



RESEARCH PAPER

Ecological Justice: An Ecocritical Study of *The Hungry Tide*

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ABSTRACT

The research examines the idea of ecological justice in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* based on the theoretical framework of ecocriticism. Nature, portrayed as an active ecological force, uncovers the social and political inequalities inherent in environmental policies. The methodology used is qualitative one involving textual analysis and close reading of the novel with secondary sources of scholarly materials related to ecocriticism and ecological justice. The research explores interconnections between nature, human survival and political power in the Sundarbans as depicted in the novel, bringing into focus the contradiction between conservation of nature and the problems faced by the marginalized communities such as Morichjhapi, human-animal conflict, and the conflict between indigenous knowledge and scientific knowledge. The study concludes that ecological justice can be achieved through a balanced approach and one that is inclusive, taking into account both ecological sustainability and the rights of vulnerable human communities.

KEYWORDS Ecological Justice, Ecocriticism, Social and Political inequalities, Environmental Policies

Introduction

The world has been showing the disproportionate allocation of environmental risk with accelerating climate crisis. Climate change is usually talked about as a global phenomenon but it impacts communities in the Global South disproportionately since most of them were historically exploited by colonizers. This imbalanced ecological burden has caused researchers to conceive the concept of climate colonialism, which interprets the modern environmental susceptibility as a continuation of imperial and neo-colonial rules of power. In the literary field, this issue overlaps with postcolonial theory and ecocriticism, leading to what has since been known as postcolonial ecocriticism a critical methodology exploring the way colonial histories contribute to environmental injustices in the formerly colonized environment.

Postcolonial theory, as developed by Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi K. Bhabha, is mostly concerned with power, representation, and marginalization structures that had been bequeathed to people through colonial rule. The idea of Orientalism by Said brings light to the fact that the West has created the East as a substandard Other, whereas the idea of the subaltern by Spivak concerns the repression of voices of the marginalized by the prevalent epistemologies. These frameworks traditionally have been applied to the problems of identity, nationalism, migration, and cultural displacement. Nevertheless, the recent critical events are pointing towards the idea that colonialism was also an ecological project -landscape reconstruction, natural resources mining, and reorganization of local economies that have had an impact even up to the present time in the postcolonial countries.

Instead, ecocriticism emerged as a discipline dealing with the depiction of nature and the environmental morals in literature. However, the early ecocritical discourse

remained Eurocentric and was not usually connected to the imperial history and global inequality. The combination of postcolonial theory with ecocriticism has thus been much needed concerning how environmental degradation in the formerly colonized areas cannot be regarded outside the pasts of empire. This trans-disciplinary prism can help researchers to analyze the mechanisms by which environmental trauma, displacement, and climate vulnerability are entrenched in the greater systems of power in geopolitics.

Such analysis can be made in the context of Amitav Ghosh novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) that serves as a literary location. The novel is set in Sundarbans, which is an ecologically vulnerable delta area that cuts across India and Bangladesh and is characterized by tides, cyclones, and the changing riverine boundaries. The Sundarbans, which is traditionally characterized by colonial forest policies and postcolonial state interventions, is turned into a place where human survival is negotiated on a regular basis against environmental precarity. The conflicts between scientific authority and native epistemology are dramatized through characters like Piya, a marine biologist with a Western training, and Fokir, a local fisherman with insider ecological knowledge.

The Hungry Tide has in the past experienced scholarship, which has largely considered the themes of subalternity, displacement, nationalism, and human nature conflict. Several works have used the theory of Spivak to interpret silencing of marginalized communities especially on the issue of Morichjhapi massacre and handling of refugees by the state. General ecocritical approaches have also been used by others to discuss ecological aspects of the text. Nevertheless, there is a lack of discussion concerning the idea of climate colonialism as a form of structural extension of imperial exploitation. Also, the neo-colonial hierarchies of knowledge as it intersects with environmental justice and global capitalism has not been thoroughly discussed when discussing the novel critically.

