



Ecology and the Subaltern: A Critical Reading of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

The study explores how *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh attempts to rebuild the ecological and subaltern dialectic in postcolonial India. It will examine the statement of Ghosh regarding the massacre of Morichjap and the displacement of refugees and deteriorating ecosystem of Sundarbans as a reconstructing element of environmental justice with the help of an interpretative qualitative framework through the prism of subaltern theory (Spivak, Gramsci) and postcolonial ecocriticism (Nixon, Chakrabarty). The study concludes that the novel shifts the ecological debate into an ethical struggle script that places the oppressed groups in the conservationist agenda in the limelight of narration. The reading of *The Hungry Tide* as ecological fiction and subaltern testimony allows the study to enter into the current discussions in fields of environmental humanities and South Asian literary studies by predicting the inseparability of the ecological, the power, and voice in the context of postcolonial narratives.

Key Words: Existential Crisis, Ecocriticism, Narrativization, Marginalization, Postcolonial, Sub-continent Subaltern.

“It was said that the operation claimed the lives of at least several hundred men, women, and children, whose corpses were then disposed of in the river. Despite the fact their Marichjhapi file included newspaper clippings, petitions, and a list of the names and ages of 236 men, women, and children killed through police at Marichjhapi prior to the massacre— including some who drowned after police sank their boats—the central government's Scheduled Castes and Tribes Commission, which had been aware of the massacre, maintained in its most recent annual report that there were indeed no atrocities committed in opposition to Untouchables in West Bengal.”

-Ross Mallick

Introduction

Journalist and writer Amitav Ghosh is an activist within Indian English literature. He has written extensively upon a number of topics, including nuclear testing, relocation, religious fanaticism, terrorism, and several Third World postcolonial tragedies. He raises the voices of the underprivileged as a researcher, and his writings are heavily centered on subaltern concerns. *The Hungry Tide* is Amitav Ghosh's sixth novel and is full of the subaltern experience of the surroundings. He goes one step further in this book by exposing the history of violence etched on the Sundarbans and giving voice to the experiences of the subaltern. The book, which is set in the tiny, destitute, and remote settlements of the Sundarbans, addresses modern concerns including the existential dilemma of man, alienation, refugee difficulties, and marginalization issues. The proposed article is an attempt to reveal and analyse the problems of rootless and unsettled, the problems of subalterns in Sundarban.

One of the most significant modern authors working in English is without any doubt Amitav Ghosh, and an inventory of Indian English writers would be lacking without his name. Amitav is renowned for his non-fiction, essays, and novels. He has also worked as a journalist. His follow-up book, 'The Shadow Lines', gained immense popularity, and 'The Calcutta Chromosome', 'In an Antique Land', 'The Glass Palace', 'The Hungry Tide', 'Sea of Poppies', 'River of Smoke', and 'The Flood of Fire' are the best sellers.

Like his other works, Amitav Ghosh's sixth English-language book, *The Hungry Tide*, showcases his knowledge of colonial history and his skills as an anthropologist. Amitav Ghosh's reputation in the literary world is really unmatched. Readers like his distinctive approach of combining captivating stories with a dash of pedagogy, and his passion for people and history is clear in all of his works. The action in Ghosh's books usually occurs over extended periods of time because the presence of the past is one of his recurrent themes. Another such book that recounts several lives and their distinct tales is *The Hungry Tide*. The majority of the episodes in *The Hungry Tide* revolve on the issue of immigration in addition the treatment of subalterns, as well as their bittersweet encounters.

The term "subaltern," corresponding to "of inferior rank," was used by Antonio Gramsci to describe the social groups that are subject to the political hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes include peasants, workers, and others who are not part of the "hegemonic" power structure. Although the history of the ruling class is manifested in the state, background refers to the history of states and dominating groups. According to post-colonial philosophy, those who belong to the lowest social classes and the fringe of society are known as subalterns; a subaltern is someone whose social status denies them personal agency. The term has been adapted for post-colonial studies as a result of the work of the Subaltern Studies team of historians, which aimed to further a systematic investigation of Subaltern themes in South Asian Studies. Whatever how it shows itself in terms of class, caste, age, sexual orientation, or position, it refers to a general feature of subordination within South Asian culture in Subaltern Studies. The idea of the subaltern became contentious in post-colonial theory when Gayathripivak criticized the assumptions of the Subaltern Studies organization in their article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She asserts that the group needs to pose this question. She begins by criticizing the Gramscian claim for the autonomy of the subaltern group, arguing that it cannot be saved from its essentialist assumption by Guha's qualifier, which acknowledges the subaltern's multiplicity, heterogeneity, and overlapping character. The subaltern, sometimes known as the people, is a group that is distinguished from the elite by their differences.

