



Environmental Consciousness and Displacement in Amitav Ghosh's Fiction: A Critical Exploration

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Abstract: Literature by Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandya, Kiran Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Anita Desai, Ruskin Bond, and Ruskin Bond has been a watershed moment for environmental thought. The interaction between humans and the natural world is a common theme in these authors' works. By addressing both the strength and the beauty of nature, they have added depth to the investigation. One of the most prominent and successful authors in this field who is also very concerned about the environment is Amitav Ghosh.

Keywords: Amitabh Ghosh, Eco consciousness, Displacement, Nature

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INTRODUCTION

In his Ibis trilogy, Amitav Ghosh vividly depicts the natural world. Almost all of his works show an interest in environmental issues, but the three volumes that make up the Ibis trilogy stand out. Environmental issues are a subset of sociological issues that may affect people's capacity to live in a healthy environment. At many points in Sea of Poppies, Ghosh discusses cultural, social, and environmental domination. The present study analyses Ghosh's Sea of Poppies via an Ecocritical lens, highlighting environmental issues and the fallout from imbalance in the process. In addition, the inclusion of vegetation, animals, rivers, mountains, and wildlife highlights the interdependence of humans and their planet. An attempt is made in this study paper to bring together the many environmental issues brought up in Ghosh's Sea of Poppies. Surely, literature must permeate our thoughts and change our lives. This research paper focuses on the author's environmental concerns and the threat that humans represent to the natural world. The author was motivated to teach humanity a hard lesson via the harsh educator that is Nature.

With a focus on "Sea of Poppies," "The Glass Palace," "The Hungry Tide," and "The Shadow Lines," this essay aims to examine the displacement topic in Amitav Ghosh's texts. Displacement may signify either a change of residence or a shift in one's social and cultural standing; the term's literary use, particularly by non-resident Indian authors, offers this issue a poignancy that is enhanced by its widespread audience and evergreen appeal. "Diaspora evokes the specific traumas of human displacement—whether of the Jews or of the Africans scattered in the service of slavery and indentured—post colonialism is concerned with the idea of cultural dislocations contained within this term," adds Leela Gandhi to her book "Post Colonial Theory." In reality, diasporic literature addresses the lingering memories of the original homeland and its

culture. Through this process, the characters in the literature construct an imagined homeland, where they strive to maintain their cultural heritage despite the 'triple disruption' that migrants experience, which includes the loss of roots, linguistic problems, and social displacement. Regarding this matter, Bill Ashcroft et.al. states in "The Empire Writes Back" that "Diaspora does not simply refer to geographical dispersal but also to the vexed questions of identity, memory, and home which displacement produces."

Diasporic literature encompasses the concept of a homeland, the location from which displacement happens, and stories of difficult travels conducted due to economic pressures, therefore the word "displacement" has a broad meaning in this context. Any group of people that are a minority and are now living in exile is considered to be part of Diaspora. At least two nations and cultures coexist in the consciousness of the migrant in tandem; the term "diaspora" derives from the Greek words "dia" meaning "through" and "speirein" meaning "to scatter," suggesting a process of dispersion. The term "Diaspora" is said to have originated in Greek and first appeared in the Old Testament (Deut: 28:25) according to the Oxford English Dictionary 1989 Edition (second). God's plan all along was for Israel's scattering throughout the globe. In this entry from Judic History, the OED merely makes passing reference to two kinds of dispersion: the "Jews living dispersed among the gentiles after the captivity" and the "Jewish Christians residing outside the Palestine."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Vishwa Bhushan (2021) Literary critics and artists have recently taken an interest in the complex web of relationships between people and the natural world. This connection sheds light on eco-critical reading and the field of ecology. Literary authors nowadays aim to draw attention to the difficulties facing the ecosystem by addressing the most pressing environmental concerns in their works. They include Amitav Ghosh. Set in the Sundarbans, whose name means "Beautiful Forest" and which span over 10,000 square kilometers—the tidal country—history of the island of Morichjhapi's forced appraisal is told in his book *The Hungry Tidal*. Some of the novel's main topics are destabilisation and environmentalism. Every aspect of plant, animal, and human existence is interdependent in this book, with the physical environment serving as a metaphor for the dynamic energy that links all three. My paper's objective is to study *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh via an eco-critical lens and conduct an ecological analysis.

