



Vulnerability of the marginal communities: An ecological reading of Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*

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ABSTRACT

This study examines Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*, representing how a profit-oriented commercial world exploits nature and vulnerable communities simultaneously for materialistic purposes. The novel is set in the region of the Sundarbans that portrays the struggles of refugees, fishermen, women, and marginalized communities who are struggling against the whole corporate culture to protect their indigenous seed. This paper is a qualitative study that focuses on textual analysis and interpretation, incorporating ecological theories and the current world scenario for exploitation through the textual evidences. It is informed by Vandana Shiva's and David Pepper's ecological theory, that asserts how corporate culture of the commercialized world pushes back the sustainability agenda and that the profit-making plan of the people leads to the disappearance of the indigenous seed from the world. This study implies that nature and marginal communities simultaneously face challenges in a materialistic society. The novel revolves around the Morichjhapi massacre, which is about political and state violence against the marginal communities, showing the act of segregation of the marginal people from the center to the margin and from the margin to the process of obliterating their historic narratives. The violence is poised to obliterate the indigenous seed of nature. The characters such as Kusum, Fokir, Kanai, and Piya are the embodiment of victims of materialistic exploitation. Ultimately, the novel illustrates the tendency of rapid growth of industrialization with the replacement of nature, people, and overall ecology. This study supports generating awareness that seed protection bonds with indigenous culture protection.

Keywords: Industrialization, Materialistic Exploitation, Original Seed, Political Repression, Vulnerable Communities

I. INTRODUCTION

Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004) explores how the loss of the natural seed leads to the loss of the indigenous people and culture simultaneously. The rapid industrial growth and development, urbanization by state power, and socio-political and class hierarchy leading Sundarban into the spot of commercialization. As a result of this, nature and vulnerable communities simultaneously face challenges. To justify the causes and the consequences of the resource extraction from nature, this study employs Vandana Shiva's and David Pepper's ecological theory, showing how the power of politics, property, materials, and resources erases the voices of marginal communities and erases their seed. Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* explores the issues of the marginalized status of natural things and poor people along with refugees, and subalterns who are voiceless and vulnerable to power. Such supremacy operates through industrial and material mechanisms whose priority is profit, massive material progress, and development, eradicating the human. The novel is set in Sundarbans- a fragile tidal region between India and Bangladesh. Sundarban is rich in nature, where the local people, such as fishermen, and villagers, depend on it for their daily life operation. Apart from the indigenous people refugees, and marginalized communities, treat this place as a shelter, savior, and place of personal spot with ancient anecdote. As a result of this encroachment, the natural culture, seed, and customs disappear, which marginalized people witnessed helplessly.

When nature is used for resource extraction, there is habitat fragmentation that leads to the displacement of settlements, either of humans or species. It refers to breaking down a natural setting into many pieces due to human interest. Fahrig (2003) explains, "Habitat fragmentation is often defined as a process during which 'a large expanse of habitat is transformed into a number of smaller patches of smaller total area, isolated from each other by a matrix of habitats unlike the original'" (p.490). Habitat fragmentation is breaking into tiny and small pieces of the total area, which does not form the original. In the novel, the establishment of conservative areas, zones, and protocols of government depicts Sundarban as a disintegrated terrain. Moreover, the state's imposition on the Morjaphi community's



displacement is an example of fragmented habitat. This process thrashes the homes of the birds and animals which in turn extinguishes the diverse insects, animals and plants.

Anthropocentric approach-putting human interest from the commercial perspective harms humans due to the loss of biodiversity. It leads to bio diversity crisis, leading to a loss of beta diversity. Humans have accelerated this process by implementing industrial and commercial ideas owing to global commerce to quench the temporary thirst. Human movement, migration and other act impact and change to the natural process of biodiversity. Olden et al. (2004) examine the result of the loss of biodiversity: “Human facilitation of population dispersal across natural biogeographical barriers has diminished geographical isolates that are necessary for eventual allopatric speciation, thereby limiting future potential species diversity” (p.22). The movement and interference of humans in biogeographical areas raise barriers and isolation of species from their place of origin. In the novel, human activities disturb the environment. The act of settlement expansion by government and conservation policies is linked to the economic growth and exploitation, causing bio-homogenization. Hence, the paper examines how commercialization, along with a money-oriented approach towards nature, generates ecological imbalance. Seen from this perspective, the vulnerable members of the earth face crisis and ultimately get disappear. This paper raises voices for the vulnerable communities of the earth in terms of habitat, rights, justice, and biodiversity.