The current research places *The Hungry Tide* in the framework of the current discussion of climate injustice and eco-imperialism. It claims that the ecological fragility of Sundarbans cannot be interpreted as natural disaster narrative but is instead historically predetermined by colonialism exploitation of resources and contemporary neo-liberal policies of environmental management. This investigation broadens the understanding of subalternity that is applied to human beings to marginalized landscapes and non-human life forms subject to global inequalities of power.

This way, the study may be viewed as a contribution to the developing area of postcolonial ecocriticism, in which climate colonialism is anticipated as a dominant approach to the field of interpretation. It places *The Hungry Tide* in a position that it does not only portray itself as a novel of environmental survival but also a critique of world-systems perpetuating ecological inequality. In that way, the research aims at shedding light on how Global South literary works project and challenge current climate discussions, which further argues the need of environmental justice in postcolonial discourse.

Literature Review

Much academic interest in *The Hungry Tide* has concerned its engagement with the ecological issues, ecological ethics and social inequality. It is generally accepted by critics that Amitav Ghosh portrays the Sundarbans as a place that is vibrant with the life of human being as highly intertwined with nature. The relationship between the physical environment and literature is another aspect of ecocriticism under which the novel can be analyzed.

In his eco-critical analysis of the novel, Vishwa Bhushan states that nature as it is represented in *The Hungry Tide* is not a passive environment but a force coming into play and determining human experience. He underlines that the relations between humans, animals and the environment show the ecological balance that is always threatened. This opinion supports the notion that environmental degradation is having an impact on both

human and non-human forms of life and the ecological justice is being a point of major focus in the text Bhushan (2021).

In the same vein, Camellia Biswas and Sharada Channarayapatna look at the issue of environmental injustice especially based on a past event related to Morichjhapi in the novel. They claim that conservation efforts led by the state have the potential to lead to the marginalization and displacement of the vulnerable communities. Their research understands the existence of ecological preservation policies that disregard the rights of local people, therefore, forming the disequilibrium between the protection of the environment and the social justice Biswas and Channarayapatna (2022).

In postcolonial ecocritical viewpoint, Nadia Anjum, Saima Rani, and Hassan Khan propose the idea that the novel is critical of Western forms of conservation that are unable to acknowledge the systems of indigenous knowledge. They indicate that local societies, embodied by such characters as Fokir are a profoundly aware of the environment, and this is often dismissed in favor of science. This locality and globality is another conflict that makes the matter of ecological justice in the novel even more difficult Anjum et al. (2024).

Besides this, Suresh Frederick and Silvia Olives investigate the issue of ethical dilemma between human needs and environmental conservation. According to them, there is moral question in the novel that can save the wildlife at the expense of the suffering of the human being. The conflict indicates the bigger concept of environmental justice, in which the rights of both non-human and human beings should be taken into account on equal terms Frederick and Olives (2022).

Also, Anjali Joshi Parampil and Jai Singh examine the ecology, politics, and economic power intersection in the novel. They claim that the problem of the environment in *The Hungry Tide* has close relations with political choices and economic interests that tend to mistreat nature and disadvantaged community. According to their analysis, these forms of underlying power cannot be negotiated without ecological justice Parampil and Singh (2025).

Displacement and memory are the other themes highlighted in recent works by J. Joy Princy and M. Natarajan that claim that the Sundarbans is a place of historical and ecological trauma. They emphasize the fact that the experiences of displaced communities are embedded in the landscape they add to the concept that environmental spaces are highly interwoven with human past and struggles (Princy and Natarajan).

In general, the current literature shows that *The Hungry Tide* is a profound discussion of environmental justice as the author employs it to bring out the intricate interrelationship between environmental protection, social injustice, and political authority. All these studies are pointing towards the necessity of having a middle ground that will deliver justice to the environment as well as to communities who rely on the environment.

Material and Methods

This research is based on theoretical approach of ecocriticism, which is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the connection between literature and the physical world. Ecocriticism developed as a reaction to the growing environmental awareness and attempts to examine the way literature texts depict nature, ecological crises and the relationship between people and the non-human world. It breaks the historical anthropocentric (human-centered) perception of literature by associating equal significance to nature and underlining the fact that the environment is not a passive backdrop, rather it is an active and powerful force.

