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## AN ANECDOTE OF AFFILIATION BETWEEN THE LIVING SPECIES

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### **Abstract:**

*Literary authors have been increasingly exploring the environment, particularly on the interactions between humans and the natural world. This connection provides valuable insights into ecological studies and eco-critical literature. One of the writers whose works best exemplifies the relationship between ecology and literature is Amitav Ghosh. His writings revolve around the human condition and the environment. His novel *The Hungry Tide* is set in the Sundarbans, a unique island renowned for its unique mangrove ecosystem, which supports a wide range of species, including the Royal Bengal tiger. The plot of the novel revolves around Amitav Ghosh's discovery of an entire human civilization thriving amidst these ever-changing, sinking islands, where they struggle for survival while surrounded by wildlife in their daily lives. In addition to portraying the natural world, Amitav Gosh sheds light on the interdependence of plant, animal, and human life, illustrating how each is either directly or indirectly affected by the others. This research study aims to provide an eco-critical reading and analysis of the novel *The Hungry Tide*.*

**Keywords:** *Ecology, Eco-criticism, Environment, Nature, Human, etc.*

Ecocriticism is the most recent progressive movement that is gaining popularity all over the world. Ecology is under peril due to environmental calamities that are harming the modern world. Technology and research have contributed to partially resolving the worldwide ecological crisis. However, literary works also act as a part of the solution by raising awareness of the current condition of nature. Ernest Hackel, a German biologist, first used the term ecology in 1866. The term 'eco' derived from the Greek word 'oikos' which etymologically means household or earth and 'logy' from 'logos' means logical discourse. When combined, they refer to criticism of how the home and surroundings are portrayed in literature.

In essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*, William Rueckert first used the word ecocriticism. Rueckert claims that ecocriticism incorporates ecological concepts or ecology into literary analysis. In an article *Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature*, Sandip Kumar Mishra quotes Lawrence Buell's definition, "As a study of the



relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist's praxis" (168). Vishwa Bhushan also quotes another definition given by Cheryll Glotfelty as, "Eco-criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (134). Ecocriticism is more than just environmental studies, it sets out to differentiate it from traditional nature writing by adopting an ethical perspective and committing to the natural world, and by building an intersection between a person and non-human worlds.

Eco-criticism is an aspect of literary research that seeks to establish concrete links between nature and literature. The environment issue is one of the greatest and most pressing challenges confronting today's generation. It is divided into two stages. The first is centered on nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction. The second is eco-criticism, often known as revisionism. Eco-criticism is oriented at environmental justice and urban issues of social criticism. The primary goal of ecocriticism is to demonstrate that the works of authors concerned with the environment are supportive in resolving and pushing ecological concerns. Many novelists operate as responsible writers, producing works that cause the society to be aware of environment. Amitav Ghosh is one such writer whose work raises consciousness and serves as a message of awakening for the society.

Amitav Ghosh is regarded as one of the best novelists of modern Indian English literature. He was born in Kolkata on July 11, 1956, and grew up in India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Ghosh's ambitious novels employ intricate narrative tactics to delve into the nature of national along with individual identity, notably among Indians and South Asians. His contribution to Indian English literature is outstanding. He has published historical fiction as well as nonfiction works on subjects such as colonialism and the impact of climate change. His works are divided into two categories: fiction and nonfiction. In fiction, popular works include *The Shadow Lines*, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide*, *The Ibis trilogy* and *Gun Island*. In nonfiction, *In an Antique Land*, *The Imam and India* and *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. As a famous writer, Amitav Ghosh has received various awards and honours. He is the winner of two Lifetime Achievement Awards and four honorary doctorates. The President of India bestowed upon him the Padma Shri, one of India's highest honours, in 2007. In 2010, he shared a Dan David prize with Margaret Atwood, and in 2011, he was given the Grand Prix of the Blue Metropolis festival in Montreal.

