

## Ecocritical Approach and Elements in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

V.V. Haleshappa

### Abstract

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* reflects on persistent tragedy of the tide country people and their continual struggle for survival. The topography, the fauna and the waterways of Sundarbans decides the fate of the people. The many histories of Sundarbans form the focal point of *The Hungry Tide*. As Kanai reads the diary of Nirmal, the stories of Kanai's own memories of the visit he paid to Sundarbans as a child and the historical eviction of the refuge settlers from the island of Morichjhapi in 1979 portrays nature and the inter-dependence of man and nature. The various characters too benefit from the environment. Piya and Kanai learn humility and sacrifice as they are confronted by the tragedies and the quiet heroism of the people. Ecology and humanity co-exist with one another as a part of one of the successful attributes of Globalisation.

**Keywords :** Bio-System; Eco-criticism; Ecosystem; Ecology; Globalization; Green movement; Morichjhapi 1979; Sundarbans.

Eco-criticism in *The Hungry Tide* is analyzed from the concept of 'nature', interdependencies of life forms, eco-system, ecological niche, myth and the notion of epiphany. The word 'ecology' is usually connected with the 'green movement'. The bio-centric idea of the theory postulates that the non-human world has an independent value in contrary to its utilitarian value to the human beings. In addition to this, nature should not be destroyed except to meet the vital needs of the human race. The momentary epiphany of nature writing with its Romantic inheritance is the observation of Dana Phillips. The two distinct modes of Erlebnis and Erfahrung (adventure, chance, occurrence, a passing sensation Vs. know-how, expertise, skill) is portrayed skillfully by Ghosh in the characterization of Nirmal, Fokir and Piya.

The Indian part of the Sundarbans is the location of *The Hungry Tide*. The landscape acts as a central protagonist in the novel as it intermingles the natural history with the human history. Sundarbans is the bhathirdesh or the tide country which is midwives by the moon. Human life is as changeable as the ebb and flood of water. The set of conditions that supports life is

clearly evident in the formation of the mangrove forest thus constituting the larger part of the 'ecosystem' or the 'bio system.

Ghosh explains: utterly unlike other woodlands or jungles. The mangrove forest in the world- the habitat of man-eating Bengal tigers, huge salt water crocodiles, species of snakes, crabs, birds .It's forest has a reputation for eeriness and most of it is reputed never to have a human settlement .The Orcaella or the fresh water dolphin is one of the earth's rarest creatures. The tide country people of Sundarbans call dolphins as susuk. Thus, the ecological niche of the Sundarbans furnishes itself as a habitat for the royal Bengal tiger and Irrawady dolphins.

The binary opposites of Erlebnis and Erfahrung are clearly evident in *The Hungry Tide*. Fokir ,Piya and Nirmal are the three major characters who are close to nature. Nirmal is the chief informer as he equips one with a sense of place. Nirmal initially thinks that he only ends up gibing a name to the trust which is started by Nilima as "Badabon Trust" which is born out of an arabic and a bangla word -bada to bon or forest. Eventually, at the end of the novel, he is able to save the lives of thousands after his death by building a cyclone-prone shelter in the top of Nilima's hospital. Nirmal who was a tectonic materialist and he is inter-connected in this fiction to natural elements. He believes: "A place is what you make of it" (*The Hungry Tide* ,281).

Fokir is the truest soul in the novel as he is not greedy and pays heed to Piya's modesty. For Moyna and others, the disappearance of Fokir in the river would mean hatred for Moyna's career. But it is due to the fact is that very near to nature and saw clear picture of his mother in the river. Fokir's respect and love for another and truest life comes to an end in struggling with natural calamities.

Gurnah puts forth: "Piya's simultaneous foreignness and indeterminacy in the social scheme of things" (21). Piya's futile attempt to save tiger and Fokir's attempt to kill the tiger in order to protect men and women disillusion Piya as she finds Fokir different from what she has thought. She is even ready to sacrifice her life for Orcaella. During the storm, Piya realises her love for Kanai, when Piya loses her equipment except the GPS monitor. (*The Hungry Tide* ,372). However, Nature brings Piya and Fokir together. Feelings run very deep in such conditions, Their bodies were so close, so finely merged ... it was as if the storm had given them what life could not: it had fused them together and made them one" (*The Hungry Tide* ,390).

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