One of the major ecocriticism concepts is ecological justice that extends the concept of justice to the natural world and not only to human society. Ecological justice proclaims justice, harmony and moral accountability to people, as well as non-human beings like animals, rivers and forests. It highlights the fact that vulnerable groups are not to be sidelined by the environmental policies and conservation programs since they rely on natural resources to survive. In this regard, ecological justice is a criticism of systems that favor environmental protection to the detriment of human livelihood, and systems that use nature to make economic or political profits.

The Hungry Tide is examined through the ecocriticism theory in this research. The novel offers a wonderful ecological background in the Sundarbans, a special tidal ecosystem with variable geography, a variety of wildlife, and a continual threat to the environment. In such a setting, Amitav Ghosh describes the complicated and even antagonistic relationship between people and nature. The novel setting is portrayed as dynamic, unpredictable, and powerful and the lives, decisions and existence of the characters are influenced by the environment.

The use of this theoretical framework will be through the analysis of how the novel portrays ecological struggles especially the conflict between environmental preservation and human existence. The Sundarbans is presented as a secure ecological habitat where the wildlife is given priority particularly the endangered species which includes tigers and dolphins. The downside, however, is that such protection is usually at the cost of the local population, such as fishermen and other settlers, who are forced to be displaced, live in poverty, and face constant danger. This imbalance points to the lack of ecological justice, where the rights and needs of the deprived groups of human beings are ignored in making environmental decisions.

Moreover, the novel also addresses the variety of interpretations and connections to nature with the help of characters. Fokir is the ecological knowledge of the locals and the unity with the environment. His knowledge about the tides, rivers, and animal behavior is highly sustainable in terms of the way of life as it is closely related to nature. Piya on the other hand symbolizes contemporary scientific knowledge and more organized and research based study of the environment. Although her point of view is good, it lacks the local experience at the beginning. The interplay of the two schools of thought indicates that ecological justice demands both scientific knowledge and local knowledge systems.

Besides the environmental issues, the historical and political aspects are also included in the novel, which are crucial to the idea of ecological justice. The Morichjhapi episode shows how the power of the state and political choices may contribute to the displacement and misery of the marginalized people under the banner of environmental protection. This incident represents the meeting of the ecological, political, and social inequality and it proves that ecological questions cannot be avoided along with the questions of power and justice.

Besides, the novel questions anthropocentrism through the agency of non-human factors. Such animals as tigers and dolphins are not depicted as some background creatures but as important members of the ecological system. Their existence and behavior affect the human life and this fact supports the thesis that human beings are not the sole elements in an ecological system that is bigger. This point of view is consistent with the ecocritical ideas that require a more inclusive and ethical view of the environment.

Ecocriticism and, in particular, ecological justice, therefore, offer a way of looking at *The Hungry Tide* in a broad manner. It enables this paper to discuss how these three problems of environmental sustainability, human rights, and social inequality are all intertwined. The final point of the novel is that there is a need to balance between nature and human communities in a way that they are just.

In this paper, a qualitative research methodology is used because it is based on the interpretative analysis of a literary text as opposed to numerical or statistical data. The qualitative research is also quite appropriate when exploring literary works as it provides the opportunity to investigate meaning, theme, and representation used in the literary works in great detail (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2012, p. 4).

The textual analysis (close reading) is the main approach that should be adopted in this study since it involves the detailed and critical analysis of the text about Amitav Ghosh and the book *The Hungry Tide*. Close reading enables the researcher to examine language, narrative, characterization, and thematic patterns in the text to understand how the text is constructing ecological meanings (Klarer, 2023, p. 33).

An ecocritical framework guides the analysis, with specific attention to the notion of ecological justice. This theoretical approach helps to investigate the associations between human and non-human factors, and such problems as environmental degradation, displacement, and the issues of morality between conservation and human survival are presented by this theoretical approach (Griffin, 2013, p.71).

