HNSJ Humanities & Natural Sciences Journal
ISSN: (e) 2709-0833
www.hnjournal.net
Peer-Reviewed Journal
Indexed at: NSP - SJIF
Impact Factor 2022 = 4.91

RESEARCH TITLE

Between Forest and Flood: Imperial Legacies and Ecological Displacement in Hungry Tide

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HNSJ, 2026, 7(4); https://doi.org/10.53796/hnsj74/2

Received at 07/03/2026 **Accepted at 15/03/2026** **Published at 01/04/2026**

Abstract

This study examines Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* through a postcolonial ecocritical lens, focusing on how ecological destruction, displacement, and state-led conservation intersect in the Sundarbans. It argues that the novel exposes the imperial and developmental logics that reshape fragile environments while marginalizing poor local communities, especially refugees and fishermen whose survival depends on the same landscape targeted for preservation. By drawing on concepts such as ecological imperialism, primitive accumulation, and the "environmentalism of the poor," the study shows how Ghosh critiques both colonial legacies and modern conservation policies that exclude human inhabitants in the name of environmental protection. Ultimately, the paper demonstrates that *The Hungry Tide* presents ecological crisis not only as environmental damage, but also as a humanitarian and political tragedy rooted in dispossession, unequal power, and the fragile relationship between humans and nature.

Key Words: Postcolonial ecocriticism, Ecological imperialism, Environmental displacement, Conservation conflict, The Hungry Tide.

عنوان البحث

بين الغابة والفيضان: الإرث الإمبريالي والتهجير البيئي في رواية المدّ الجائع

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة رواية *المدّ الجائع* لأميتاف غوش من منظور النقد البيئي ما بعد الاستعماري، مع التركيز على كيفية تداخل التدمير البيئي والتهجير وسياسات الحفظ التي تقودها الدولة في منطقة السونداربانس. وتجادل الدراسة بأن الرواية تكشف عن المنطق الإمبريالي والتنموي الذي يعيد تشكيل البيئات الهشة، في الوقت الذي يهمّش فيه المجتمعات المحلية الفقيرة، ولا سيما اللاجئين والصيادين الذين تعتمد حياتهم على البيئة نفسها المستهدفة بالحماية. ومن خلال الاستناد إلى مفاهيم مثل الإمبريالية البيئية، والتراكم البدائي، و"بيئية الفقراء"، توضح الدراسة كيف ينتقد غوش الإرث الاستعماري وسياسات الحفظ الحديثة التي تستبعد السكان باسم حماية البيئة. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن الرواية تصوّر الأزمة البيئية لا بوصفها ضررًا بيئيًا فحسب، بل بوصفها أيضًا مأساة إنسانية وسياسية متجذرة في نزع الملكية، واختلال موازين القوة، وهشاشة العلاقة بين الإنسان والطبيعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النقد البيئي ما بعد الاستعماري، الإمبريالية البيئية، التهجير البيئي، صراع الحفظ البيئي، رواية المدّ الجائع

Introduction

People have been using land for farming and living in for over 10,000 years. But the size, range, power and tempo of land conversion for human purposes has surged since industrial times began. Contemporary worldwide estimates suggest between 40-50% of earth's ice-free terrestrial area is now being used for agriculture, forestry and urban expansion [2]. Around 11% of it is used for crop production, while about 25% is pastures and grazing land and between 1 to 3% urban areas (and the infrastructure that goes along with them). In addition, 2% to 10% of the land is managed for forests providing a range of goods that include timber, fuel wood, paper makers and rubber. Of the remaining land which is not heavily used, at least half is still influenced by smaller scale human actions like local firewood hunting and other gathering, pollution as well as hunting. All told, human influence — both direct and indirect — has modified about 75% of Earth's terrestrial ecosystems. Moreover, less than one-quarter of land remains largely untouched, the vast majority being in remote cold and arid regions, but some still persists in tropical areas where diseases and other natural barriers have restricted human encroachment. Crucially, human terraforming of the biosphere predated the arrival of farming. Before the Holocene transition, hunting and gathering activities put severe stress on land, freshwater, and marine systems resulting in the loss of populations and extinctions of species. These ecological pressures typically increased as numbers of people grew. Development is a concept that is based on an assumption of unfettered economic growth, achieved through integration of open market economy, heavy industrialization, mechanized processes to produce commodities, and the commodification and privatization of resources (natural as well as human). This limitless confidence in market-driven expansion has its antecedents in the historical dynamics of capitalist production, which took visible shape and form from the 16th century onwards in Western Europe. With the emergence of capitalism, traditional forms of production and community were superseded by a new socio-economic system organized around market forces and a differentiated labor force.