1.1 Research Objective

To examine how commercialization, along with a money-oriented approach towards nature, generates ecological imbalance.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* has drawn scholarly critical remarks for its sociological, rhetoric, and stylistic concerns. Equally, geographical and ecological concern has also been the dominant critique in the existing scholarship. The place, Sundarbans, embodies human identity, which includes not only the geographical spot, but also the social and personal identity. Martin et al. (2025) argue that the place incorporates identity formation, saying “In the novel *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Amitav Ghosh examines the importance of place to the expression and formation of social and personal identities within postcolonial India, foregrounding narratives that portray the progression of events across time within the dynamic ecosystem of the Sundarbans” (p.971). They value the novel from postcolonial point of view. The particular place Sundarban shapes the identity, experiences, and relationships among the people during the era of post-colonial India. The Sundarban is the social and personal identity formation of the people living over there.

However, Hume analyzes the novel as the integration of human and non-human components. Landscape depicts the notion of interconnection, and intersection of ecology where human and non-human share the same place to survive and sustain. Reflecting this idea, Hume (2022) states, “Through its exploration of ecological concerns and the interplay between human actions and natural environments, ‘The Hungry Tide’ offers a compelling and thought-provoking reading experience” (p.41). Hume’s bold statement indicates that humans are the fundamental reason that creates lapses in the natural environment, having an intrusion to natural environment. For Anand water element is significant in the novel that plays a pivotal role in the survival of humans and non-humans because human body and the body of the earth contain water to a larger extent. The human body properly functions with water whereas in the earth there is more than two third percentage coverage with water. So, in that sense, water is the biggest asset for the function of life and the Earth. Anand (2008) mentions that, “Ghosh sets his novel in the Sundarbans, the tidal country where the contours of land constantly change with the ebb and flow of water”(p.23). The writer chooses Sundarban in the novel as the place of the ocean and tide, where anyone can experience the essence of water that constantly changes from reconstruction to destruction and vice versa.

For Chen personification is nature matters more than the plot of the novel. Moreover, it indicates fear to the biotic inhabitants. Climate change and the changing nature of nature cause fear to the residents of Sundarban and such fearful incidents are the result of human activities. Chen (2018) reasons that the way the environment acts on its own will and the way the environment gets affected through human actions: “Importantly, Ghosh reminds us that the uncanny that derives from the sense of the environment having its own will is the result of human activities” (p.84). Nature is pure in itself, but human activities to gratify the materialistic wish exploit it.

Interdependency and cooperation between nature and human beings is the main point of argument for Prakash. Man, and nature are interconnected entities whose coexistence is shaped by mutual dependence. This reciprocal relationship between man and environment shapes the lives of the human as well as non-humans, generating development in the evolutionary process. Prakash (2022) examines the correlation thus: “The novel presents a connection and correlation between man and nature; man’s existence and development of all-natural beings are associated with the development of the proper harmony between the presence of human beings and existing natural spheres” (p.2). To maintain natural order, there has to be coexistence through respect.



According to Bentley Wessel (2025) anthropocentric tendency tends to dominate and exploit nature for self-satisfaction. Humans' behavior is self-centric for their satisfaction and progress. So, the development of infrastructure, construction, and mobilization of natural resources for their need are the results of the human desire for materialistic development. Bentley Wessel (2025) critically remarks, "An increasing number of human beings with their intelligence has made man the dominant species on earth" (p.38). The increasing number of human beings and their activities exploit nature. Human intelligence has used man's power of creation and implementation of that creation over nature.