The individuals who were kept silent by the colonial nations that made up the subalterns are known as subalterns. By taking political action in opposition to the dominant development rhetoric, they are able to get their voices heard and establish their own unique modernization and development models. Therefore, do subaltern social categories develop the use and application of indigenous understanding to create new spaces of opposition and prospective, non-imperialist futures by establishing social, political, and cultural organizations that challenge and dismantle the Western imperialist powers' exclusive claims to power?

1. Literature Review

Research in critical scholarship about *The Hungry Tide* has been dominated by the environmental themes and narrative structure, as well as concerns about postcolonialism. John C. Hawley and Tabish Khair, among other scholars, note how Ghosh manages to blend the

historical and fictional narratives of the world, foreshadowing the viewpoints of the marginalized in the world. The novel has been studied by the postcolonial critics with the concepts of displacement, migration, and memory, as well as the Morichjhapi incident. Much of the current criticism, however, is inclined to take the issues of environmentalism and subalternity as parallel issues, as opposed to thoroughly interdependent issues. Although the issue of the refugees and the indigenous communities have been noted in studies, little has been given to the fact that environmental conservation discourse itself becomes a source of exclusion. What is more, the concept of subaltern silence created by Spivak is often mentioned, but there are not many studies based on her idea that provide a sustained application to the narration mediation of voice in the novel.

1.1. Recent Developments in Postcolonial Ecocriticism and the Anthropocene

Recent work in environmental humanities has turned back to the ecological coloniality intersection by stating that ecological degradation cannot be discussed out of the context of imperial history and social hierarchy (Nixon, 2011; Chakrabarty, 2021). The idea of slow violence put forward by Rob Nixon is used to explain how environmental devastation works unfairly to the disadvantaged and the poor; this notion resonates with the structural disparities that Ghosh plays with in *The Hungry Tide*. Other authors, like Elizabeth DeLoughrey (2019) and Graham Huggan (2020), push ecocriticism to planetary and oceanic scales, making the maritime ecosystem of the Sundarbans vulnerable to climate change worldwide.

The Anthropocene or the period of human-driven ecological transformation has been re-conceptualized as the Capitalocene or the Plantationocene to reveal its colonialism (Haraway, 2016; Moore, 2017). The Sundarbans, in this way, becomes symbolic of postcolonial climate precarity in which the subaltern is the victim of the violence of the environment orchestrated by both global capitalism and local politics. *The Hungry Tide* may be perceived as a pre-climate novel anticipating twenty-first-century eco-justice novels, with a pre-emptive human-nonhuman emergence in the hierarchical structure of power (Mukherjee, 2020; Ghosh, 2016). By combining subaltern and ecocritical theory, one can draw attention to the reflections of the ecological preservation initiatives on the model of postcolonial exclusion, or what Chakrabarty (2021) refers to as the planetary and the global. By so doing, the text by Ghosh does not merely criticize nationalism and conservatism but is also engaged in a planetary humanism that reinstates moral agency to marginalized ecologies.

This study addresses this gap by integrating subaltern theory with postcolonial ecocriticism, arguing that *The Hungry Tide* exposes the ethical contradictions of environmental politics that prioritize wildlife over human survival. Although several studies (Hawley, 2005; Khair, 2005; Sharma, 2011) have been done on *The Hungry Tide* through a postcolonial or environmental lens, very few have tackled the issue of ecological protection itself as a process of marginalizing the subaltern. The paper is filling that gap by combining the subaltern theory and postcolonial ecocriticism, where Ghosh reveals the ethical falsehoods of the conservation discourses that prioritize wildlife survival as compared to the survival of humans

Research Objectives

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

1. To discuss how the hungry tide is an expression of subaltern society in the socio-ecological environment of the Sundarbans.