Shijo Kanjirathingal et.al (2021) Nature has been portrayed in literature in a big way. The rise of ecocriticism shifted literary attention to the ways in which humans and their physical surroundings interact. Using myth, history, and folklore in his work, Amitav Ghosh is one of the few Indian authors who investigates the consequences of humans' over exploitation of nature for their own interests. Humans' materialistic and anthropocentric worldviews are the root cause of catastrophic climate change and the subsequent relocation of many species, as this study explains. Reading this analysis of *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh will hopefully serve as a warning to readers about the imminent environmental disasters that our planet is facing and an encouragement to stop being so selfish with Mother Nature.

MS. Subarnarekha Ghosh (2023) Aiming for ultra-modernization in the twenty-first century, humans are accelerating the mechanisation of the capitalist world via industrialization and citification, completely ignoring the impact on the environment. There is a major ecological catastrophe developing as a result of it. While literature has historically been enjoyed for its aesthetic qualities, literary critics and authors today are

more concerned about the threat that human activity poses to the human-nature interaction. Ecocide has wreaked havoc on the natural world, leading to pollution, climate change, and other ills; human civilization is reeling from the effects of this abrupt imbalance, which includes refugee crises, pandemics, high mortality rates, and more. Ecocriticism has been the subject of several literary scholars and authors, but there is still a lot of uncharted territory in this domain. Research study of *Jungle Nama: A Story of Sundarban*, *Gun Island*, and *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* by Amitav Ghosh from an ecocritical standpoint is the primary focus of this publication. The author has done a wonderful job of depicting the link between humans and the natural world in these novels, which has resulted in highly realistic descriptions of environmental problems and the elements. In order to pique readers' interest, the article details the interdependencies between humans and the natural world, as well as the potential global effects of the Ecology issue. Among his climate fiction works is an examination of the political and historical backdrop of the climate catastrophe, which sheds insight on the problem's origins.

Ekta Bawa (2022) The Ibis Trilogy by Amitav Ghosh consists of three historical fictions: *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), and *Flood of Fire* (2015). This dissertation provides an ecocritical analysis of these works. This documentary delves into the dark history of the East India Company's forced labour practices and the opium trade that transpired between China and India in the middle of the nineteenth century. Ecocentric aspects of Ghosh's writings will be the focus of this article. Ecocriticism is a new literary movement that focuses on how humans interact with the natural world. Ecological imperialism and ecocide are two major themes that emerge throughout these books. The epic scope of the opium battle is realistically depicted by Ghosh in his Ibis Trilogy. The opium war ranks high among the most significant events in India's imperial history. This article will use an ecocritical lens to examine the Ibis Trilogy's depiction of environmental destruction.

Roohi Huda (2023) This study proposes that Hein De Haas's Theoretical Migration Categories, which are based on positive and negative liberty kinds, may be used to classify the migration storylines that are crucial to several of Amitav Ghosh's important novels that are migration-oriented. This article follows this line of thinking by analysing texts from the Ibis Trilogy books and two standalones, *The Glass Palace* and *Gun Island*, to draw out specific migration narratives. All of the stories that have been told here seem to fit neatly into one of de Haas's four types of migration: precarious, distress, improvement, and free. This work addresses a vacuum in the literature by classifying Ghosh's many migration tales into overarching themes; it also goes beyond the academic trend of viewing migration only from the perspective of native speakers, which has received little attention.

ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH

Nature has a special place in the human heart. They engage with it and rely on it relentlessly. Man has done more than just rely on nature for sustenance; he has also altered nature in several ways to suit his use. Interactions between humans and the natural world also caused the latter to undergo fundamental changes. The inevitable tragic outcomes of this paradoxical relationship between humans and the natural world led to the latter's turn against the former. There is an ecological imbalance, which is a worldwide concern, and the connection between humans and environment does not help. Popular literature that often deals with current events has also centred on this idea. On the other hand, environmental awareness and the urgency

of the situation have just lately sparked the authors' curiosity. Authors such as Raja Rao, Ruskin Bond, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Kamala Markandya, and R.K. Narayan—all from India—have shown an interest in nature and the connection between humans and environmental issues in their works. Notable figures include Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, and Amitav Ghosh.