Amitav Ghosh's work mostly focuses on key environmental challenges in order to expose ecosystem difficulties. *The Hungry Tide*, his fourth novel, was published in 2004 and addresses the interaction between humans and the environment. The plot of the novel revolves around disjunctions, dislocations, and destabilization. It is commonly known as ecological novel. It is an outstanding novel that combines anthropology, environmentalism, migration, travel, ethnography, and landscape beneath the guise of English literature. Gosh demonstrates the power of nature beautifully at the beginning of the novel:

There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as two hundred miles inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater, only to re-emerge hours later. The currents are so powerful as to reshape the islands almost daily — some days



the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbanks where there were none before (Gosh, *HT*, 7).

Gosh's portrayal of nature demonstrates his understanding of the environment.

The most important component of the novel is its environment. Novel addresses the ecological difficulties of the Sunderbans, the mangrove forests that stretch between the plains and the Bay of Bengal. Ghosh attempts to depict the clash between man and nature. The Sunderbans' biodiversity is gradually being depleted as a result of modern human activity to keep themselves and their families alive. Moyna addresses Nilima's perspective on the new nylon nets used to catch tigers in the Sunderbans as, "These new nylon nets, which they use to catch chingrir meen — the spawn of tiger prawns. The nets are so fine that they catch the eggs of all the other fish as well. Mashima wanted to get the nets banned, but it was impossible" (Gosh, *HT*, 134). These precisely reflect the disadvantage of technological growth, which is beneficial to men but harmful to biodiversity. Sankar Polaiah writes in his article, *Impact of Technology on Environment*:

While technology can be a powerful force to improve our standard of living, it comes at a cost. New technological goods are often burdensome to the environment. This damage may come from acquiring the resources to produce new technology, or from toxic by-products of technological production. It can consist of environmentally harmful waste produced by the technology itself, or the castoff remains of obsolete technology (Polaiah, 53).

Technology is important in development and greater production to meet human needs, but unregulated technology has a negative impact on the environment, such as neylon nets, which kill the eggs of many fish.

The rich and well-balanced biodiversity of West Bengal's Sunderbans (India) are heavily influenced by the island's poor people. They believe that natural resources belong solely to them and that they may use them at any cost. As a result, the government takes strong steps to expel them from the island in order to preserve nature's bounty and maintain the right cycle of biodiversity in the Sunderbans. As Nilimai states, "Some refugees had occupied one of the islands in the forest. ... There was a confrontation with the authorities that resulted in a lot of violence. The government wanted to force the refugees to return to their resettlement camp in central India. They were being put into trucks and buses and taken away" (*HT* 26). Man has long believed that nature exists to fulfil their desires, thus they exploit nature on a large scale.

The next significant theme in the novel is climate change. Climate change is killing rare dolphin and fish species in the Sunderbans ecosystem. At the same time, the tiger population is rapidly declining due to the climate change. Wayne Hsiung and Cass R. Sunstein in their article, *Climate Change and Animals* discuss climate change and its influence on animals and rare species as follows:



Species that cannot adjust to climate change, either geographically or chronologically, face a number of severe difficulties. Heat is a direct stressor of animal physiology. ... Extreme weather events, and abrupt climate change, also hit animals hard. Even aside from the direct damage of storms, periods of abnormal precipitation or drought can have adverse behavioral and physiological consequences on species ranging from elephants to turtles (Hsiung, 7).

Through this novel, Amitav Gosh also attempts to highlight the repercussions of climate change happens in the Sunderbans which leads to the extinction of endangered species.

The submergence of islands is a true ecosystem that is a key aspect of the environment. A minor imbalance in an ecosystem can be hazardous to the ecological chain. Morichjapi Island's ecosystem and Sunderbans environment is out of balance, which creates harmful conditions. As Piya explains:

Some kinds of crabs actually laundered the mud they lived in, scrubbing it grain by grain. Their feet and their sides were lined with hairs that formed microscopic brushes and spoons. They used these to scrape off the diatoms and other edible matter attached to each grain of sand. They were a sanitation department and a janitorial team rolled into one: they kept the mangroves alive by removing their leaves and litter; without them the trees would choke on their own debris. Didn't they represent some fantastically large proportion of the system's biomass? Didn't they outweigh even the trees and the leaves? Hadn't someone said that intertidal forests should be named after crabs rather than mangroves since it was they — certainly not the crocodile or the tiger or the dolphin — who were the keystone species of the entire ecosystem? (Gosh, *HT*, 142).