2. To examine the point of convergence of environmental conservation and state power in reducing/silencing the voices of the marginalized.
3. To examine the applicability of the subaltern theory and postcolonial ecocriticism in the interpretation of the narrative strategies developed by Ghosh.
4. To critically evaluate the question of whether the novel allows the subaltern to speak or simply re-mediate their voices with the help of the elite narration.

Research Methodology

This research is based on a qualitative, interpretative research paradigm, which is based on the postcolonial literary analysis. Three theoretical lenses are interrelated and used in the analysis:

1. Subaltern Studies (Gramsci; Spivak) to interrogate voice, silence, and representation
2. Postcolonial Ecocriticism to examine environmental governance and human–nature relationships
3. Historical Materialism to contextualize refugee displacement and state violence.

The methodology is a close textual analysis of the chosen narrative episodes, specifically of the Morichjhapi massacre, the diary of Nirmal, and the lived experiences of Fokir and Kusum. These literary scenes are read in relation to historical and theoretical references of unraveling ideological conflicts between environmental protection and human survival. The study does not employ descriptive commentary but instead the foreground of continuous critical argumentation to make sense of the ways narrative form, voice, and silence work in the novel. Qualitative design was chosen so that the interpretative analysis of texts could be carried out based on the symbolic patterns, narrative techniques, and thematic displays of displacement. The triangulation was achieved via theoretical cross-referencing of the literature text, historical records (Mallick, 1999), and the critical theory in order to achieve the interpretative validity and minimize the subjective influence. This approach is consistent with the interpretation paradigms of cultural studies of literature (Creswell, 2018).

Analytical Approach and Theoretical Triangulation

The analysis is based on the triangulated analytical paradigm of postcolonial ecocriticism, subaltern historiography, and narrative theory. It is based on the interpretative structure of Spivak, the critique of representation, which is known as the subaltern cannot speak, to discuss how the narrative voice mediates the silence of subjects. At the same time, the ecocritical prism based on the slowness of the violence used by Nixon and the ecologies of islands used by DeLoughrey highlights the way in which the nonhuman environment becomes an agent of postcolonial trauma. Narrative analysis concentrates on those textual points which are considered crucial: the diary of Nirmal, dialogue by Kusum, and the death of Fokir to follow the dialectic of silence and agency. The interpretive procedure implies close reading with the help of the reference to historical documents on the Morichjhapi incident (Mallick, 1999; Ghosh, 2016). The combination of textual and contextual analysis gives access to a subtle perception of how *The Hungry Tide* makes environmental fiction a place of subaltern resistance and moral introspection.

In society, individuals or organizations work to achieve cultural, social, political, and economic balance with those who have the ability to use it. Still, some individuals still fall behind in becoming active members of society for cultural, social, political, and economic reasons. These include marginal, subaltern, refugees, migrants, expatriates, and immigrants. The books of Amitav Ghosh address these most pressing problems.

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh demonstrates his skill as a superb research writer and blends together a variety of historical personalities from many eras and places against the picturesque backdrop of the Sundarbans.

“It is also a politically contentious area that is sandwiched between the government and the refugees: “no beauty here to invite the stranger in: but to the entire globe at general this archipelago is referred to as the Sunderbans”, “ which means ‘the beautiful forest’. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, p. 8)

As a townsman, I saw the forest of the tidal country as a place of desolation and a place where time stopped still. I now realized that this was a delusion and that the exact opposite was true. I realized that the wheel of time was whirling too quickly to be noticed in this situation. It took a time frame for an island to emerge, and several thousand years for a river to shift its flow in other locations. However, in the tide nation, where rivers veer from week over week and islands are created and destroyed in a matter of days, change is the norm. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, p. 224)