Moving, or being made to move, from one area to another is a deep trauma for those involved; it takes away their sense of identity and makes them struggle for a place in the new society where they find themselves living, often against very different circumstances. The Hungry Tide is the kind of book which brings to life the struggles of refugees. Interwoven with the incident of 1979 in Morichjhapi of Sundarbans, the plot covers Piyali Roy (marine scientist)'s journey; the plight of migrants like Fokir and refugee efforts made by Neelam and Nirmal Bose for reclamation of looted-out people including Kusum (Fokir's Mom). It also takes the outsider's point of view of Kanai, among strangers in the strange land of Sundarbans. Stand together should be the motto of them as do, and above all of those who whose business it is to tend nature under a glass domedow in God's conditions!One of the most impressive aspects about this novel is that about how central nature is: every character or event has an intimate and wary interaction with their natural surroudings.

Amitav Ghosh is one of India's most acclaimed contemporary writers with a great eye for detail and his varied coverage of colonialism, migrations, identity and climate change. He crosses genres of both history and fiction, giving authenticity to social and political aspects of both times through his words. Ghosh early on received ample acclaim for novels such as The Shadow Lines and The Calcutta Chromosome, established his reputation with The Glass Palace and the epic Ibis Trilogy (Sea of Poppies, River of Smoke, and Flood of Fire), which revolve around the opium trade and its global implications.As he has widened his scope — even trying his hand at speculative fiction with Gun Island — Ghosh's confrontations with globalization, climate change, migration (and much more), have become increasingly

ambitious. He has been the recipient of many awards and honours, including the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Dan David Prize and Jnanpith Award in 2018 (India's highest literary award). He had received Padma Shri for great work in literature. Ghosh has in recent years become one of the leading environmental thinkers, especially with books like The Great Derangement and The Nutmeg 's Curse dealing squarely with the climate crisis. Amitav Ghosh is a prominent environmental writer who foregrounds ecological issues in his literature. He probes the intimate connections between climate change, colonial history and global capitalism in his fiction as well as his non-fiction. In novels like The Hungry Tide, Ghosh makes thrilling stories out of the rising seas, endangered species and displaced communities that environmental change will bring upon us.

Theory

Ecological imperialism refers to the organized and systematic exploitation of natural ecosystems and resources of a region, state, or territory by a foreign power, often justified

through deceptive narratives meant to legitimize the extraction and environmental degradation. Although the practice dates back as far as imperialism itself, the concept in its modern form can be traced to European colonial expansion during the late 16th and early 17th centuries. This form of domination manifests in two major ways: the plundering of a region's natural assets by imperial powers and the drastic alteration of its ecological systems. Britain is a prime example of a colonial power deeply involved in the environmental and resource- based exploitation of its colonies. The motivations behind British imperialism are candidly captured by Cecil Rhodes, "We must find new lands from which we can easily obtain raw materials and at the same time exploit the cheap slave labour that is available from the natives of the colonies. The colonies would also provide a dumping ground for the surplus goods produced in our factories"

The term "ecological imperialism" was coined by Dr. Alfred Crosby, writing in 1986 from his book Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900. In Crosby's view, colonialism was about more than the cultural and political subjugation of others — it was also environmental destruction. His studies, which pointed to the frequently unintended but deep ecological disturbance created by European colonizers in transferring Old World plants and animals into New World systems, brought him friends and made him enemies. Local species were displaced and local biodiversity often suffered as these alien "invaders" experienced population explosions. Despite the biological focus of Crosby's work, it sidestepped explicit examination of imperialism as an economic or political development. It did not consider the environmental implications of the domination of peripheral societies by a capitalist core nor the rivalry among capitalist states for world hegemony.

