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Ecology, Survival, and Displacement in *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh explores the complex relationship between humans and nature in the fragile ecosystem of the Sundarbans. The novel highlights ecological vulnerability, the struggle for survival, and the displacement of marginalized communities. Through the experiences of characters such as Piya Roy, Kanai Dutt, and Fokir, the narrative examines how environmental forces and political decisions shape human lives. The novel also reflects on the conflict between wildlife conservation and human livelihood, particularly through references to events like the Morichjhanpi Massacre. By portraying the harsh yet vibrant life of the Sundarbans, the novel emphasizes the interconnectedness of ecology, survival, and displacement.

Keywords

Ecology, Survival, Displacement, Environmental conflict, Sundarbans ecosystem, Marginalized communities

Introduction

The intersection of ecology and human survival has become an important theme in contemporary literature. Environmental changes and political interventions often lead to displacement and social struggle, particularly among marginalized communities. *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh is a significant ecological novel that portrays life in the unique deltaic region of the Sundarbans, a vast mangrove forest shared by India and Bangladesh.

The novel focuses on the fragile relationship between humans and nature. It presents the Sundarbans as a space where tides, storms, wildlife, and political forces constantly threaten human existence. Through the journeys of Piya Roy, a marine biologist researching river dolphins, and her interaction with local inhabitants like Fokir, the narrative reveals the daily struggles faced by people living in this hazardous environment.

Ecology and the Sundarbans Landscape

The ecological setting of the Sundarbans plays a central role in *The Hungry Tide*. The region is characterized by dense mangrove forests, tidal rivers, and dangerous wildlife such as the Bengal Tiger. The constantly shifting landscape reflects the unpredictability of nature and its power over human life.

The novel emphasizes ecological balance while also highlighting the tension between conservation policies and local survival. Government efforts to protect wildlife sometimes ignore the needs of the people who depend on the forest and rivers for their livelihood.

Survival in a Hostile Environment

Survival is a recurring theme throughout the novel. The inhabitants of the Sundarbans face natural disasters, tiger attacks, and economic hardship. Characters like Fokir represent the resilience of local communities who rely on fishing and forest resources despite constant danger.

Through these struggles, the novel portrays survival not merely as physical endurance but also as cultural and emotional resilience. The lives of the islanders demonstrate how human communities adapt to ecological challenges.

Displacement and the Morichjhanpi Tragedy

Another important theme in the novel is displacement caused by political and environmental forces. The narrative refers to the historical incident known as the Morichjhanpi Massacre, where refugees who had settled in the Sundarbans were forcibly evicted by the government.

This event reveals the harsh reality faced by marginalized communities who seek refuge in fragile ecological zones. The tragedy illustrates how policies designed for environmental protection or political control can lead to human suffering and displacement.

Conclusion

The Hungry Tide presents a powerful exploration of the relationship between ecology, survival, and displacement. Through its depiction of life in the Sundarbans, the novel

highlights the struggles of marginalized communities living in a vulnerable ecosystem. By combining environmental awareness with human stories, Amitav Ghosh encourages readers to reflect on the ethical challenges surrounding conservation, human rights, and ecological balance.

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