Amitav Ghosh shows the direct battle between human and animal in this novel. He attempts to demonstrate the power of humans and animals. Humans gained power at times, and men overpowered animals at other times, but both eventually failed to win. Humans are thought to be the most intelligent beings on the planet, they should consider the balance of the environment and consider animals, which have emotions and feelings and will respond according to their nature. But the difficulty is that humans know everything but choose to disregard it. While Kusum's father went to collect firewood, he failed to observe the event that led to his death. Ghosh states:

The animal was in the trees that lined the shore, and from the direction of its advance she knew it had watched the boat as it came across the river. At Kusum's first scream her mother and many others from the hamlet ran up to the embankment. But her father, for whom the shout of warning had been intended, didn't hear her, for the wind was blowing in the wrong direction. Within moments, dozens of people had joined her on the



embankment and they all saw what she had seen: the animal was stalking her father (Gosh, *HT*, 108).

Ghosh's opinions that animals have emotions as well, but because of human selfishness, they feel problems and sometimes attack human out of fear or to protect themselves and devour human as their sustenance. Nobody likes to offend other people in this domain. Animals, too, desire to be free in their environment. Due to population growth, humans willingly damage the forest in order to build their home. These actions have an impact on the emotions of animals because forests and caverns are safe places for them where they can readily obtain what they want for survival. Animals feel helpless and some become enraged when they see their enemy in the guise of a human being and attempt to exact revenge on them because they believe they have come to kill them or ruin their territory. That is why animals use their power to save their lives and occasionally to turn humans into food. Ghosh illustrates the feeling and prediction of animals as, "The animal too was upwind of its prey, and they could see its coat flashing as it closed in; because of the distinctiveness of its own odor, it was skilled in dealing with the wind and it knew that the people on the other bank were powerless against these gusts" (Gosh, *HT*, 108).

Amitav Ghosh also discusses the natural cycle in the novel. He describes an incident that occurred in 1970 involving a massive cyclone, and explains how Fokir, Piya, and other island residents are confronting the same cyclone, which has caused massive destruction and chaos in the Sunderbans. Ghosh attempts to warn the humans against their irresponsible actions against nature. Ghosh describes, "It happened in October — that's always when the worst of them strike, October and November. Before the storm had even made landfall the tide country was hit by a huge wave, a wall of water forty feet in height. Can you imagine how high that is, my friend? It would have drowned everything on your island and on ours too. Even we on this roof would have been underwater" (Gosh, *HT*, 205). Through history, Ghosh warns people of cyclones and explains their destructive power.

Through this novel, Amitav Ghosh also explores the relationship between Indian myth and the ecological difficulties of the Sunderbans. The residents of Lusibari worship 'Bon bibi,' the 'forest goddess,' who rules over all of the Sunderbans animals. People used to perform to honour their goddess. They believe that animals such as tigers and crocodiles were used as servants to the Bon bibi. And they firmly believed their goddess is kind and protects humanity from natural disasters and animal attacks. When Dokkhin Rain was being chased by a tiger, he received assistance from Bon bibi. However, Ghosh strongly opposes the myth and provides a character who witnessed the tiger incident and sought assistance from Borm bibi but received none. Kusumshares to Kanai, "I called her too," she said. But she never came. ... Bon Bibi. The day my father died. I saw it all, it happened in front of me, and I called her again and again" (Gosh, *HT*, 107).

The novel, *The Hungry Tide* takes place in the Sundarbans, an area of almost 10,000 square kilometers. Climate change in the Sundarbans had an impact on both humans and animals. Flora is in danger as well. The Sunderbans mangroves begin to wrinkle as the population grows. The threat of flooding and tsunamis increases when water levels rise suddenly. The people of the islands are illiterate and unaware, resulting in an uneven



biodiversity in Sunderbans-tide country. The extinction of rare spices, the struggle between humans and animals, and their myths about nature are all significant factors that have led to massive losses for both nature and humans. The selfish nature of humans also causes nature to shift, resulting in natural disasters. Amitav Ghosh addresses the challenges and proposes the best response for environmental protection by highlighting numerous interactions between humans and nature through this novel.

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