His literary style, which is well-known from *The Hungry Tide*, includes a pattern of alternating narrative threads, the use of memory and flashback, the usage of myth, and the inclusion of textual snippets that provide multiple perspectives on a past that has been forgotten. One of the main characters in *The Hungry Tide* is Piyali Roy (Piya), a cytologist and biologist. Her area of specialty is freshwater river dolphins, which may be found in Asia's major rivers, including the Indus, Mekong, Irawaddy, and, of course, the Ganges. Cytology is this investigation of marine animals. She is enticed to her parents' native state of Bengal in order to do a census of the marine species residing in the Ganges delta, despite having little touch with her birthplace as the child of Indian emigrant researchers in the United States. She employs Fokir, an uninformed but arrogant local fisherman, to assist her in her search for the rare river dolphins. She meets Kanai Dutt, a "sophisticated Delhi businessman," one of the other main characters, near the beginning of the book. He is a professional translator who speaks six languages fluently and many more. Kanai was the nephew of Nilima Bose, an old lady known to the locals as Mashima, who founded the Badabon Trust, a non-governmental regeneration organization that is effective in rural development. In distant places, this organization has established basic modern infrastructure, such as a hospital, school, and other humanitarian services. For the first time since his uncle's death a political extremist who passed away inexplicably during a local uprising Kanai has come back to Lusibari at his aunt's request. As a translator, Kanai goes on the excursion with Piya and Fokir. Despite their inability to grasp one another's language, Piya and Fokir are able to converse well. Despite Fokir's lack of literacy, Piya is struck by his compassion concealed under his rugged exterior and his extensive river knowledge.

The primary metaphor that serves as the shared reference point connecting Piya, Kanai, and Fokir is the "tide country." People like Piya must understand the tide as a scientific phenomenon, and people like Fokir depend on it for their daily routines, as the story makes evident. The person who can convert one language's idioms into another is known as Kanai. *The Hungry Tide* has a strong emphasis on textuality and words and how they connect to real-world experiences. The three of them are dragged unprepared into the murky undercurrents of this remote realm as they plunge into the intricate backwaters, where political unrest takes a

toll on individuals that is just as strong as the raging tide. *The Hungry Tide*, a prophetic book of extraordinary insight, beauty, and compassion, is already a global hit.

Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* highlights the miserable life of Bangladeshi immigrants, the Morichjhapi massacre, and dealing with those whose voices are not heard. He discusses on the post-war and post-partition disadvantaged in the subcontinent and their unfulfilled aspirations. The concerns depicted in the book are the post-war visual appeal of postcolonial migration as well as the settlement of refugees and orphans. Nirmal and Horen encounter the Morichjhapi slaughter of Bangladeshi immigrants in the book. During the split, the refugees arrived from Bangladesh. Kusum returns to the Sundarbans along with her little kid, Fokir, and other refugees. Kusum was slain in an attack while standing out for the rights of refugees. Nilima tells Kanai the story of the Morichjhapi massacre:

“...Both Muslim communalists and Hindus from higher castes have persecuted and exploited them in their final days making them one of the poorest rural populations in Bangladesh.” (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* 124).

The history of India after the partition and the ensuing turmoil is brought to light in the book. Originating from East Bengal, the refugees were sent to Dandakaranya, Madhya Pradesh, in 1961. They are forced to live there in unsanitary conditions and have to deal with local tribes attacking them. As a result, they are ridiculed and ignored.

“For all, this is not a solitary and isolated boundary; rather, it is India's doormat, the entrance to a crowded subcontinent. Everybody who ever passed through the Gangetic heartland via the eastern route—the Khmer, the Japanese, the Dutch, the Malays, the Chinese, the Portuguese, and even English—had to go across it.” (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, p. 50)

“Like Cambodia, the Mekong Orcaella was completely devastated by the indiscriminate American Carpet bombing throughout the 1970s. Later, Khmer Rouge cadres who had realized they could use dolphin oil to augment their diminishing petroleum supply had also slaughtered them. In Tonle Sap, Cambodia's largest freshwater lake, the once-broad Orcaella population has almost gone extinct. The bodies of these dolphins were hung in the sun to allow their fat to flow into buckets after they were killed with guns and explosions. Afterwards, boats and motorbikes were powered by this oil.” (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, p. 205)

Using a rediscovered journal as a primary source, Amitav Ghosh discusses the tragic events of the 1970 refugee settlers on the island of Morichjhapi located in the Sunderbans. A post-colonial political struggle between the requirements of wildlife conservation and the pressing requirements of the Sunderban inhabitants is effectively implemented by Ghosh.