Primitive accumulation In Britain, Karl Marx located primitive accumulation as one of the central processes in early capitalism. This was achieved by dispossessing the peasantry of common land and customary rights, depriving them of access to vital means of production. That which it was able to produce, was surplus in relation to the needs of traditional natural subsistence economy So a dispossessed population — people made landless and forced into wage labor under capitalist (i.e factory) organization, to crowd them together into urban settings like ants — came to be what we now know as the early industrial working class. The concentration of capital and production in the hands of an ever narrowing elite, centralizing economic power and siphoning off surpluses to urban industrial centers. This new proletariat could be fully exploited then, and masses of unemployed workers forced other layers into accepting lower wages, thus guaranteeing profit levels. Marx's notion of

primitive accumulation— focused on the forcible separation of people from the land and their coerced expropriation into urban labor markets—had so powerfully put it: It was, in Marx's words, "the strife to be something apart" that "set man against man.

profound environmental consequences. It refashioned economies and societies, but it also resculptured ecological landscapes—to remind us of the intimate relationship between systemic economic displacement and remaking the material world.

Predominant developmentalism is based on a fundamental belief in unrestrained growth and expansion, achieved through the one market driven economy, massive industrial development, mechanised production processes and the commodification and privatisation of natural and human resources. This dogmatic faith in growth as the market's true north has its origins and roots in that capitalist mode of production that crystallized (starting in Western Europe) from the sixteenth century. This way of viewing the world, in which Europe was conceptualised as rational, progressive and therefore naturally superior (and all non-European society was seen as backward, emotional and irrational)55 was a staple of nineteenth-century European intellectual life. Even J.S. Mill, a leading figure in liberal democratic philosophy and an official with the East India Company, strongly asserted that India should be ruled autocratically by a morally upright imperial administration until it became "civilized" enough for self-governance. The colonial rulers presented it as their moral responsibility to take control of the vast 'chaotic' tracts of Africa and Asia and to 'develop' and 'civilize' them according to their supposedly 'advanced' knowledge which they thought to be universally applicable. Victor Hugo's following remarks explicitly reflect these sentiments:

> In the nineteenth century, the White made a man of the Black; in the twentieth century, Europe will make a world of Africa. To fashion a new Africa, to make the old Africa amenable to civilization – that is the problem. And Europe will solve it. … Go forward, the nations! Grasp this land! Take it! From whom? From no one. Take this land from God! God gives the earth to men. God offers Africa to Europe. Take it! Where the kings brought war, bring concord! Take it, not for the cannon but for the plough! Not for the sabre but for commerce! Not for battle but for industry! … Go on, do it! Make roads, make ports, make towns! Grow, cultivate, colonize, multiply (51)

The colonial powers carried these "development" forms on to subject peoples around the globe as they left Europe; there the impact was even more severe after the power disparity between metropolis and colony was exposed.These interventions were cast by their authors as part of a "civilizing mission" or "modernization." Yet the description of colonial rule as inherently benevolent simply hid its real character.When you strip away the protective veneer, colonialism operated as a system of extraction, exploiting resources and labour outside the metropolis to feed its metropolitan economy.

Fear of Forest and Flood in *The Hungry Tide*-

> "This island has to be saved for its trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a forest reserve, it's part of tiger projects which are paid by the people all over the world." "I was curious about these people who love animals that much.and they are willing to kill us for them? Do they know what is done in their names? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers and fathers? (Ghosh, The Hungry Tide 261-62)

The resistance and reflective words by Kusum, the character in The Hungry Tide (2004), a popular novel of Amitav Ghosh, echoed the severe oppression thrust on marginalized and

subaltern communities which are forced to stay unnoticed and unheard within hegemonic social- political institutions. One cannot stress enough that this is why there is such an urgency for those both in policy, institutional and governing power in the developing world to realize that copying certain western models because they are more "progressive" or "environmentally friendly" may not always be relevant. There are some very deep anthropological, social, historical, psychological and ecological differences that you have to take into account. The novel jumps back to 1903 when Sir Daniel Hamilton, a British philanthropist andpragnat5 reformer bought ten thousands of acres in theSundarbans from the British government. This area, comprising islands such as Gosaba, Rangabelia, Satjelia, and Lusibari—collectively named Hamilton-abad—was once dominated by dense forests inhabited by dangerous wildlife, including tigers, crocodiles, sharks, leopards, and snakes. Nilima remarks, "…at that time there was nothing but forest here. There were no people, no embankments, no fields. Just Kada ar Kada, mud and mangroves. At high tide most of the land vanished under water. Everywhere you looked there were predators – tigers, crocodiles, sharks, leopards. (51). To make the region habitable, Hamilton invited settlers from various places, including Northern Odisha, Eastern Bengal, and the Santhal Parganas. Ghosh in the novel refers to the historic tragedy in 1970 of refugee settlers from Bangladesh on the land of Morichjhapi in the Sundarbans through Nirmal"s diary. The facts of the incident are revealed by Nirmal"s widow, Nilima as:

