much as she recognized them. However, Kanai's reaction was different. Puzzled, he observed the dolphins with a furrowed brow, unable to see beyond their surface behavior. Piya tried to convey the depth of her connection to these animals, but Kanai's expectations had been shaped by images from films and aquariums.

Their conversation shifted to Piya's journey into studying Orcaella dolphins, recounting her encounter with a stranded dolphin named Mr. Sloane in Cambodia. Piya's determination to save Mr. Sloane and her subsequent involvement in studying Orcaella dolphins reflected her passion and dedication to marine conservation. Later, as they sailed back towards the Megha, Piya and Kanai found themselves reflecting on personal experiences. Piya shared the story of her past romantic relationship with Rath, a government official she had met in Kratie, Cambodia. Despite initial promise, their relationship had ended abruptly, leaving Piya with unanswered questions and unresolved feelings. As the sun dipped below the horizon and the landscape transformed with the changing tides, Piya and Kanai sat in companionable silence, contemplating the mysteries of the natural world and the complexities of human relationships. It captures the essence of exploration, discovery, and the intertwining of personal and professional journeys in the vast and enigmatic Sundarbans.

Piya arrives at Kratie expecting to reunite with Rath, only to discover that he has married someone else and moved away. Feeling rejected and humiliated by the town's gossip, she relocates to Stung Treng. Back in the States, she realizes that her experience is not uncommon among female field biologists, who share similar stories of romantic disappointment and isolation. Piya resigns herself to a life of solitude until Kanai, her companion on the boat, suggests otherwise. Kanai recognizes Piya's resilience and offers her companionship, challenging her belief that she must always be alone. Overall, the passage delves into Piya's experiences of heartbreak, betrayal, and the challenges of being a female scientist in remote locations. It also highlights Kanai's newfound appreciation for Piya's strength and resilience, as well as his offer of companionship and support.

Kanai and Piya are on a boat with Fokir, observing dolphins. Piya asks Kanai to assist in spotting dolphins due to the changing tides. While on the boat, Fokir and Kanai engage in conversation, with Fokir sharing his mother's beliefs about fear and spirituality. Fokir points out marks on the shore, indicating recent tiger activity, but Kanai remains skeptical. Fokir insists they investigate further, and Kanai reluctantly agrees. As they approach the shore, Fokir's behavior becomes increasingly unsettling, and Kanai becomes apprehensive. When Fokir suggests venturing into the mangroves, Kanai refuses and insists on returning to the boat. As they argue, Kanai suddenly falls into the mud, and Fokir's demeanor changes, becoming more menacing. Fokir advances toward Kanai with a dá (a type of knife), and Kanai, feeling threatened, demands to return to the boat.

It depicts Kanai's experience of being stranded on an island after a confrontation with Fokir, who leaves him behind. Kanai's emotions and past experiences flood his mind as he grapples with anger, fear, and a sense of isolation. He reflects on the complexities of human relationships and confronts his own mortality when faced with the possibility of a tiger attack. Eventually, he is rescued and returns to the boat, where he decides to leave the expedition and return home to New Delhi. Kanai expresses a desire for Piya to join him in the future, but she gently declines, leaving their relationship uncertain. The passage also explores themes of identity, connection, and the power of nature. It follows

Piya and Fokir as they embark on a journey by boat through dense fog to observe dolphins.

Kanai, a fellow passenger on a larger vessel named Megha, prepares a present for Piya before they part ways. As Piya and Fokir navigate the waterways, they encounter unexpected challenges, including a lack of dolphin sightings and the onset of a storm. Meanwhile, aboard the Megha, Horen, the boat's captain, navigates through busy waterways and learns of an approaching storm, prompting him to return to Garjontola to wait for Piya and Fokir. Despite initial doubts, Kanai persuades Horen to search for Piya and Fokir's boat before the storm arrives. The passage sets the stage for the unfolding events and highlights the interconnectedness of the characters' journeys amidst the backdrop of the natural elements and the riverine landscape.