The Hungry Tide has been chosen as the main piece because of its intensive involvement of the ecological and socio-political problems particularly in the unique environment surrounding Sundarbans. The main aspects of the story such as its setting, characterization, and key plot points are subjectively examined to evaluate how the concept of ecological justice is manifested in the text and how it is challenged.

Besides the main text, to facilitate the analysis and position the study within the existing scholarly discourse, the study includes the secondary sources in the form of scholarly articles, books, and critical essays. The analysis of the literature in the field is crucial in determining the gaps in the research work and enhances the theoretical and analytical basis of the study (Gentles et al.).

This methodological approach will give the chance to examine the multifarious concurrence of ecology, power, and social disparity in the novel through this methodological approach.

Results and Discussion

Nature as an Active Ecological Force

The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh, introduces the subaltern ecological space of the Sundarbans, in which nature is presented as an active and autonomous force, rather than a passive environment. The novel deconstructs anthropocentricist views on human mastery of nature, through the changing geography of the islands, the unpredictability of the tides and the perpetual threat that wildlife poses. In an ecocritical approach, the representation of the Sundarbans by Ghosh highlights interconnectivity of human and non-human life whilst preempting what lies ahead in terms of vulnerability of human life within the ecological framework.

The novel reminds us on numerous occasions about the fragility of the Sundarbans world. Rivers, tidal and islands are found to be constantly moving in size by forces that occur naturally. The environment thus is a space where land is constantly being created and destroyed, embodying the impermanence of human settlement and the uncontrollability of the ecological processes (Ghosh, 2004, p. 7). The Sundarbans, in contrast to the urban spaces, which are developed through human intervention, resists permanence and order and, therefore, challenges the notion of human mastery over nature.

This instability has a strong relationship with the flow of tides, which has been pivotal in establishing rhythms of life in the area. The tides govern the traveling, the comfort of the economy and even the existence. They may maintain life by supporting fishing and transportation; and may be disastrous, devastating through floods and land erosion. This kind of representation could be a response to ecocritical arguments that nature cannot be perceived only as a source of human activity but as an autonomous entity that has its own form of agency (Buell, 1995, p. 44). The tidal scenery of Sundarbans constantly reminds the characters that the human existence is the issue that is based on the ecological systems that are not fully under the control of human beings.

Dangerous wildlife in its turn strengthens the active involvement of nature in the novel. Particularly tigers, which in some sense represent the unpredictable nature and the power of nature. The people of the Sundarbans are constantly exposed to attacks of tigers, which never have any warning, are all sudden. These events lead to the de-stabilization of anthropocentric presumptions because they show anthropocentric presumptions are destabilized through these incidents. Rather, the novel depicts human beings as a species among many that are at war in the same environment in a bid to survive.

The tiger is also used symbolically, it is used as a symbol of the resistance of the nature to the human intrusion. Conservation policies aim at safeguarding tigers as endangered species but, within the context of local communities, they are seen as a direct threat to life. This struggle exemplifies the conflict between ecological preservation and human security, which comes to the fore in the broad ecological justice engagement of the novel.

Simultaneously, Ghashazadeh does not try to frame nature as completely hostile. There is also the Sundarbans that is an income source and a source of cultural pride to the locals. All fishing, honey picking, and riding up rivers all rely on the ecosystem. As a result, the contact between man and nature in the novel is described as being dependent and dangerous. This duality makes romanticized perceptions of nature as being harmonious and peaceful. By ecocriticism, Garrard argues that ecocriticism seeks to shift beyond simplistic idealizations of nature in that science recognizes the complexity and ambivalence of nature (Garrard, 2012, p. 16).

The character of Fokir is an example of a way of being based on ecological adaptation. Fokir has first-hand experience of the Sundarbans as opposed to outsiders like Piya and Kanai. It is not formal knowledge about the environment that makes him understand the environment but direct interaction of the environment (stated by tides/ rivers/ and wildlife). He reads ecological indications intuitively and sails the waterways with assurance. This ecocentric worldview of humans existing as a component of a larger ecological network instead of as the masters of nature is exhibited by this caring relationship.