> In 1978 it happened that a great number of people suddenly appeared in Morichjhapi. In this place where there had been no inhabitants before there were now thousands, almost overnight. Within a matter of weeks they had cleared the mangroves, built badhs and put up huts. It happened so quickly that in the beginning no one even knew who these people were. But in time it came to be learnt that they were refugees, originally from Bangladesh. Some had come to India after partition, while others had trickled over later. In Bangladesh they had been among the poorest of rural people, oppressed and exploited both by Muslim communalists and by Hindus of the upper castes. (118)

In an effort to control the wildlife threat, he began offering rewards to individuals who killed predators. As stated in the novel, "Sir Daniel began to give out rewards to anyone who killed a tiger or crocodile" (52). Land was granted as a reward to those who killed animals—a powerful incentive for impoverished settlers desperately in need of land. Over time, this unregulated and excessive hunting led to a sharp decline in animal populations. Through this narrative, Ghosh underscores that the origins of ecological degradation often lie in aggressive and unchecked human encroachment on natural habitats. . Annu Jalais in "Dwelling in Morichjhapi" maintains, "In the context of the tide country, every day, is a struggle for survival. Man killing the tiger and tiger killing man are scenes that happen every day on the terrain of Sundarbans" (1758 The novel is full of human nature conflicts. Sometimes nature is kind and benevolent like mother goddess but sometimes disastrous, chaotic and havoc:

> A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself, utterly unlike other woodlands or jungles. There are no towering, vine-looped trees, no ferns, no wildflowers, no chattering monkeys or cockatoos. Mangrove leaves are tough and leathery, the branches gnarled and the foliage often impassably dense. Visibility is short and the air still and fetid. At no moment can human beings have any doubt of the terrain"s utter hostility to their presence, of its cunning resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them. Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles. (7-8)

The Hungry Tide opens with a contrast between a physical map of the Sundarbans and a real- time scene of travelers attempting to orient themselves in this unique, shifting landscape. The

story follows two outsiders—Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy—as they engage with the local communities of the tidal region and form connections with one another. Kanai, a businessman from Delhi, travels to Lusibari to visit his aunt, Nilima, a dedicated social worker and founder of the Badabon Trust. Kanai’s trip is prompted by a parcel left for him by his late uncle, Nirmal. The consignment contains a journal that records musings and details penned in the last days of his uncle’s life — entries about Kusum and her son Fokir who fell victim for eviction during forced displacement from Morichjhapi. These narratives unveil the social-ecological history of the Sundarbans, its making, land, waters and sky and symbiotic relationship between people and the environment. In addition, Piyali Ray, an Indo-American marine biologist from Seattle also visits Sundarbans in connection with her scientific research. Piya was Bengali by origin, but had grown up in the United States. Her specialty is cetology (the study of aquatic mammals) and her research specializes in river dolphins. She comes back to India for further studies on Orcaella Brevirostris, the species also known as Irrawaddy dolphin native to the Bay of Bengal in vicinity of Sundarbans.

There are two narratives at work here. One of these trails Piyali, who is a marine scientist tracking down Fokir, who is a local from the Mangrove (Sundarbans) area and knows everything about its maze-like land and also about the kind of dolphin that Piyali is studying. With the barrier that stands between them because of their inability to communicate in any common language, she opts decide to travel with him on her journey. In the other plot line, Kanai starts reading his late uncle Nirmal's journals. Readers are reminded in this diary about the massive migration that had taken place in 1971 when people from Bangladesh flocked to India. These migrants were first resettled in Dandakaranya, a jungle belt of Madhya Pradesh, by the Indian government. But their search for permanent settlement finally took the to the Sundarbans, a maze of tiny swampy islands in southeastern Bengal covered with mangrove forest.