Piya and Fokir encounter a distressing sight while searching for dolphins in the river. They come across the carcass of a young Irrawaddy dolphin, likely killed by a motorboat's propeller. Piya collects samples for research, and they push the carcass back into the river. Fokir indicates that such incidents are not uncommon in the area. Meanwhile, aboard the Megha, Kanai learns from Horen about the imminent threat of a cyclone, prompting them to search for Piya and Fokir. Horen recounts his harrowing experience surviving a previous cyclone, underscoring the danger they face. As they return to Garjontola without finding Piya and Fokir, the sense of unease grows, and the sunset casts a solemn light on their uncertain situation. Piya and Fokir find themselves anchored for the night at a place called Gerafitola, unable to return to their boat by nightfall.

As they sit together, Fokir shows Piya a lunar rainbow, a phenomenon she's never seen before. They share a moment of intense connection, but Piya feels a sense of melancholy afterward, sensing a shift in their relationship. Later, Piya reads a letter from Kanai, which tells the story of Dukhey's redemption, a tale from the epic of the tide country. The story revolves around Dhona's betrayal of Dukhey to the demon Dokkhin Rai, and the intervention of Bon Bibi, the forest's protectress, who saves Dukhey from being devoured by Dokkhin Rai in his tiger form. The story resonates with Piya, deepening her understanding of Fokir and the cultural context in which they find themselves. As Piya

finishes reading, Fokir begins to sing, and Piya feels a profound connection to both Fokir and Kanai, recognizing the complexity of her emotions. It explores themes of connection, identity, and the power of storytelling to bridge cultural divides.

5.7 STRANDED IN THE STORM: PERILOUS JOURNEYS IN THE HUNGRY TIDE

As the storm intensified, Piya and Fokir battled against fierce winds and towering waves while attempting to return to Garjontola. Despite their efforts, the boat faced severe challenges, with waves breaking over the bow and causing damage to the vessel. Piya struggled to secure her equipment and belongings amidst the chaos. Eventually, the boat lost crucial parts of its structure, including the hood and Piya's backpack containing valuable equipment and data. In the midst of their struggle, they realized the Megha was nowhere in sight, leaving them alone in the storm's fury. Meanwhile, Kanai and Horen navigated the Megha through the tumultuous waters, with Kanai eventually deciding to disembark at Lusibari to be with Mashima. With Horen's guidance, Kanai braved the strong winds and waded through the water towards the embankment. However, a sudden gust of wind knocked him off balance, causing him to lose grip of the gangplank and fall into the water. Despite his efforts to retrieve it, Nirmal's notebook, a precious possession, was lost in the current.

It describes a harrowing experience during a powerful storm and tidal wave on Garjontola island. Piya and Fokir find themselves caught in the midst of the chaos, seeking shelter in the trees as the wind and water rage around them. Fokir ingeniously uses a sari to tie them to a sturdy tree trunk, saving them from being swept away by the flood. Meanwhile, Kanai, seeking refuge for his aunt Nilima, faces the storm's fury as he tries to secure her belongings and bring her to safety in the Guest House. Amidst the chaos, Kanai reveals to Nilima that he had lost Nirmal's notebook, which contained valuable insights into Morichjhāpi, but assures her that it survived and was eventually found.

Nilima expresses frustration that Nirmal, her late husband, had grand ambitions beyond what she could manage. She highlights their efforts in Lusibari and the

importance of Nirmal's contributions, particularly in building a cyclone shelter. Kanai vows to reconstruct Nirmal's notebook and considers Nilima's perspective on the value of practical efforts versus grand visions. Piya and Fokir endure a violent cyclone while taking refuge in a tree during their journey. They witness a tiger seeking shelter as well, and Piya realizes the depth of their connection as they weather the storm together. Piya survives the storm but tragically learns that Fokir did not. She returns to Lusibari with his body, and the community mourns his loss. Piya supports Moyna, Fokir's wife, through the grieving process, and Tutul, Fokir and Moyna's son, It depicts themes of resilience, human connection, and the impact of natural disasters on communities and individuals.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The project attempts to illuminate the novel of Amitav Ghosh, titled *The Hungry Tide* from an eco-critical perspective. The fundamental premise of the study is to look into the depiction of nature through the interactions of human with their habitat. Ecocriticism covers a wide range of theories and areas of interest, particularly the relationship between literature and the environment. The project attempts to examination language used by Ghosh to illustrate nature, as ecocriticism investigates the terms by which one relates to nature and it a portrayal as one of the central characters in the work.