The tension between fluidity and fixity of the nature and human-induced nature is the concern of another critic Jaising. Human subjectivity is fluid due to interaction with the environment. Jaising (2015) mentions the conflict between flexibility and fixity: "the novel's network form occasionally exposes a curious underlying tension between fluidity and fixity as well as processes of transformation and idealization" (p.5). The tension between the liquefied and fixity from both sides- human and nature leads to the path of transformation of each other. But that transformation leads humans' position to idealization.

Current scholars have examined the novel as the epitome of social and personal identities in the postcolonial age. Other scholars used figurative use of language as the main facet of the novel. Others emphasize disruptive human activities and its consequence to nature. Some other critical observations deal with the tuneful relationship between humans and nature. However, this paper examines how the loss of the seed in nature causes the loss of biodiversity that, in turn, affects the existence of marginal communities due to state-guided commercialization. The plan of the state, imposing protocols by the state, and the idea of progress push the people of Sundarban into a vulnerable stage. As a result, people are left behind with no option but are forced to leave the place, relocate and when they resist, the massacre exterminates indigenous identity. Along with this the indigenous seeds get disappear and biodiversity gets lost. So, the common people are obliged either to leave their place or to die. Creating such a condition is an injustice and inhuman to the nature and the vulnerable communities of Sundarban.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study uses qualitative research design to analyze the text to justify the argument that nature and vulnerable communities of Sundarban faced injustice. The primary source for analysis is Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), and the theoretical lens for the analysis is the ecological perspective that prioritizes conservation of biodiversity. The paper examines the novel through Vandana Shiva's and David Pepper's theoretical framework of globalization and ecology because these theorists discuss the commercialization of the natural resources and their impact on biodiversity. It also draws upon secondary sources, including scholarly articles, books, and journal publications related to the novelist and the novel, for discussion to support the study. The themes that are valid for the theoretical ideas were coded and designated for scrutiny. The textual analysis employing the theory validates the argument. However, this study does not encompass other theoretical framework and other theorists related to ecology.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE

Vandana Shiva and David Peeper are the ecological theorists who value nature and nature conservation and speak out against the commercialization of resources. They argue that priority to commercialization and industrial society demolishes the indigenous seed and vulnerable cultures simultaneously. Shiva (1994) embarks on how the agenda to conserve nature has been deliberately deleted, the forest agenda, and converted to a global trade agenda to destroy the world's diversity and manage resource utilization: "In 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio marked the maturing of ecological awareness on a global scale. The world was poised to make a shift to sustainability; however, the Rio process and the sustainability agenda were subverted by the free-trade agenda" (Shiva, 1994, p.466). The shift to the trade agenda devalued the biocentric concept. Resource management is the profit-making process that deviates from real sustainability showing how "Political commitment to sustainability and justice was replaced by the rule of trade and the elevation of exploitation, greed, and profit maximization" (Shiva, 1994, p.466). The rule of trade values profit maximization and greed extension. Society has become a form of profit-making process: "Commercial forces are now regulating the state and society for the benefit of corporations" (Shiva, 1994, p. 466). A benefit-oriented process has made society a weak form of society through commercialization. "Economic globalization reduces all value by commercial value" (Shiva, 1994, p. 466). Societal value is concerted to profitable value, which in turn leads to corporate culture in society. Thus, the shift from nature conservation to resource utilization caused the loss of biodiversity.

Realization of the significance of ecological balance makes people aware of its long-run positive impact, "Realization of an alternative order that puts ecological balance and social and economic justice rather than trade at the center of economic policy" (Shiva, 1994, p. 466). The three waves of globalization: colonization, imposition of the Western development model, and free trade, massively hurt ecological balance: "Three waves of globalization. The first wave was the colonization of the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Australia by European powers over the course of 1,500



years. The second wave was the imposition of the West's idea of development on non-Western cultures in the postcolonial era" (p.467) and the third phase of "globalization was unleashed approximately five years ago as the era of free trade" (p.467). Colonialism, a manipulated model of development and free trade culture, shifted the attention from ecological balance to resource utilization and profit-making culture. Consequently, "The community is becoming mere instruments of global capital" (Shiva, 1994, p.467). The process for capital formation uses everything from materialistic perspectives. Then, the world gets an unfit place to live due to excessive pollution and toxic emissions: "90 percent of historic carbon dioxide emissions have been made by the industrialized countries" (Shiva, p. 468). Thus, globalization has led to ecological disbalance deviating the attention from biocentrism to anthropocentrism.