The story then becomes one of Kusum’s life, Kanai’s childhood friend who finds her way to Calcutta and gets married. She returns to the Sundarbans with a group of refugees from Bangladesh after her husband dies. This cohort was initially placed in a refugee settlement in central India close to Madhya Pradesh. But the situation there was abysmal. “Up there they called it ‘Resettlement’, but people say it was more like a concentration camp, or a prison. They were encircled by security forces and not allowed to leave. And those who escaped were

hunted down.” (HT 118). In pursuit of a home to call their own, Kusum and her son Fokir followed others to Morichjhapi, an island covered in mangrove: no road leads there — just ponds that open up into false mouths.

The Sundarbans turned out to be an inhospitable place for these settlers — politically as well as ecologically. It was like walking a tightrope with pitfalls to the left and right. The elements were harsh, especially because it was an area where men could not survive. Bhatair Desh or the Tide Country locally, was infamous for frequent storms and flooding. And however often the migrants raised homes, they faced destruction. In addition to environmental struggles, they quickly encountered political repression as well. The authorities ordered the expulsion of all settlers from the area. The one-year mark had put the issue of displacement back on everyone’s radar. The authorities redoubled efforts to dislodge the refugees from Morichjhapi. Nirmal was told at Kusum’s house in Mendhar that “..In the last few weeks they (the government agents and authorities) had been coming

to pressurize the settlers, police, officers have come here and tried to allurement to vacate'. When that didn't work, they had issued threats." (223).

This indicates how the burden of struggle and bondage was heavy on them, as they sought a place to belong. Their refusal to submit made that a fateful fight to the finish between police and evicted villagers, a battle that claimed hundreds of lives, including Kusum herself. Beside this catastrophic past, the current story of Piyali and Fokir is narrated today where the motif of displacing comes in. In the tiger reserves of popular Sundarbans, Bengal tigers are so protected they have been known to freely walk through villages and towns crossing from one part of the reserve to another. Villagers as often encounter these predators as they cause them the deaths. In such instances, forest officials often responded not with sympathy but with punitive actions, subjecting victims' families to humiliation and mistreatment. The rigid emphasis on wildlife preservation consistently places the lives and livelihoods of the region's inhabitants at risk. Ramachandra Guha argues in his trenchant critique of wilderness preservation, "because India is a long-settled and densely populated country in which agrarian populations have a finely balanced relationship with nature, the setting aside of wilderness areas has resulted in a direct transfer of resources from the poor to the rich…. The designation of tiger reserves was made possible only by the physical displacement of existing villages and their inhabitants." Creating a new category of "ecological refugees" in the process (Guha 107) The ongoing plight of the tide country's residents deeply moved the author, and he conveys his sorrow through Kusum's voice:

The worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless, and listen to the policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that our lives, our existence, was worth less than dirt or dust. "This island has to be saved for trees, it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid for by people from all around the world" (261).

Piyali represents a Western approach to environmental science. Her perception of ecology and its safeguarding diverges from the perspective typically held by environmentalists in the Global South. For instance, despite his economic under-privilege and lack of formal education, my otherwise marginalized person Fokir, a person with deep-rooted indigenous ecological knowledge, gains Piya's trust and becomes her guide into the Sundarbans. In my narratives, Fokir played a disruptive role in her journey in order to disturb the otherwise dominant narrative grounded in colonial ideologies. First, Fokir's presence in the girl's experiences highlights a more dynamic and balanced relationship between humans and their natural environments. As a local fisherman, Fokir is a poor person forced to hunt wildlife for survival. However, Fokir is conscious of the importance of conserving the environment, indicating that the local poor and marginalized people are also responsible for sustaining ecological integrity in the region. Apart from her narrative, Kusum, perhaps, experiences the greatest impact of displacement when the jungle, which was her home, became sacred: "Wake up, Kusum! It was a leaf on the wind, the wind blowing, blowing all around me, shoving me with it". Kesavan reminisces about the inauguration of Project Tiger in 1973, after the baggage man launched their mission and began to search about the Sundarbans. She recalls that in 1973, the ecological value of the Swamps increased under the Project Tiger, and the area was declared and established as the biggest Royal Bengal tiger sanctuary in the world. Her words may amount to the argument that people like her, who are regarded as disposable by conservationists, are removed for the mere goals of environmentalist conservation. She asserts that these individuals have no ecological relevance, hence, they need to be excluded. According to Pramanik quotation from Beyond Man, intensified forest exploitation leads to a decrease in the number of tigers:

