



Environmentalism and Eco critical Analysis of *The Hungry Tide*

Prof. Dr. Mamta Rani (M.A., Ph.D. in English)
Principal, RBBM College, BRA,
Bihar University, Muzaffarpur

Abstract

Ecocriticism is the result of the realization of the fact that a socio- cultural critique of modernity, colonization and imperialism is inevitably intertwined with environmental and ecological issues. One of the important features of Ecocriticism is that it sees nature and human culture as interwoven rather than as separate sides of a dualistic construct. Ecocriticism takes, as its subject, the interconnections between nature and culture. Amitav Ghosh, one of the most celebrated Indian English novelists, has consistently interwoven ecological consciousness and environmental concerns into his literary narratives. His *The Hungry Tide* is set in the Sundarbans, the dangerous and liquid space where land and ocean constantly honour each other. *The Hungry Tide* explains the manner in which it is difficult to establish a natural testing environment for both humans and non-humans. The story highlights the complexities of maintaining imperilled biological structures and animals as the life and vocations of the local inhabitants are put in danger. It shows the pen image of life against the suffering of humans. The novel explores the challenge and survival of human beings in a challenged biological environment in which humans survive and fight against monsters. Securing nature and creating an amicable life between people and the world is a decisive point of Eco criticism.

Keywords: Eco criticism, ecological consciousness, Nature preservation, Natural surrounding

Introduction

Ecocriticism is a broad term that refers to the study of art and literature from an environmental perspective. It addressed ecological concerns such as pollution, climate change, habitat destruction, species endangerment, and other environmental forms of exploitation. It is associated with the urge to examine and resolve existing ecological concerns. In 1978, in an essay entitled “Literature and Ecology: An experiment in Ecocriticism.” William Rueckert described Ecocriticism Implies “the application to study of the literature of ecology and



ecological principles.” His definition encompasses all the fathomable connections between literature and the physical world. Ecocriticism also examines the environmental consequences of human activity. It examines the factors responsible for the damage to the environment. Ecocriticism deals with many different aspects of existence, particularly those relating to the natural world. By exploring the connection between literature and the physical environment and highlighting environmental issues, literature has a far-reaching effect on the world around us. In the Indian context, nature is regarded as an unavoidable aspect of human life and tradition. Nature has been a significant theme in many English-language literary works. Various poets and novelists convey the incomparable and perpetual Indian environment using visual imagery and metaphorical language. Contemporary literary and non-fictional writers are highly aware of the ecological devastation around the world. The functions of nature kept changing and has visualised a sea change in literature after the late 20th century. As in literature today, nature is no more a mere component that redefines or rebuilds the character or plot; but an element that enables one to analyse and criticise the world one lives in. However, it was in the beginning of the postmodern era, a new outlook towards nature, took form as a new movement with a scientific inquiry. This new movement ‘Ecocriticism’ turned out to be kaleidoscopic, as it imbibed in itself the other schools of literature including post-structuralism, feminism, postcolonialism and postmodernism. Amitav Ghosh is a leading postcolonial writer of present times and his works have been analysed as illustrations of Postmodern, Postcolonial writing. But a close reading of his novels reveal a number of environmental concerns in almost all his works. Ghosh’s ecocentric vision is evident in his works as he visualizes the world as a composite, interconnected whole. Ghosh is one of the few Indian writers in English who constructs nature in his fictional works by using interweaving legends, experience, myth and history.

Major Thrust

Ecocriticism is a science that studies the relationship between living things and their natural surroundings. In a simple definition, the focus of literary works that discuss about ecocriticism can be understood as literary criticism that is focus in nature topic. Ecocriticism is the assumption that literature exist during the environment. On the other hand, we can conclude that literature belongs to the environment. The eco-conscious writings aimed at raising awareness and concern towards environmental issues were one of the major reasons that