The industrial countries are the prime places for poison secretion: "The United States generates more than 275 million tons of toxic waste every year and is the leading waste-exporting country in the world" (Shiva, 1994, p.469). The regular emission of poison makes the earth an unfit place to reside for all. Consequently, vulnerable species and their communities disappear. The first to be affected are humans because of their vulnerable health. She gives the anecdote of India, the way the West produced and transported to India.

Lead wastage transport from developed countries to India is a development politics, in the words of Shiva. She gives the data of the wastages for recycling in India: "Imports from the United States, Australia, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands, France, Japan, and the United Kingdom account for about 67 percent of the total import of lead wastes to India" (Shiva, 1994, p.470). She further points out its significance in the environment that "India is being used as a dumping ground by the Northern industrialized countries because the cost of treating and disposing waste sustainably in the North has become highly expensive" (Shiva, 1994, p.470). Making India a dumping site harms the sustainability of the nation within and around

Seed is an important aspect for protecting indigenous agriculture, which protects diversity. So, seed protection has to be the prime concern to protect multiplicity: "Our slogan is, Native seed – indigenous agriculture – local markets" (Shiva, 1994, p.472). Her voice for the protection of indigenous seed is the basis for managing local diversity, protecting diversity "saving native seeds from extinction" (Shiva, 1994, p. 472). Once the local seeds become extinct, variability gets lost, which is a sign of the disappearance of the vulnerable plants, people, or communities. Therefore, "The seed has become, for us, the site and the symbol of freedom in the age of manipulation and monopoly of its diversity" (Shiva, 1994, p. 473). For Indian, seed protection is the means for defending freedom. Despite the tiny size, it encompasses identity of multiplicity: "The seed too is small. It embodies diversity" (Shiva, 1994, p.473). To sum up, diverse seeds of manifold plants, foods, and other items manage to save multiplicity. Therefore, it is the symbol of freedom and identity.

When nature becomes an instrumental source of material gain, its real value is diminished, as Pepper asserts, "Westerners see nature as an instrument to be used for endless material gain" (Pepper, 1996, p. 13). The exploitation of natural resources is consumer-oriented. Pepper further elaborates that "hard facts and calculating economic utilitarianism in deciding what is good or bad" (Pepper, 1996, p.14). He critically remarks on a business society that values profit-generating activities, giving value to humans rather than plants and animals. He further points out that "industrial society is founded on the too-narrow objective of profit maximization, encouraging overconsumption" (Pepper, 1996, p.14). The expansion process exploits the forests and endangers the small indigenous community, driven by the desire to expand the market and find consumers: "The search to expand markets and command resources and cheap labor has extended the industrial-consumer society across the globe, destroying rainforests and changing the climate" (Pepper, 1996, p.14). Howarth allies with Pepper and explains, historically, "After 1750 global exploration and colonization by Western powers promoted dynamic new ideas in the natural sciences" (Howarth, 1996, p.72). Consequently, the ethics gets derailed, "The perceived decline of public ethics in the 1980s, when commerce began to profit from 'green' policies" (Howarth, 1996, p.74). Thus, the consumer culture eradicates seeds in the process of industrialization and leads to the eradication of biological diversity through mass exploitation to satisfy the greed of the people. The indigenous seeds of people and plants are in danger due to an industrial, consumer-oriented society. Consequently, certain communities that rely on such seeds disappear. Thus, Shiva, David Peeper, and Howarth prioritize the conservation of biodiversity to maintain the interconnection of the earth to sustain the quality of life. This study analyzes Amitav Ghosh's "*The Hungry Tide*" from an ecological perspective, advocating the significance of biodiversity conservation that, in turn, supports indigenous people.