> “Tigers are the best conservators of the forest. They have got us people away. If there were no tigers in the Sunderbans, in a few months, the whole forest-area would have been bare like my palm”. The quotation illustrates that the majority of forest conservation comes at a cost of human dignity and contravenes human rights, and the remaining humanitarian issues are only empirically apparent. Kusum also asserts that she also asked the following rhetorical questions: I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them.? Do they know what is being done in their names? Where do they live, these people, do they have children, do they have mothers, fathers? As I thought of these things it seemed to me that this whole world has become a place of animals, and our fault, our crime, was that we were just humankind, trying to live as humankind always have, from the water and the soil”.

they have forgotten that this is how humans have always lived- by fishing, by clearing land and by planting the soil” (Ghosh 262).

In his narrative, Ghosh not only raises the question of justice for suffering people like Kusum-turned-homeless as she was thrown out on the pretext that the tiger has to be saved-but also expresses his own apprehension about fragile environment that is the Sundarbans. Piya describes a cataclysmic cyclone that strikes the delta, hitting every sort of life in this littered landscape. Her evocative prose captures the vulnerability of animals and bird: “A white cloud came drifting out of the sky, and settled on what remained of the drowned forest. They were a gathering of white birds and they were so tired that they seemed unaware of Piya or Fokir …. One of the birds was so close that she could pick it up and take it in her hands: “Trembling,” she said, “I can feel its heart fluttering. The birds had ultimately been attempting to remain in the eye of the storm …. she overheard another concern: that a tiger, emerging from the water and into a tree on the other side of the island….” (Ghosh 389).

Against the backdrop of an ongoing war between humans and the Wild, Port conjures up sensual scenes of tides, tempests and cyclonic disturbances raises big questions about nature human relations. So this is a case of perceiving the anomalous events as being cause by man harming the environment, in this case due to the irresponsible cutting down mangrove ecosystem to name but one. Nature, in the form of hurricanes and tidal waves, is savage, ruthless. The environmental wreckage represented by these cyclones and tidal surges seems beyond repair and dark. In one particular story, a great storm that destroys the sea wall a kilometer long is recalled. Strangest of all is the effect upon the new settlers in the tide country; to these, above all others, does the tempest wreak its brutal fury. The storm crashes someone’s hopes, and leaves them uglier and sadder.

Ghosh comes back to his environmental roots in the novel, showing that humans, animals and all species are equally vulnerable to the same natural disasters. The story ends with a devastating cyclone hitting the entire region and this leads to Fokir's death, as well as the whole Garjontola island is decimated by tidal waves. This disaster spares no being, it is the same for all. Ghosh emphasizes that peoples and other entities as human or other in here submitted Georgic life worlds are always part of a larger ecological system in the Sundarbans— with mutual fates controlled by nature’s powers.

The Hungry Tide stands for all the malevolent and destructive aspects of nature. Many people die of drowning, many are eaten by crocodiles and sharks. Battles with tigers are quite common. Upon a closer reading of the tale, however, the account of Kusum’s father's death remains quite detailed in comparison to all apparent deaths by wild animals. This representation portrays human frailty and reiterates nature\'s superiority to manliness. Ghosh writes: “Upwind of its prey, the animal was—and they saw its coat flashing as it closed in; and because it belonged to another order than their own, so distinct a difference between that

and mankind's, one versed in wind knew how worthless were the people on the other bank against these gusts" (108). These predators of the tidal marsh are compared to ghosts—rarely seen, but felt through tracks, sounds and smell. It is a shame however that the tidal civilization not only bring countless danger and harm to the livelihood of its people, but also leaves a permanent fear for their existance.

> "Think of what it used to be: think of the tigers, crocodiles and snakes which had their haunts on the creeks and nalas which ran all over the islands. This was a feast for them. They've murdered hundreds of people" (52).