Contrastingly, Kanai first approaches the Sundarbans with intellectual detachment, and urban arrogance. Their lack of knowledge about the environment reveals the restrictions of human knowledge without ecological experience. Gradually changing Kanai, Ghosh criticizes attitudes toward nature being an object that can be manipulated or studied at a distance.

The storm at the end of the novel is the ultimate manifestation of life by the nature. The storm annihilates the plans of humanity, the social order of things and ends up killing Fokir. This episode is symbolic of the overwhelming force of nature and supports the concept in which nature has its own desires and wants nothing to interfere with it. The vulnerability of a human being in the face of an ecological disaster becomes one of the key themes of the novel.

The Sundarbans hence appears to be more than just a geographical location, but now a living ecological organism that informs human consciousness and social relations. By showing the active, unpredictable, and powerful nature of nature, Ghosh develops the anthropocentric assumptions and demands a more respectful and adaptive attitude towards nature.

Environmental Inequality and Marginalized Communities

Although *The Hungry Tide* is a foreground to the power of nature, it also shows that the problem of ecology has a strong connection with social and political inequalities. The novel deals with the theme of environmental injustice, through the episode of the Morichjhapi and the experiences of the marginalized communities that inhabit in the Sundarbans.

The Morichjhapi event is one of the most politically laden events of the novel. Displaced refugees who seek a means of livelihood and protection seek refuge in the Island of mostichjhapi in an attempt to settle down. Nevertheless, they are forcibly removed by the government on the grounds that the area falls under an ecological reserve which is under the protection of the government. The incident reveals that the asymmetry between state power and marginalized groups in relation to environmental protection is formed, and how environmental protection can turn into an instrument of exclusion and domination over the state.

In the ecological justice mindset, the event brings to fore very significant ethical concerns with the correlation between conservation, and human rights. The settlers are not depicted as exploiters of nature but instead, they are individuals trying to survive in challenging ecological and economic environment. However, their lives are criminalized in that they disrupt the official conservation policies. This can be seen to be telling what Nixon describes as slowness violence, that form of environmental/political harm which disproportionately affects the poor and marginalized (Nixon, 2011, p. 2).

The case of Morichjhapi settlers and the state treatment of the people shows how discourse of environmental issues may actually mask underlying forms of political and economic power. The conservation is introduced as a neutral or scientific goal but in the interpretation this term becomes mixed with issues of classes, displacement and power. Postcolonial ecocriticism highlights that colonial forms of control over land and resources are often replicated in postcolonial societies through stress on environmental policies (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010, p.12). In the novel, the forced displacement of the settlers shows how vulnerable groups are marginalized in the environmental decision-making processes as they all are dependent on the ecosystem in order to survive.

The people of the Sundarbans have a two-fold vulnerability. On the one hand, they become a subject to the environmental threat of storms, floods, and tiger attacks. Instead they are politically and economically sidelined, which limits the availability of resources as well as protection. This imbalanced exposure of ecological risk demonstrates the main issue of ecological justice, which is the least politically influential who often face the consequences of environmental hardship the most.

Ghosh also criticizes conservation model, which places man and nature apart and not in a relation of interdependence. The Morichjhapi settlers are trying to establish life, which co-exists with nature, but they are perceived to be a threat to environmental conservation. This can rub against the belief that the presence of man is necessarily devastating to nature. The novel, however, hints that sustainable coexistence can be achieved in cases where the environmental policies recognize local realities and incorporate mined voices.

Moreover, the story shows that environmental injustice goes hand in hand with other social injustices. Availability of safety, mobility and institutional support are disproportionately available to the characters. As Kanai and others who are urban and educated have their privilege, so do people like Fokir who are vulnerable despite their knowledge about the environment and their reliance on the environment.

By portraying the story of Morichjhapi and the experiences of the marginalized communities more widely, *The Hungry Tide* posits that ecological sustainability will be impossible without social justice. Environmental protection that fails to consider human predicaments will merely reproduce the inequality instead of addressing itself to ecological crises.