V. FINDINGS & DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Findings

5.1.1 Exploitation of Vulnerable Community and Countryside

The Sundarbans and its landscape: Amitav Ghosh's "*The Hungry Tide*" presents the idea of a respectable earth through preserving biodiversity by protecting tiny seeds, small resources even of the hinterland. In the novel, Ghosh has chosen a place named Sundarbans as a site of nature, a place of survival of humans and species, and existence for natural



phenomena. The depictions of natural fauna and flora of Sundarban and its connections to biodiversity explain the interconnection between humans and nature. In addition to that, the novel explores the power of nature, particularly Mother Nature and the power of humans over nature, and the integration between them, along with the parallel bond of both humans and nature in Sundarbans. Ghosh has presented the Sundarbans landscape as an image of nature that is performing its natural cyclic process, showing its multiple forms.

Ghosh (2004) describes about Sundarbans as the land of tide following its natural law, “The tide country’s rivers, creeks and islands are always changing, always creating and destroying” (p.118). Nature performs and sustains through its natural law. It moves in its cycle, which incorporates creation, renewal, construction, and destruction. Moreover, it shows the phase of construction and resilience after destruction. So, the tide and country’s rivers have the capacity to flow in their own way, the ability to build or create and destroy at the same time. The word ‘create’ refers to Mother Nature, or in other words, feminine energy that has the capacity to reproduce in the sense of creation, recreation as the notion of resilience, and nurturing as a portion of care and protection. In the novel, the tides and rivers represent an image of creation and destruction in Sundarbans, illustrating the spot of natural forces that represent multiple images of that place. The images of geography, landscape, and Mother Nature exist under the same roof of Sundarbans and function as one. Such unification resembles human and non-human co-existence bonding. In addition to that, Mother Earth has both the capacity to create and destroy. If she cares, then she nurtures its habitant like her own child. She takes responsibility for her inhabitants, providing food, shelter, and other basic needs. However, if she is in her destructive phase, then no one can control or manage her power of destruction. Ghosh (2004) claims about the power of creation and destruction of Mother Earth that, “For these people, the very earth was a mother who could nourish and destroy in the same moment” (p.134). For the people of Sundarbans, the land is a source of life and nurturing like a mother, yet can get out of control when it is in its changing form. Consequently, appearing as a destructive force that is difficult to manage or control. In the end, the power of construction and destruction is witnessed at the same time by the people of Sundarbans, portraying the real condition of the landscape and its unpredictable changing scenario.

An island is the formation of rivers that set the place in a form of retribute what it has taken at some point in its flow. Subsequently, rivers create a new place. In the novel, Sundarbans provides a glimpse of nature to invoke the sense of richness and diversity. Its rivers and islands are enriched with the flora and fauna of nature and its natural sights. Such natural sites of the Sundarbans are formed through the river. The river’s act into both giving and offering as a restorer after changing its position and chasing to its surroundings. Ghosh (2004) claims the power of rivers in the formation and restoration that “These islands are the rivers’ restitution, the offerings through which they return to the earth what they have taken from it, but in such a form as to assert their permanent dominion over their gift” (p.14). The lines explain that the river, as a natural force, has the power of both giving and taking. It is both the giver and the taker. During the process of giving and taking, the river takes its mud by eroding the soil from the land and gives it back to the island, which reshapes the island by depositing the silt. This entire process is in the phase of restitution, which is the form of destruction and re-creation. So, Nature has the power of destruction but moves itself in the cycle of reconstruction. Both the capacity for construction and destruction move into the cyclic process of nature that supports nature to spin on its axis. Furthermore, Nature is open without any boarders and boundaries. Ghosh (2004) elaborates on free nature of nature that, “There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea” (p.14). There are no demarcation lines between any natural component in the area where various existing natural phenomenon such as river and sea, water and slat are intermingling to each other and are able to create an aurora its surrounding. Such assimilation resembles the enrichment of the landscape of Sundarbans.