compelled the realm of literature to incorporate relating themes into literary genres. It is done with the goal of conserving, preserving and recognising ecosystem through a better understanding of the bond between humans and the physical environmental space. Ecocriticism pays special attention to the relation between nature and literature, including concerns in ecology caused by the unstable or consistent relationship with social and physical realities. The limits of environmental ecocriticism allow us to conclude that the study of literary works through environmental ecocriticism describes that literary works are inseparable from nature and the environment and its various problems. Ecocriticism, is referred by 'Green Cultural Studies', 'Environmental Literary Criticism', 'Ecopoetic', first rose as a concept in the late 1970's. It addresses the irreparable environmental hazard caused by the exploitation of natural resources by humans. It investigates domains of culture and nature and how the merging of the two. The central focus of *The Hungry Tide* is the Sundarbans, an enormous archipelago in Bangladesh and India that is home to several thousand human and nonhuman species. Ecocriticism argues that human nature is often anthropocentric, assuming that only men are important. In an effort to prevent a disastrous end for our planet, ecocriticism seeks to rectify the toxic anthropocentric perspective. The goal of ecocriticism is to maintain the integrity of the planet's core life support system for a sustainable future. There are numerous works of literature contributed by Indian authors in English who have engaged in the theme of ecocriticism. They explored the environmental issues in many diverse ways through their works. The novel *The Hungry Tide* authored by the renowned writer Amitav Ghosh, published in the year 2004 is based on the assumption that the novel reflects a conflux of history and human insights through reflections of ecology. The author portrayed the relationship between humans, flora and fauna and the physical environment exposing the tension between human beings within the same communities and their links to the natural environment in the novel *The Hungry Tide*. Ghosh majestically focuses a magnifying lens on a micro-culture within the Sundarbans or the tide country—the islets of the Ganges delta that lie south of Kolkata and east of West Bengal/ Bangladesh frontier. This delta spanning 335 km in width is the largest mangrove forest in the world at the mouth of Ganges and is spread across areas of Bangladesh and West Bengal. It is intersected by a complex network of tidal waterways, mudflats and small islands of salt-tolerant mangrove forests. It is a place in which the sea, the river, the land, humans and animals all co- exist. This co-existence is sometimes in harmony, but often in



competition. The Sundarbans is a vast area of sundari trees, as the mangroves are locally called which are able to tolerate environmental conditions of salt water, and they constitute the flora of the area. The title of the novel, foreshadows the realities of surviving in such a desolate area, which is prone to the destroying effects of rogue tidal waves and tropical cyclones. The study investigates how the literature accomplishes that and turns the Marichjhapi massacre into a historiographic metafiction. The text is situated at the intersection of postmodernism and postcolonialism as a result. The different discursive strands that this theory has evolved to embrace within itself— Ecofeminism, Deep Ecology, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Marxist Environmentalism, and Eco-socialism—are connected to the recent theoretical developments in ecocriticism.

The Hungry Tide begins with the juxtaposition between a map of the Sundarbans and a scene of travellers orienting themselves to the area. It centers on two visitors to the Sundarbans, Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy (Piya), and their interaction with the community of tidal country people and with each other. Kanai, a Delhi based businessman, comes there to pay a visit to his aunt, Nilima, an NGO activist who runs a charity, a hospital, a guest house and educational services in the name of Badabon Trust on one of the islands, Lusibari. Nilima's work revolves around the welfare of women, education for children and basic health care amenities for the citizens of the tidal land. Kanai comes to collect a parcel that his late uncle, Nirmal, has left him. The parcel appears to contain a diary, excerpts from which are sprinkled throughout the novel. The package he discovers is an account of his uncle's last days, which revolve around Kusum and her son Fokir, who are portrayed as the victims of eviction from the island of Morichjhapi. Through this package, Ghosh reveals the story of the Sundarban island, its geography, origin, landscape, waterscape, skyscape and the story of human beings whose life is entwined with the ecology of the Sundarbans. The novel presents the emotional bond between the human and non-human members in a micro world of Sundarbans— an immense archipelago of islands located at the southernmost tip of West Bengal. It is a landscape in which the sea, the river, the land, humans and non-humans all co-exist. This co-existence is sometimes in harmony but often in competition. Novel knowingly deals with ecological issues of the Sunderbans, the mangrove forests between the plains and the sea of Bengal. Biodiversity of Sundarbans is slowly imbalanced due to modern activity of human being to make alive themselves and their family. Through the novel, Ghosh hints at the fact that globalization far-reaching impact upon



the people who are considered backward and uncivilized. Through the globalization, even these sections of people have benefitted a lot and the transfer of knowledge and effect of communication will pave the way for further education and advancement in technologies and ideas.

Conclusion

The analysis of *The Hungry Tide* (2004) by Amitav Ghosh concludes that when the environment is affected, humans are likewise affected due to the interwoven connection between nature and man. Ghosh depicts the cycle of nature in the novel. Somewhere Ghosh wants to warn the people that if we don't bring change in our life style, Nature will take its revenge in this manner. The novel puts forward the most important appeal that humans have to find ways to keep the human community away from destroying other fellow beings and the natural community as a whole. The novel provides awareness about various types of environmental racism and environmental injustices faced by both human and non-human life forms. Ghosh wants to get aware to the people about the natural calamities of environment in future which will be the result of human's own karma.

Cited Reference:

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. Harper Collins, 2018.

Huggan, Graham, Helen Tiffin. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. Routledge, 2010.

Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism: New Critical Idiom*. Routledge, 2004.