Indigenous Knowledge - versus Scientific Knowledge

The relational aspect of indigenous ecological knowledge, juxtaposed with modern scientific knowledge is significant in *The Hungry Tide*. By using contrasting characters in Fokir and Piya, Amitav Ghosh gives out the two different ways of perceiving and relating to the natural world. The novel illustrates the dependence of these knowledge systems on each other, instead of describing the juxtaposition of the local ecological systems to the broader ecological systems in environmental discourse.

Fokir is a native form of knowing, based on the experience of being here, and being in close contact with the ecosystem of the Sundarbans. Though he has never been educated, he knows all about the rivers, the tides and the wildlife and it is highly practical. He is able to read the indicators of the environment without the slightest use of mental calculation, he can work out the path to overcome life-threatening areas of waterways, he can read the patterns of animal behavior with the degree of precision that has not yet been labeled in language objective to describe certain researches in this field. His ecological consciousness is a resultant success of ongoing interaction with the environment and not the institutionalization of learning.

On the contrary, Piya is a representative of scientific rationality and empirical research. She discovers the Sundarbans as a marine biologist studying river dolphins by means of data collection, observation and use of technology. Her scientific mindset can be represented as an indication of the current environmental discourse, in the sense that it tends to be formalistic in writing, quantitative in analysis. But its knowledge as shown in the novel, is not sufficient to understand the dynamics involved in the ecosystem.

The use of Fokir within her research is slowly getting clearer in regard to the shortcomings of impersonally scientific research. She has the academic knowledge, she cannot find her way in Sundarbans without the guidance of the locals. Being used to the environment, Fokir can list dolphins and learn to feel water rhythms of the waterways in a manner that scientific tools alone cannot accomplish. In this exposition, Ghosh implies that environmental knowledge involves cooperation between scientific and indigenous knowledge.

This association contradicts the hierarchical favour of Western scientific epistemology with reference to local ecological experiences. According to Postcolonial ecocriticism, indigenous modes of knowing have historically been marginalized by the colonial and modern institutions without providing an adequate justification. However, in *The Hungry Tide*, the level of knowledge that Fokir holds about us is so important that it becomes impossible to decide to ignore our customs and adopt different methods of managing our nature and environment. In *The Hungry Tide*, however, the level of information that Fokir holds about us is so eminent that it becomes impossible to decide to neglect our custom and adopt some different methods of control over our nature and our surroundings.

Communication between Fokir and Piya is another challenge which supports this concept. Being unable to share the mutual understanding through the language, they form mutual understanding with the help of mutual interaction with the environment. This implies that an ecological knowledge need not exist within or between formal linguistic and institutional systems. The novel thus challenges the notion that knowledge can only be legitimate when one articulates the said knowledge within either an academic or scientific context.

An ecocentric worldview manifests also in the relationship that Fokir has with the natural world. His knowledge does not rely on objective-study or use of nature, but, unlike many contemporary methods which treat nature as an object of studying or exploitation, his appreciation is founded on coexistence and adaptation. He is aware of the risks involved in the Sundarbans but fails to make any efforts to master the nature. Instead he exists in its rhythms, manifesting a sort of ecological consciousness based on respect and survival.

The point of view of Piya changes dramatically, as she is exposed to Fokir. She starts off in the Sundarbans basically as the site of a scientific study but as the time goes by, she begins to appreciate the social and ecological reality of the area. Her increased admiration of the skills of Fokir is related to the overall message of the novel that ecological solutions cannot be based solely on the scientific power. Rather, they need to capture the local experiences and indigenous knowledge regimes.

The death of Fokir has a symbolic meaning in this situation. His demise during the storm is the death not only of a person but of aboriginal ecological knowledge under modernization and instability in the ecological contexts. It is already implied in the novel that the loss of such knowledge systems can undermine the ability of humanity to have a sustainable relationship with the natural world.

Ghosh concludes with the relationship between Fokir and Piya, that a dialogic and inclusive approach towards environmental understanding should be realized. There is no opposition between scientific and indigenous knowledge but rather see them interacting positively and able to collaborate in order to come up with solutions to the ecological problems. This view is consistent with the modern ecocritical thought, which has to be pluralistic and interdisciplinary in looking into environmental problems (Heise, 2008, p. 62).