Ecocriticism is a branch of literary studies that attempts to analyse the interconnection between literature and nature by looking into the representation and treatment of environment by examining the depiction of environment in relation to the plot and how the characters interact with their habitat and most importantly how the environment impacts the character and their life depicted in the story. Degradation of the environment is one of the most important issues the world faces today. Ecocriticism continues to grow as a discipline is the growing global environment crisis and the threat it poses to the beings on this planet. Ecocriticism aims to show how the authors and their works can play a crucial role in influencing the readers to build a mindset that help them view nature as more than just a source to be exploited.

In respect to Sundarbans as an ecological area, the novel underlines the intimacy between man and environment. In his fictional works, Amitav Ghosh, one of the few Indian authors who wrote in English during the postcolonial era, builds the image of nature by weaving together tales, experience, myth, and history. Through this work, Ghosh strives to the development of environmental justice toward all living things. The assumption underlying the term “Environmental Justice” is that every person has the right to benefit from a high degree of environmental protection, regardless of their race, colour, nation or origin.

Environmental justice communities are commonly identified as those where residents are predominantly minorities or of low income. The residents are excluded from the environmental policy setting or decision-making process and are subjected to a disproportionate impact from one or more environmental hazards. Huggan and Helen in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* point out that both postcolonial and environmentalist critics, who are aware of the challenges involved in putting the livelihoods of local (subaltern) people at risk, have drawn attention to such conflicts of interest.

The issue frequently appears intractable, with humans or the additional human environment demanding attention. Understanding how people behave and respond in relation to environment and ecological issues is one of key objectives of the study of ecocriticism. Due to the rising social emphasis on environmental degradation and the advancement of technology, this critique has attracted a lot of attention recently. Ecocriticism facilitates understanding the complexities of relationship between man and nature as presented in literature.

This relationship varies from one species to another and brings out the specific characteristics of nature and human being. Ecocriticism developed prominence among both common people and academics as environmental challenges swiftly occupied the global spotlight. In the book *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, Cheryll Glotfelty contrasts ecocriticism with various literary ideas. She elucidates that literary theory explores the connections between authors, writings, and "the world," which is typically referred to as society or the social sphere.

Literature does not float around the physical world in some kind of aesthetic ether, but rather, it participates in an incredibly intricate global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact. Ecocriticism broadens the concept of "the world" to include the entire eco system. In his writing, Amitav Ghosh has brought out the beauty of the 'tide country' and has discussed the life of people in Sundarbans and the interaction of characters with their environmental surroundings. He details the vicinity and presents the relationship between the protagonist and nature in the novel *The Hungry Tide* with precision.

Ghosh highlights the absolute dependency of people on nature despite the challenges it offers. It is interesting to note that same natural space offers both the warmth of a home and dangers to its inhabitants. India is a nation known for its feature of diversity which is also found in its ecosystem. The country has a diverse range of flora and fauna, which is reflected in writers' works. The ecocritical reading of the book tries to study how the close, intimate relationship between nature and society has been textualized by the writers. The conservation of endangered animals like dolphins and tigers, as well as human habitation in the Sundarbans forest, were the key issues discussed in the novel.

The *Hungry Tide* illustrates the symbiotic interdependence that must be upheld between humans and non-humans. He projects the way one life depends on the life of the other. The novel *The Hungry Tide* revolves around the main characters who are caught up in the tides death trap and which represents the mutual relationship between man and nature. The novel discusses themes related to ecological issues knitted along with adventure, love, identity and history. The novel has given more importance to the crimes done against the environment as well as against the humans in the name of conservation and brilliantly documents how the ecological balance is disturbed through intervention of each other to their place.