A factual account of the Sunderbans is presented in the book via Nirmal's journal entries on Morichjhapi and the suffering of the Fokir's mother, Kusum. There, on the island of Morichjhapi, the migrants build their own paradise. Kusum extends an invitation to Horen and Nirmal to join them in celebrating their return home. Nirmal says: -

“Was there any chance that Morichjhapi had sown the seeds for what would eventually become a Dalit nation, or at the very least a sanctuary where the most disadvantaged individuals in the nation might live with actual freedom? (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 205).

When these migrants are requested to return to their former location, their hopes quickly come to an end. By asking questions, Kusum vents her terrible rage, rendering Nirmal

completely stupid and powerless. Morichjhapi Island is designated as an animal preservation reserve by the Bengal government. "Who are these people...who love animals enough that they are willing to kill us for them?" Kusum queries. After the islands' food and water supply were cut off, forcing the refugees to evacuate, they battled for their lives and fell prey to Morichjhapi. When the police come in Morichjhapi, they monitor the area and make constant announcements to leave. In addition to damaging tube wells, they also obstruct the ration supply, which causes famine.

"A considerable number of individuals unexpectedly showed up in Morichjhapi in 1978. "They called it resettlement," Nilima recalled, "but it was more resembled a concentration camp, or a prison." However, these refugees had not been escaping from Bangladesh the moment they arrived in Morichjhapi; rather, they were leaving a government resettlement center in central India. Security personnel encircled them and stopped them from leaving." (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 118)

"The settlers were forced to eat grass since food ran out throughout the several days of the siege. There was a cholera outbreak, the settlers were consuming from puddles and ponds, and the police had demolished the tubewells." (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 260)

"Who are we? We here do we belong? ... We are the dispossessed." (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 284).

The quotations on rootlessness mentioned above capture the meaningless existence of refugees who go about looking for their place in the world and sit there defenseless while listening to police officers make statements and claim that their lives and existence are worthless compared to dirt and dust.

According to the most prominent post-colonial theorist, Homi Bhabha, the power structures of the subaltern groups had been highlighted as marginalized minority groups whose existence was crucial to the self-identification of the majority community: the subaltern group of the social system was also able to contest the authority of those using hegemonic power. Because East Bengali Muslims are shown as the ontological "other," the refugees in the book are depressed, shunned, and neglected everywhere.

The famous quote by Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak, who is a leading critic of the subaltern, "Can the subaltern speak?" suggests that silence is a crucial aspect of subaltern identity. It's interesting to observe how the male and upper-class representative Nirmal narrated the account of gendered subaltern Kusum and the Dalit's maneuvering. In the novel's narrative, the function and complexity of the subaltern language are also heavily emphasized. This link between internal colonialism and subaltern studies is demonstrated in the book *The Hungry Tide*, where ethnicity and gender intersections serve as the crucible.

The refugees are primarily those who lack political, economic, or commercial clout. Whenever the refugees arrived in India, they realized that they were also not totally accepted here. Subaltern groups known as refugees were compelled to look for housing elsewhere, but they were regrettably compelled to take sanctuary at a resettlement camp within central India. Nilima says that "they called it resettlement, although people say it functioned a greater role a prison or concentration camp." They were surrounded by security guards and prevented from leaving. They chased after those who tried to escape. (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 124).

The following paragraphs of the story illustrates the political violence directed against the refugees. Here, they are unable to voice their opposition to things, which further demonstrates the subalterns' silence.

Nirmal, who was a rebel in his younger years, is inspired by the Morichjhapi events' display of tenacity. In order for history to have a little attention via the kanai, he made the decision to document everything in his book. In his notebook, Nirmal discovers a significant utopian element in his work, in the dispossessed people's desire to own something. The government soldiers violently suppress it, and Kusum is subsequently slain. Several years later, Piya echoes Nirmal's Marxist belief that reconciliation across class divides may unite the elite and the underclass with Kusum's son Fokir. Because of the low caste and class identity's invisibility, the Morichjhapi, the underlying cause of the heinous violence, were long repressed in both the academic and public imaginations. The expulsion was further supported by the 1982 West Bengal state committee meeting, which observed that the refugees could not be provided with any kind of housing under any condition. Ghosh can be difficult this government decision and using Kusum to speak to the people of the world,

"I'm curious about the folks who are prepared to murder ourselves for animals because they love them so much?" (Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 284).