Human-Animal Conflict and Ethical Dilemmas

The ethical dilemma of human survival versus wildlife conservation is another burning issue in *The Hungry Tide*. Both people and animals are endangered, making the Sundarbans a case in which the survival of one group, people, is often at risk because of the survival of the other, animals. In this pitting, Ghosh poses significant questions of ecological ethics, conservation and meaning of justice in the discourse of the environment.

The role of tigers plays a rather important role in the novel. They are portrayed as strong and unpredictable beings that can at any time, attack a human being without any warning. To local residents, the tiger is associated with the fear and ecological dominance. The ever-present danger of attack induces a sense of insecurity, an element that depicts insecurity of life in Sundarbans.

Meanwhile, conservational laws afford tigers protection due to their endangered status. It presents the local communities with a moral dilemma, as they must live in dangerous areas, and they do not have the necessary protection. The killing of a tiger after they attacked the village is condemned by the authorities, though the fact that they themselves were acting in self-defense. This accident puts into view the conflict between the policy of conservation of the environment and realities of human survival.

Through the ecocritical lens, the novel criticizes the ethnocentric anthropocentrism ethics that place human interests as the most important ones. Meanwhile, it challenges conservation models which focus on animal protection and overlook the plight of human populations within the fringes of society. According to Garrard, ecocriticism aims to extend the moral consideration beyond humanity in its practical form, yet *The Hungry Tide* proves that such an ethical balance is very complicated in practice in both its theoretical form and practical implementation (Garrard, 2012, p. 27).

The clash of human and animal in the novel is not given in the form of a fight between civilization and wilderness. Rather, it can be seen as an emergence of poverty, vulnerability to the environment, and neglect of political arenas. The people living in the area rely on the forest in order to sustain their lives and this leads them into the close areas of the dangerous wildlife. They are further weakened by the fact that the state is not supporting them properly and also because of the restrictive conservation policies that they have.

River dolphins offer additional view of the ethical aspects of conservation. The research by Piya is a reflection of scientific interest towards endangered species and the significance of safeguarding the biodiversity. Nevertheless, her visits to the Sundarbans also show that it is not possible to keep the issue of environmental protection out of social realities. According to the novel, sustainable conservation poses a challenge of addressing economic and social situations that influence human nature and human relationship with nature.

Notably, Ghosh does not create an image of animals being adversaries. The images of tigers and dolphins are presented as critical components of the ecosystem the survival of which is intertwined with the well-being of the environment. The novel has thus avoided the simplification of ecological conflict into a mere human versus non-human life conflict. Rather, it emphasizes on the complexity of coexistence in precarious environments.

This ethical complexity is evaluated by changing the attitude that Piya had towards his former self, and how he now views his former actions and their victims. She starts to realize that conservation should not only be considered in relation to the wildlife, but also human communities. This change is an indication that ecological justice needs to be extended to a more comprehensive ethical approach that is capable of responding to not only environmental sustainability, but also social inequality.

The storm which leads to the death of Fokir is an additional reinforcement of the theme of vulnerability common to human beings and the non-human nature. We find that in the presence of ecological disaster, the human and the animal survival become unclear and the interrelation of all living forms in the ecosystem can be experienced.

Finally, *The Hungry Tide* suggests that the ecological ethics cannot be founded on preserving nature or on the predominance of human interests. Rather, justice must be all about make a balance that acknowledges the mutual rights as well as vulnerabilities of both the human and non-human beings.

Power, Politics and Ecological Justice

The ecological struggles that are expressed in *The Hungry Tide* can never be separated and isolated of other larger complexes of political and economic power. Ghosh shows that the ecological problems are the construction of not only the natural forces but the order of governments, inequality and social hierarchy. This lens demonstrates the ecological justice in this novel, as an environmental and political issue.

The top-down approach to environmental governance exemplifies the state control and domination of the Sundarbans that denies any real evidence of involvement and participation by the local communities. The case of the Morichjhapi incident is similar to how the environmental policies can turn into tools of political power. To maintain ecological territory, refugees who seek survival are displaced, and this aspect tells about how the power of the state often does not consider human welfare as a priority, instead focusing on abstraction in conservation.