Due to his groundbreaking book *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao should be firmly enshrined in the canon of Indian literature. Acclaimed for its realistic portrayal of rural South Indian village life and the interplay between humans and their natural surroundings, this book is a classic of the genre. The author emphasises the significance of rivers and mountains in human life. In several of his works, R. K. Narayan has landscapes or locations serve as heroes or characters. In "The Dark Room," Savitri is positively impacted by the river and the disused temple. In "The Guide," Raju is shaped and elevated to sainthood by the Sarayu River, the remnant of a temple, and the stone slabs. Because of the Malgudi attitude, he is able to confront the fast with the proper humility. Bhabani Bhattacharya's "So Many Hungers" is praised for depicting the actual impacts of the Bengal famine that happened in 1943 and Jagan's near-transformation after the river retreat. The starvation killed millions of people. Problems that individuals get themselves into and how powerless they feel are important themes of the book.

The intriguing themes of cultural displacement, migration, exile, communal violence, and environmental challenges provide historical context for Ghosh's work. Many of his greatest works, such as *The Hungry Tide* and the *Ibis Trilogy*, provide insight into ecological issues and the environmental catastrophe. To emphasise ecological challenges and the consequences of imbalance, this article examines Ghosh's books *River of Smoke* (2011) and *The Hungry Tide* (2004). Nature, represented by rivers, mountains, and animals, and man's place in it are both shown and explained. In his first book, *The Circle of Reason* (1986), Ghosh delves into the issue of migration and the ongoing cultural exchange for India. Ghosh lauds the success of human kindness and challenges western reason in this work. Through the journey from Lalpukur, India, via al-Ghazira, Egypt, and finally to the little village of El-Qued on the north-eastern border of the Algerian Sahara, the protagonist seeks a transformative vision—more than just a quest for identity. An important theme in the 1988 book *The Shadow Lines* is the protagonist's quest for self-awareness and identity. One of the book's main characters "is an individual, rooted and well-defined but as the novel progresses, he seems to transcend himself and becomes identified with a depersonalised contemporary consciousness" (Sircar, 49). Additionally, it addresses modern issues, such as the desire for autonomy, the thorny connection to colonial heritage, and the legacy of subcontinental split.

Written in 1992, Amitav Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* delves into the African-Asian links that existed before British colonisation and highlights the unfortunate events that befell India and the rest of Asia and the Middle East. In addition, the 1995 book *The Calcutta Chromosome* makes an effort to demolish the Western belief in superiority via the fallacious reasoning of Indians. Through his critique of Ronald Ross's colonial "truth" account of "Plasmodium B.," Ghosh casts doubt on the colonial story of discovery and the myth of advancement within his corpus. War, its meaning and purpose, hybridity, colonisation, and the notion of borders are all themes that recur throughout *The Glass Palace* (2000). In *The Hungry Tide* (2004), the brutal reality of life on the Sundarbans islands are confronted, the horrors endured by Bangladeshi refugees in Morichjhāpi, and the discussion of cultural, environmental, and eco-related challenges brought about by the West's invasion of the East are articulated. *Sea of Poppies* and *River of*

Smoke, the second and third books in the Ibis Trilogy, follow the protagonists as they navigate colonial and social-cultural challenges by discovering and reimagining who they are. In his works, postmodern writer Anand Ghosh emphasises the ephemeral nature of entities in addition to other hallmarks of postmodern literature like migration, multiplicity, multiculturalism, scepticism, and the elimination of borders.

Sunderbans, a bioregion, serves as the setting for Amitav Ghosh's book *The Hungry Tide*. Beautiful mangrove forests cover much of the Sundarbans, which are located in an area prone to wind and tidal movement. Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy are the story's leading ladies. An entrepreneur and translator named Kanai travels to the island of Lusibari to see his aunt Nilima. In the spirit of conservation, Kanai learns about the resettlement tragedy of Morichjhapi and the clash between human and non-human life forces via his late uncle Nirmal's notes. Evicted from Morichjhapi Island, Kusum and her son Fokir's tale is told in the journal as well. Piyali, a cetologist by birth from the United States, travels to Tide nation to study the rare Irrawaddy dolphins unique to its waterways. Through Fokir's assistance, she is able to locate the dolphins' habitat.

