



Saarth E-Journal

Saarth E-Journal of Research

E-mail : sarthejournal@gmail.com

www.sarthejournal.com

ISSN NO : 2395-339X

Peer Reviewed

Vol.7 No.05

Impact Factor

Quarterly

Oct-Nov-Dec 2022

AN ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF AMITAV GHOSH'S THE HUNGRY TIDE

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ABSTARCT

The vast majority of environmental issues are being thoughtfully considered and discussed in today's world of literature. Because of this, it is possible that this may lead to environmental activism through the medium of literature, as the writings in question will reject and challenge existing official narratives. In this research, the novel *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh is analysed through the lens of ecocriticism. The novel, written in the style of literary pastiche, makes use of many different literary methods and genres. This allows for a more in

depth understanding of the eco-poetics of the piece. This transformation of the novel into a historiographic eco-criticism of the Marichjhapi massacre is the subject of the investigation that is presented in the article. Because of this, the work might be seen as being at a crossroads between post-colonialism and postmodernism.

Key words: Green Post-colonialism, Marichjhapi massacre, postmodernism, ecology, eco poetics, historiographic eco-criticism.

INTRODUCTION:

Due to their focus on environmental concerns and the way they question traditional conceptions of progress and modernity, eco-narratives are now recognised as their own literary subgenre. Even before this subgenre existed, nature and references to it were a part of the literary imagination, sometimes as the focal focus and sometimes as the backdrop. As a result, as Dana Philips says in "Ecocriticism, Literary Theory, and the Reality of Ecology," "nature is difficult, nature is profoundly entwined in culture, and culture is fully implicated in nature." Nature has been utilised as a backdrop in literature throughout time and space, frequently echoing events in the plot. Nonetheless, an ecocritical reading of this usage is far from certain. Ecology and environmental conservation did not become a global issue until the late twentieth century, when environmental devastation was increasing and activists took action. As a result, environmental issues have been tackled in every domain, from government to academics. One way this philosophy manifests itself in writing is through eco-criticism.

THE ECOCRITICISM

The Ecocriticism Reader defines ecocriticism as “the investigation of the relationship between literature and ecology” (1996). Pramod K. Nayar defines ecocriticism as a “critical approach that looks at nature and representations of environment and landscape in cultural texts, putting specific focus to ‘nature’ and the vocabulary utilised when speaking about it” (Nair 330). As ecocriticism has strong ties to activism, it is able to establish a political engagement with the texts and investigate the politics at play. In addition, it’s considered an interdisciplinary method, as shown by books like *Multidisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (ISLE). Ecofeminism, Deep Ecology, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Marxist Environmentalism, and Eco

socialism are all branches of thought that have contributed to recent theoretical advances in Ecocriticism. It cannot be emphasised enough that the differences between “developed” and “under-developed” or “non-developed” locations are a direct result of the relationship those places have with Nature and Gender.

DEEP ECOLOGY

Many people believe that the idea of “Deep Ecology” is the single most important factor in advancing the global environmental movement. It’s more concerned with a spiritual connection to and response to nature than with logic and reason (Nair 332). Organizations like Earth First! are motivated by this idea. That mankind cannot prosper in large numbers is a central tenet of Deep Ecology, which suggests a radical shift from an anthropocentric to a bio-centric worldview. Third-world environmentalists such as Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier have also argued against this point of view. They say that in developing countries such as Africa and Asia, poverty and environmental degradation are inextricably linked. Deep Ecology makes sense in the developed world because of all the available unoccupied land, but it is unworkable in the developing world owing to poverty and a lack of land. Deep Ecology, according to these eco-sceptics, is an isolated idea that has no place in a global setting. The postcolonial ecological approach known as “Liberation Ecologism” is an outgrowth of this critique. It contends that the First World’s trade policies and agreements harm the Third World. The IMF and World Bank’s development initiatives, as well as first-world countries’ waste dumping on underdeveloped countries, are examples of Euro-American politics.

Ramachandra Guha emphasises the fact that it is widely acknowledged that the First World’s route to modernity and progress cannot be replicated in the Third World. As a result, Liberation Ecologism emphasises the need of infusing social justice concerns within Ecocriticism. The next thread is Guha and Martinez-concept Alier’s “bad environmentalism” (1998). These and other strands highlight the range of perspectives enabled by Ecocriticism, “which may help to underscore the value and obligation of the humanities and literary studies” (Zapf 136). Since “the environmental approach in literary studies has been more issue-driven than technique or paradigm-driven,” it contributes to a fertile arena in which new ideas can bloom and develop (Buell 12). The majority of Amitav Ghosh’s writings, which may be categorised as eco-critical stories, are set in West Bengal’s Sunderbans. This article will examine *The Hungry Tide* from an eco-critical standpoint in order to answer questions such as, “What are the various tactics used by the writer to analyse the ecological issues?” In the long term, who benefits from these methods? What linguistic studies have been conducted on the term “development”? How do these works employ historiographical eco-criticism?