The name ‘Sundarbans’ in the novel carries the name with a combination of two words: Sundar and Bans, which means Sundar is beautiful, and Bans is forest. Ghosh (2004) defines Sundarbans as “Known as the Sundarbans, which means the beautiful forest” (p.15). In the novel, Sundarbans is presented as a beautiful, green, and vast jungle that is a habitat for various species, and it has charismatic power. In the novel, Sundarbans is not only a place; it portrays dynamism between the different living forces. It is the vast delta of rivers, tides, and mangrove forests that shows an ever-changing relationship between its components. It depicts its ever-changing nature due to erosion and tides, where water and land constantly shift. Because of that, Sundarbans is a beautiful place for all its inhabitants of that place. The Sundarbans is characterized in the novel as a pre-human and primordial landscape that is enriched with the existence of forest, natural phenomena, flora, and fauna, rather human presence and man-made construction in the nature. Ghosh (2004) describes on pristine land, “no people, no embankments, no fields” (p.52). Sundarbans is full of wilderness and uncharted territory for humans. It resembles pure nature that is not captured, violated, and used for cultivation. The world of Sundarbans is not shaped by people and is not under the control of humans. It is a free space of nature which has its own ownership instead of others. In the novel, Sundarbans is an example of the free will of nature that has the power to create its own rules. Moreover, Sundarbans is a land that is not contaminated by human action and behavior to fulfill their needs.

The natural land is enriched in its natural diversity and resources. It is the source of mines, minerals, and other treasures. In the novel, Sundarbans is a tidal country known for its natural diversity. Whereas for the ordinary people, it



is a source of mines, gold, and other treasures. It is the store for resource mobilization. The common people are aware of the reality of the Sundarbans' natural wealth. So, the people of that area assume that any natural resources are full of treasures. Ghosh (2004) poses the question about the natural treasure of the Sundarbans, "Where was the gold that was to have been distilled from the tide country's mud?" (p.77). People understand that the mud and water of the Sundarbans are hidden gold. Water support to reform the land, while the mud that is distilled by the tide is fertile. Both water and land are basic needs for the survival of people. In contrast, the term 'gold' not actually indicate only mines and minerals; rather, it illustrates the hidden and unrealized promise of wealth in the tidal country's ecology, such as mangroves, the movement and shifts of rivers, including fragile ecosystems governed by their own law. Thus, Sundarbans is a valuable landscape for its biodiversity.

5.1.2 The Relationship between Human and Nature

The environment and its surroundings shape human existence. Whether it is about fulfilling basic needs or satisfying the desires and interests of humans by spending time in it, conducting research, or simply exploring its area and scenery. In the novel, Piya, one of the central characters, went to the Sundarbans to study Dolphins. The study of the dolphins by Piya does not indicate her interest; rather, it shows the relationship between humans and nature. Ghosh (2004) characterizes Piya, who comes to study dolphins, as "you study marine mammals" (p.17). As a marine biologist, Piya has interests to study marine mammals, as well as it being her occupation as a researcher. The study of mammals not only narrates a story of biological research or intervention of human in to nature; instead, it emphasizes the human and animal cofunction and cooperative relationship. It shows a reciprocal relationship between humans and nature in the environment that enriches each other and supports maintaining ecological balance.

Human and Nature connection and interrelation function as a form of worship. From the beginning of human civilization, human surrender to nature and treated nature has a spiritual energies and supernatural power. Such a notion of belief system is a reflection of animism. Animism is the belief that posits every element of nature has a soul and views nature spirits or natural elements as sacred. Indigenous people follow the tradition of animism and worship the natural elements such as land, forest, river, and so on. Indigenous people of Sundarban have given a name to their natural resources like "Bon Bibi" (Ghosh,2004, p.32). A 'Bon' means forest and 'Bibi' means a lady or a woman. In other words, it refers to the Goddess of the forest in indigenous culture, representing a female. So, here the word 'bon bibi' is not only a forest; rather, it illustrates an image and a characteristic of Mother Earth and woman. Both of them are symbols of nurturer and nature. Therefore, there is a close relation between woman are nature in terms of their similar characteristics. Additionally, Ghosh (2004) elaborates on the presence of bon bibi that, "In these parts, people believe she rules over all the animals of the jungle" (p.32). In the sentence, the term 'in these parts' means the Sundarbans, where people believe bon-bibi rules to overall places animals of the jungle and the entire inhabitants of that place. It is the belief system of Indigenous people that nature has the power of love, compassion, and acceptance for its various entities. So, bon bibi is not just a forest, but she is a mother nature who takes care of her children, including humans and non-humans of that area, as any mother protects her children from danger. The symbolic representation of bon bibi is also the characteristic of a woman where mother and mother nature have no demarcation line between them.