This relationship represents postcolonial ecocritical discourses whereby environmental management in postcolonial societies often re-enact colonial control structures (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 9). The regulation of land is based on the interests of both the nation and the world in terms of environmental concerns, and the locals are marginalized despite having a reliance on the environment.

Economic disparity plays another role in ecological experiences in the novel. Other characters like Piya and Kanai enjoy educational and social privilege which enables them to have mobility and institutional support. Local residents, in contrast, like Fokir are economically vulnerable, despite their expertise in ecology. Such an unequal distribution of resources shows how marginalized communities are often disproportionately affected by the problems of environmental hazards.

Another way the novel criticizes the assumption of the political neutrality of environmental policies is through this method. As much as conservation activities are packaged as being necessary to preserve the ecology, in many cases, they are subjective to certain groups of people at the expense of others. By showing these disparities, Ghosh demonstrates that environmental discourse has strong ties with the problems of the class, power, and access to the means.

Ecological justice thus emerges as a framework which aims at resolving to establish an environmental sustainability and social equity. It grounds its argument on the notion that ecological protection could not be isolated in the sense of not having to concern itself with questions of human rights, participation and economic inequality. Green environmental policies should incorporate not only the needs and perspectives of the local communities, but also address the needs of the local communities more effectively and efficiently in this respect.

By its portrayal of nature, marginalized groups and political authority, *The Hungry Tide* ultimately offers the idea of ecology as a subject of moral and political conflict. The novel compels a reader to revisit traditional ways conservation should take place, and how environmental and social justice are intertwined.

Conclusion

This study examined Amitav Ghosh's book *The Hungry Tide* in the context of ecocriticism, specifically ecological justice. The analysis showed that the novel depicts the Sundarbans as a dynamic and potent ecological domain, where human life is still strongly connected with nature. Ghosh's depiction of an active, unpredictable, and autonomous nature undermines anthropocentric views and highlights the fragility of human life in relation to nature.

The research also identified that environmental issues in the novel are also relevant to political power, social inequality and displacement. The novel highlights the issues with environmental policies that neglect the rights and survival of marginalised groups in the name of conservation through the Morichjhapi episode and the lives of the marginalised people. Meanwhile, the interaction between Fokir and Piya underscores the

need for the incorporation of indigenous ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge for sustainable environmental practices.

Furthermore, the novel is a story about human-animal conflict as a complex ethical dilemma, not one or the other, human life or animal life. To achieve ecological justice, Ghosh argues for a "balanced approach that takes into account the rights, needs, and vulnerabilities of both humans and non-humans.

To sum up, *The Hungry Tide* is a valuable addition to the field of ecocritical writing; it highlights that ecology, politics and social justice are all interconnected. In the end, the novel promotes a co-existence, responsibility and equality-based approach to environmental governance that is inclusive and ethical.

Recommendation

Future studies on *The Hungry Tide* could be continued and expanded from an interdisciplinary approach, such as literature and environmental studies, sociology and political ecology, in order to examine the idea of ecological justice. Comparative analysis can also be used to compare the themes of environmental crisis, displacement and marginalized communities in both *The Hungry Tide* and other postcolonial eco-literary works within different ecological contexts.

There is also the potential for future scholars to research how climate change and environmental disasters, including the impact of the rising sea level, migration, and ecological vulnerabilities in coastal areas such as the Sundarban delta, are explored in the novel. Analysis of gender and ecology could also be useful in understanding the impact of environmental issues on the lives of men and women in marginalised communities.

Additionally, future research is needed on the relevance of local ecological knowledge for current environmental governance and sustainability policies. Using local knowledge systems in combination with scientific approaches can help to create more inclusive and effective environmental solutions.

Lastly, scholars can examine the role of literature like *The Hungry Tide* in promoting environmental awareness, and shaping the understanding of ecological justice, conservation ethics and social responsibility in the contemporary world.

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