The novel *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh, published in 2004, is set in the Sunderbans on India’s eastern coast. Although the tale is narrated from the perspectives of numerous characters, including Kanai, Piyali, Nirmal, Nilima, Kusum, Fokir, Moyna, and Horen, an anonymous fake narrator works as a commentator and ties up loose ends. Ghosh

wrote this novel in 2004, when the Sunderbans were in grave danger, to attract global attention to the subject. At the time, the state of West Bengal was vigorously pushing the notion of “Eco

tourism,” which gave its inhabitants a false image of eco-friendly travel. Yet, throughout the text, Amitav Ghosh disputes this interpretation, pushing the reader to reconsider whether the projected tourism for the Indian mangroves is ecotourism or environmental destruction.

Postmodernism is defined by Jean Francis Lyotard, author of “The Postmodern Condition,” as “incredulity towards meta-narratives.” Ghosh debunks the West Bengal government’s grand narrative, which claims that the refugees are too responsible for the loss of “present and future forest resources, as well as causing ecological imbalance” when West Bengal proclaimed Marichjhapi as a reserve forest in 1978. Ghosh tells a variety of stories that violate this assumption throughout the book. Nirmal’s journal is only one illustration of this. Postmodernism contends that all knowledge is incomplete and flawed. Numerous occurrences in

the novel highlight this concept, including Kanai’s difficulty to recall particular details while recreating an event from memory, Fokir’s death, and the subsequent loss of his notebook. The book participates in self-reflexivity by demonstrating that there is not one but many narratives, making it eco-criticism even if the reader may be expecting for a single, factual story. As a result, Ghosh provides a harsh assessment of the decolonized territory, highlighting how colonial forces pervade the state. The article is a criticism of the failed postcolonial society, showing the hypocrisy of the state.

The novel confirms the concepts of postcolonial and Marxist eco-criticism by illustrating that the Western paradigm of ecological preservation cannot be mindlessly applied to decolonized, third-world locations. If conservation efforts are performed in an area where humans and animals have coexisted, they may end up being disruptive and detrimental to the local population. Residents in these locations frequently rely only on natural resources, making them vulnerable in an increasingly capitalist culture. In such a milieu, Western conservationist values may appear extravagant and out of reach. Many binaries are also obtained in the text from the Sunderbans people. Within the colonial sphere, the coloniser and the colonised constitute a duality. In a scenario with urban and destitute inhabitants, the same binary is flipped. Kanai, a polyglot, represents the urban environment as a repository of information in this book. The rural populace is seen to be ignorant and defenceless. Kanai, on the other hand, is a powerless colonised person in Garjontola, commonly known as the tide nation.

SUBALTERNS HAVE POWER HERE, UNLIKE IN MARICHJHAPI, WHERE THEY HAVE NO AUTHORITY

There is an intriguing link between the narration and the place in terms of storytelling. The Sunderbans are distinguished by mangrove trees and, as a result, an extremely mutative terrain that is unpredictable due to low and high tides. These tides keep reshaping the island to the point where land and ocean can no longer be distinguished. This corresponds to the narrative’s presentation of several storylines. The characters evolve throughout time, just as the plot does. The events in the early section of the story are relatively peaceful and the action is sluggish, as the characters are still getting to know each other, mirroring the tidal ebb in the Sunderbans.

CONCLUSION

In contrast, the events of the second portion wash over and the tension becomes more obvious. These insights speak to the novel’s postmodern aspects. Sunderbans itself is postmodern, since everything claiming prominence in this region gets swept away, and the landmass and water continuously contest who becomes the centre. It may be claimed that the

novel's space contributes to the novel's postmodern feature. The use of literary pastiche throughout the novel, as well as the use of different registers and genres, is postmodernist. The folkloristic retelling of the Bon Bibi story incorporates several textures of speech, and this hybridization once again resists centre. Finally, Ghosh may be seen to have used a variety of postmodernist strategies, such as pastiche and historiographic fiction, to develop the ecopoetics in this work. The text demonstrates that the state's development terminology is deceptive and misleading. If it serves any purpose, it is to conspire with power structures while ignoring the bond that individuals may have with the land. By integrating numerous anecdotes, the book serves as a wake-up call for readers to be more wary of state politics when it comes to their so called development programmes.

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