In a passage that pollinates dread, pain and sense of waste, Kanai reflects and compares suffering due to tiger attack with the crocodile. He thinks the tiger to be in a sort of tender-hearted person, because it kills at once — its roar is so awful that it stuns a man and paralyzes him. When Dr. Sanga gets back up he is forced to watch, impotent and scream-mute as the crocodile with its slick belly and sleek limbs bites down on his prey in a hostile state of being untamed:

> "The crocodile it's said keeps you alive till you drown; it won't kill you on land but it'll drag you into water while your flesh still has breath in it. No one recovers the bodies of warra (151 dead people) killed by crocodiles" (328).

Ghosh vividly describes a crocodile attack on Piya. She sees a pair of interlocking jaws chomping and whirling in her direction. The beast next sinks its teeth into the back of the boat, from which Fokir barely pulls her. Piya is severely traumatized and disturbed by this near-deadly encounter, her mood swings affecting her for some time. A mind seized by fear can, surely, give its terror a form. In another episode, Piya, a marine scientist studying the Gangetic dolphins, slips and becomes stuck in sludgy tidal land. A strong swimmer, she's stuck in the thick muck and filled with fear and despair at that terrifying moment. Here, nature takes its most terrifying, disgusting form. There is a strange admixture of horror, revulsion and repudiation for the natural world when Piya is in pain.

Illustrated by vibrant images of tides, tempests and cyclonic surges, the novel provokes a continuous conflict between men and nature. These ecological disruptions are presented as the predictable result of human meddling in nature, thanks mostly to the (reckless) deforestation of the mangrove forest. Nature, in hurricanes and tidal waves, is portrayed as wild, destructive and cruel. The ecological devastation wrought by these storms and tidal surges is emblematic of an irreversible, foreboding change. One particular episode narrates of a violent storm that destroys an embankment which was a kilometer long. The violence of this storm most severely rages at the recently formed settlers of the tide-region. The optimism of these people is destroyed by the storm, and they are disillusioned and distraught. One last one is told at the conclusion of the book. Piya and fokir had gone to a place outside of Garjontola cut off from water, and returned home to find that all the boats were missing. Unsuspectingly, an official warning had gone out advising all boats to return to port and citizens to head indoors as a dangerous storm approached. Unbeknown at all of the warning, they carried on with their field work many miles away from their boat. It was quite a while before they discovered signs of the approaching storm and by that time they were cut off from any shelter. They ran their boat into a tree and rapidly climbed the tree. They chained themselves to the tree and were left stranded two days later. Kanai and Horen had gone through this travail. Meanwhile Piya and Fokir who had gone out somewhat further by boat, had a quite different experience. Once they caught a whiff of the oncoming squall, they turned tail and sheltered off in an adjacent creek. They scaled a tree and clamped themselves to the branch at Garjontola's highest point. Fokir saved Piya by using his body as a shield, but unfortunately he was struck down by an uprooted tree and died. Piya, however, emerged unharmed.

Conclusion

For the people of Morichjapi, forced eviction has been an enduring traumatic memory. They are the excluded ones, individuals who have been erased from the foundational constitutional text of creation, and as an author Ghosh has given a voice to their grievances through their stories in order to sensitise readers toward ecological and humanitarian issues. He interacts with and enunciates the idea of "environmentalism of the poor," as conceived by Ramachandra Guha. Ghosh depicts as vulnerable and impoverished these deracinated subalterns—again ousted, this time from Morichjapi by state authorities in the name of Project Tiger—and illuminates the perilousness of wholesale imitation of Western models and the impotence and defeat of attempting to superimpose Eurocentric ideologies on a local milieu.

Postcolonial uncanny In his powerful essay The Postcolonial Uncanny: The Politics of Dispossession in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide Pramod K. Nayar condemns the duplicitousness of "relocation" and "expropriation" done to indigenous peoples by postcolonial states in the name of development. He writes: Postcolonial societies such as India inevitably turn development into a process of dispossessing and exploiting large sections of their citizenry" (Kothari 88). The Hungry Tide highlights a crisis in state machinery that has unfortunately been brought up to innocently apply the model of Western conservation – an approach which is not merely skewed and lopsided but one that chooses to alienate itself from the biodiversity practices and cognizance between Global South and North)". The novel therefore unambiguously supports the rational dictum, "no conservation without local consultation and participation": a maxim that forms part of postcolonial ecocriticism.

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