Ecocriticism elucidates relationship between human and non-human nature, privileging literary inscriptions. It is a response to the need for the humanistic understanding of one relationship with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction. The book narrates the story of one of the most dynamic ecological systems of the world. It transports readers to the Sundarbans and the numerous islands that have been discovered and lost in a short span of time. It is about the struggles that the settlers faced while trying to provide their life purpose despite all the obstacles posed by the environment. We see nature in all of its splendour and harshness. Ghosh shows us the brutality of nature and the vulnerability of those who are at its mercy. The combination of social and political reality with concern for the environment has made this Indian English Literature a landmark of nature writing.

The Hungry Tide is a novel which foregrounds language and textuality, and its relationship to lived experience. The Sundarbans Islands in the Bay of Bengal serve as the setting for this story, which focuses on the hardship of displaced people, refugees from neighbouring Bangladesh, and a forgotten tribe struggling to live in a remote, little island. The Hungry Tide is a visionary book with remarkable insight, grace, and humanity. Human life is inconceivable without the existence of nature. It is not just the artistic and aesthetic aspect of life which breathes the abundance of the beautiful earth. As the title of this project suggests this is an attempt of the reading of Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide which is set in the world's largest mangrove ecosystem the Sundarbans, which comprises both water and earth and the intersection of landscape, water, human beings and their culture. The land is always being reshaped and anything permanent is being uprooted by the hungry tide, which comes in twice daily. Ghosh has made tremendous research work and has presented the evolutionary system of creation in a unique way. His attention has been focused on the area's animistic creation and the ecological equilibrium it maintains.

He imparts so much information about gigantic dolphin, and about flora and fauna of the 'tide country'. Additionally, he demonstrates how the Sundarbans are more than just a site where river and the sea meet. It is an astonishing intersection of several civilizations, which would seem inconceivable in any other location. The Hungry Tide examines the complicated coexistence of man and the natural world in the ecosystem of the archipelago, as well as the resettlement of refugees in the Morichjhapi and Sundarbans forest reserves. The continual conflict between people and the environment in the Sundarbans, West Bengal's "Tide Country", India, and Bangladesh is the main subject of this book.

The world's abundant nature is kind to people. It not only nurtures man but also serves as his teacher, mentor, and guardian. It offers several perspectives on the forested island and ecology of the Sunderbans, illustrating the continuous changes it goes through as a result of daily tidal flows that temporarily bury parts of the island and introduce seawater. Ghosh's sense of place might be his greatest literary strength. When we are removed from his works in memory, we recall visions of a landscape, a city, or a

settlement on the edge of a desert. The region is believed to derive its name from the sundari tree, that occupies most space in Sundarbans. In his book *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh makes his general natural and environmental approach to his vision quite evident.

As a distinctive approach to the practice literary criticism, ecocriticism emphasizes literary representations of nature and is perceptive of the interdependencies that root the author, character, or work in the natural system. This method sees the individual as a component of the ecosystem and shifts the crucial attention away from social ties and toward natural ones. It places a high priority on the "literary sense of place," which is an essential statement of one's connection to or estrangement from a particular natural context rather than a setting.

Ghosh portrays nature in more precise and lucid ways, bringing to light the idea that the world is alive and that people must abandon the thinking of themselves as separate from nature. The study suggests that rather than destroying nature's inherent wisdom and perfection, humanity should begin to understand how it functions and strive to integrate into a harmonious whole. A paradigm change is required to go from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric set of values. It becomes clear from the analysis that Ghosh's writings support and seek a potential remedy for the ecological catastrophe. As a further remedy to the ongoing ecological problem, he suggests fostering a deep ecological vision, a social ecological vision, the eradication of ecocide, and widespread awareness of environmental justice issues.

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