Kusum Ghosh is attempting to convey in these lines the cruelty of the upper class against a group of immigrants, who are a subaltern group. Therefore, in the Sundarbans, the situation of the displaced, dispossessed, and disadvantaged is hostile and unpredictable. Examples in the story that highlight the plight of the subaltern and disadvantaged people include the slaughter, the tiger murdering Kusum's father, and Fokir's susceptibility to state authorities.

In his works, Amitav Ghosh uses history as a means to depict the subaltern people and gives voice to the struggles and sacrifices of ordinary individuals. As a whole, the *Hungry-Tide* consistently depicts the interactions between the oppressed elite and the subaltern. Kanai and Fokir's relationship serves as an example of how to impose control on those who are ostracized. Enabling subaltern voices to emerge in opposition to the authority of colonial and elitist forces is a problem that Spivak addresses. The West Bengali rural poor are the subalterns in *The Hungry Tide*. According to Spivak, the question of these poor Easterners' right to be heard and the importance of their ideas must be addressed while they live in a Western-dominated society:

"The question that now has to be addressed is: Is it possible for the subaltern to speak out against the global division of labor from nationalized capital, both within and outside the framework of imperialist legislation and education that adds to an earlier economic language?" (Spivak 283)

Spivak is concerned about the socially and politically marginalized subaltern; this injustice has to be rectified. She says that although there is some tenacity in the argument that elite Indians may make for the underclass Indians, it is still insufficient:

"On the surface, certain types of Indian elites serve as native informants for intellectuals from the first world who are curious about the perspectives of others. However, it is essential to maintain that the colonized subaltern subject remains irretrievably diverse" (Spivak 284).

Because he is not a Westerner comparable to Piya, Kanai, who Ghosh portrays as a representative of the Indian elite, may speak for Fokir to some extent and may even be seen as a heterogeneous subaltern voice. The two primary female characters throughout the novel, Nilima and Piya, haven't been conditioned to adhere to the survival rules of the Sunderban island and are not acquainted with it. In spite of their horrible personal struggles and crises, these women's passion and tenacity are meticulously shown throughout the story. Together, Ghosh and Spivak use these distinctive personalities to empower the subaltern and give them a voice. The perseverance and hardship of these little-known Sunderbans women and their network empowers them as well as several other subaltern women in the area.

It is common for dominant narratives to deny subaltern populations the privilege of representation. The main way that Amitav Ghosh charts the subalterns' path is via the Morichjhapi event, which served as a catalyst for the subalterns' voice, struggle, and sacrifices to gain prominence. In his story, Ghosh made subalterns the main protagonists, elevating them to a position of prominence. Additionally, he examines the difficulties that cosmopolitans have while attempting to make a moral difference in a subaltern environment. The history of the Sunderbans' inhabitants is followed by a creative metamorphosis in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*.

Critical Analysis of Subaltern Voices and Environmental Politics in *The Hungry Tide*

Central Argument

This study argues that *The Hungry Tide* critiques dominant environmental and nationalist discourses by revealing how they systematically marginalize subaltern communities. Ghosh demonstrates that ecological preservation, when detached from social justice, reproduces colonial and caste-based hierarchies. The novel does not merely depict subaltern suffering; it interrogates the conditions under which such suffering is rendered invisible, thereby questioning whether narrative itself can truly recover silenced histories.

Subaltern Silence and Environmental Power

The episode in Morichjhapi is the most explicit example of subaltern erasure in the novel. Displacement of the refugees is legitimized in the name of conservationist discourse, which conceals the violence of the states as a necessity to conserve the environment. The moral impoverishment of such policies is revealed by the desperate plea of Kusum, who cries out at the question: Who are these people that love animals so much as to kill us on their behalf? Her voice is also emotionally potent, but it is not recorded except in the form of a diary by Nirmal, which supports the point of view Spivak points out that the subaltern is not heard, but spoken on their behalf. Ghosh, therefore, prefigures the paradox of representation: despite sympathetic narration, it cannot help to reinstate elite mediation.