DISPLACEMENT AND IDENTITY: A STUDY OF AMITAV GHOSH'S SELECT NOVELS

Modern transnational and transcultural communication calls into question the very nature of identity, which is often seen as something static and unchanging. The feeling of belonging that comes with having a strong identity is supplanted by the many different connections that one might have as a result of living in a varied cultural and geographical location. Many of the characters in Amitav Ghosh's writings, both fictional and nonfictional, do not belong to any one culture; they move freely between different places and time periods. Actually, Ghosh's stories depict the distinct plights of people whose lives are impacted by random events in history. Not surprisingly, Ghosh has made migration, displacement, and dislocation central themes in his work. His characters' preoccupation with losing their roots challenges the idea of solitary identity. One may argue that Ghosh's nomadic lifestyle informs his continuing exploration of self-discovery in literature. Migration and displacement have been at the centre of Ghosh's works on several times. The fact that Ghosh's characters—from commoners to royalty, from colonised to postcolonial, from pre-modern slaves and traders to modern, contemporary workers—all undergo displacement and dislocation at some point in their lives and how this affects their sense of self is fascinating. A number of historical forces, such as colonisation, trade and business, etc., lead characters to be forcibly removed from their homelands, casting doubt on their sense of belonging. However, it might be said that Ghosh refrains from providing a simplistic solution to the problem of displacement. This is due to the fact that Ghosh is acutely aware of the wide range of options that displacement presents and the fact that a person's social position is closely related to how their outlook on life changes during displacement. Several lower-middle-class individuals are seen in Ghosh's 1986 first book, *The Circle of Reason*, as they take a boat across the Indian Ocean to Al-Ghazira in search of work. Their sense of self is impacted by relocation, a recurring motif in Ghosh's novels. Within the context of our increasingly interconnected globe, this chapter aims to conduct a critical examination of the ways in which diasporic experience, migration, displacement, and dislocation mould personal identities.

Ghosh's characters, a varied group of individuals from various social and cultural backgrounds, are

sometimes uprooted from their birthplace and forced or forced to relocate due to events in history or their own free will. Forced migrants experience cultural fragmentation as they are uprooted from their familiar geo-cultural surroundings, whereas migrants seeking better economic opportunities strive to establish a new home for themselves in their new surroundings. As expected, Ghosh's characters encounter a wide range of unexpected socio-cultural contexts due to the many cultural manifestations they reflect. A transient, hybrid population that participates in creative and cultural creations and straddles multiple cultures is the most evident result of such displacement. Various historical events, such as the transatlantic slave trade, the forced relocation of Africans and Asians to colonial outposts, and the current wave of voluntary migration driven by economic opportunities presented by globalisation, demonstrate the limitations of our traditional forms of self-identification. To rephrase, we are reevaluating the role of conventional associations in the formation of our identities as a result of global movement. Fascinatingly, migrating groups that have been uprooted by historical forces often reimagine their former associations. Indeed, Ghosh demonstrates the wide variety of responses and reactions shown by the migrants towards their previous identities, which were characterised by their national, religious, or regional associations.

In his works, Amitav Ghosh portrays human relocation as a direct result of many historical events, such as European colonisation, the subcontinent's partition, World War II, the British invasion of Burma, and many more. A number of elements, including "push" and "pull" forces, are often used to describe human migration. Most people have an unfavourable impression of the push factor, which is the social and economic pressure that causes individuals to flee. War, ethnic cleansing, riots, violence, poverty, and other similar factors often compel people to leave their homes and seek refuge in other places. Migrants have a terrible sensation of dislocation and never fully assimilate into their new home after experiencing this kind of relocation. Pull factors, on the other hand, are those that draw in residents from other areas due to the attractive possibilities or services they provide. Opportunities for guest workers have arisen as a result of economic globalisation and technical improvement. Global connection has made migration in the modern era simpler, more pleasant, and less risky. One obvious example of this kind of migration is the Algerian guest labourers in France. Many individuals from many parts of the world, including the Indian subcontinent, go to the Gulf area. Many people work in information technology, and many go to the United States and other developed capitalist nations in search of better job prospects and a higher standard of living. Moving to a new place naturally changes the way people deal with the cultural norms and practices of the host country, in addition to their material circumstances. The migrants face a distinct socio-cultural setup in their new home, which might have several consequences due to the fact that they carry their own cultural norms and practices with them. Their identity is shaped by their cultural interactions. The identity dilemma takes on new dimensions in Ghosh's fictions, which include migrants forcibly removed from their homeland, in relation to its foundation, maintenance, and potential re-formation.

CONCLUSION

In addition to serving as a structural element for the story, the setting emphasises the enigma and destiny of a person's life among the peril and beauty of nature. Locals have their own folklore and beliefs around Mother Nature because of how close they live to her.

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