Intersectionality and Voice Reconstruction

The Hungry Tide is a story that is both ecologically interdependent and socially unequal, which is why the story is so complicated in its narration. The silence of Fokir and Kusum is not their lack of knowledge but a strategic choice of the narrative to show the resistance in a non-verbal mode. According to Huggan and Tiffin (2015), postcolonial ecocriticism should read silence as a counter-discourse, whereby the marginalized communities express their ecological awareness not in the form of intellectual expression but in the form of lived experience. What is more, the women featured in the novel, Piya, Nilima, and Kusum, have multiple subaltern subjectivities. They do not interact with the environment in terms of the biological but epistemological level, which finds its background in the indigenous knowledge systems, which

question the Western scientific rationality. Therefore, Ghosh breaks down the dichotomy between expert ecology and local ecology, showing how power relations influence access to the discourse of environmentalism. In that way, *The Hungry Tide* prefigures what DeLoughrey (2019) defines as the so-called oceanic humanities, according to which water serves as a location of memory, movement, and postcolonial trauma. The imagery of the tide in the novel is a metaphor of the reemergence of the suppressed voices in a cyclic form that represents the continuation of the resistance in the Anthropocene.

Comparative Perspectives and Global Resonance

Comparative postcolonial readings are those that place Ghosh “the Hungry Tide” in the same line with other stories that are eco-political texts, including Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things* (1997), Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), and Helon Habila’s *Oil on Water* (2010). All these novels reveal that ecological degradation cannot be discussed outside of social hierarchy, and it can be characterized as a form of green postcolonialism (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015). Where Roy and Desai portray the ecological destruction as an effect of the globalization process and the division of classes, Ghosh realigned the deltaic space as an extant storehouse of dispossession. The tide and the blossom-and-wilt-change geography is a metaphor of the precariousness of refugees: as though the unstable nature and the subaltern bodies are in a state of constant displacement. The human-nonhuman relations of Ghosh, like the research of the river dolphins by Piya, dramatize what DeLoughrey defines as the ecological intimacy, or rather, the entanglement of the effect, ecology, and colonial history. This comparative method places *The Hungry Tide* in a wider stream of South-South environmental literature, which follows the ecocritical approaches that focus on justice, sustainability, and voice. This reading heightens the level of importance of the novel to the status of a national allegory, placing it as the forerunner of global climate fiction (cli-fi) based on postcolonial ethics.

Conclusion

The Hungry Tide anticipates 21st-century ecological thought, demonstrating that the climatic disaster is also a crisis of democracy and justice. By depicting the displacement of the refugees, caste marginality, and violence with the environment, Ghosh has related the local struggles in the Sundarbans to the global inequalities of the Anthropocene. The ecological ethics in his story is reinvented as the ecological protection of the wilderness, but rather shows the vulnerability of human beings in the planetary system. The novel, therefore, comes out as a prototype of environmentalism of the poor as defined by Nixon (2011) as a movement that places subaltern agency in the environmental discourse. Combining ecological realism with the writings of the postcolonial historiography, Ghosh broadens the ethical context of environmental literature to the concept of silence, trauma, and endurance. The moral lesson is obvious: sustainable futures require that one hears the people who will suffer the most because of the environmental policies and the power of the state. Thus, *The Hungry Tide* will turn ecocriticism into a decolonial practice of care, voice, and cohabitation.

Future Research and Implications

Future research would develop this model into comparative research across South Asian and African climate fiction, and how marginalized groups are expressing the concept of environmental identity through storytelling. Additional empirical studies can be conducted to understand the acceptance of *The Hungry Tide* by the displaced people and to understand how the literary creation contributes to ecological consciousness. The paper is part of an

emerging interdisciplinary discussion on environmental justice and literary humanism, which serves to support the necessity of inclusive eco-critical pedagogies in the Global South.

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