The human is prone to their natural setting. They are dependent on their surrounding environment for their needs. Human's day to day task cannot be completed without interacting and communicating with nature. In the novel, Sundarbans provides rhythmic vibes to operate the daily life of people. Ghosh (2004) delineates the interaction of human and nature, "The very rhythms of daily life are dictated by the moon and the tides" (p.107). The connection between the moon and tides shows the relationship of gravitational forces of the moon and tides that produce waves and rhythmic sounds in nature. Moreover, lunar phases and the scene that is created through the intermingling of tides and the moon present the daily life of people of that place in a natural setting, its impact on their lives, and a part of culture.

Nature opens its arms to everyone without any condition and boundaries. It never constructs a fence and creates limitations for its access. Ghosh (2004) depicts the free living of people in nature, "She had spent enough time on rivers to know that the people who lived on their shores were rarely strangers to each other" (p.81). The description of nature is open to everyone as it provides free will and space to people to live there. People have free choice to select the place and manage accordingly. Nature never questioned and interrupted to human when they use its resources. Conversely, humans have restrictions on each other, whether it's in the form of communication or knowing each other. In the novel, Piya has observed both scenarios as an outsider: how nature is open to everyone, while how human is confined in their own space.

5.1.3 Survival vs Development

Land is the space of security that provides a roof and shelter, fulfilling basic human needs. Land symbolizes the social status and identity of a person. A person's class is determined by his or her accumulated property, denoting rich or poor, high class, middle class, or low class. Therefore, land is one of the modes of survival for people, whether fulfilling infrastructural needs or serving as a means of generating money. On the contrary, land as an accumulated



property has monetary value. It is sellable. People sell their land when they lack money for their survival, or they have filled the gap in their life as well as to achieve bigger plans. Ghosh (2004) mentions the idea of people of Sundarbans selling land, “This was at a time when people were so desperate for land that they were willing to sell themselves in exchange for a bigha or two”(p.52). People of the Sundarbans plan to sell their lands or exchange. The condition of selling requires fulfilling current needs, surviving, and taking a step in development. Nonetheless, land is not worthy it to keep, or its value is degrading. In the case of people of Sundarbans, the idea of survival pushes them to sell their land. The land of Sundarbans is fragile, where land constantly disappears due to tides. On the one hand, in such an area, gaining even a piece of land is a sense of security. But lack of stable land forces people to sell it. Selling the land is searching the betterment from the present scenario, but also being the phase of displacement from their original places or origins. The displacement from the enrichment area like the Sundarbans leads to the extinction of indigenous culture, customs, and preservation. Sooner or later, it is overlapped and replaced by modern infrastructure and culture with progressive thought and models.

Sundarbans is a pristine land, an enriched cultivated ecological system that is filled with landscapes and animals such as tigers, crocodiles, and snakes. The presence of animals, plants, and other species is the fauna of that place, as well as conserving biodiversity on Earth. The non-human entity is free and safe until there is human intervention. Human intervention for their development is a constant threat for inhabitant of animals. As a result, animals react to preserve their home and simply survive so they would not extinct. Ghosh (2004) elaborates on the condition of animals of Sundarbans, “think of the tigers, crocodiles and snakes that lived in the creeks and nalas that covered the islands. This was a feast for them. They killed hundreds of people” (p.52). The plain and open land of nature is for the natural inhabitants and species at first. Because they belong to that openness. They have built their survival mode accordingly. Animals like tigers, crocodiles, snakes, and many more are living in nature and on islands. They have the capacity to survive in nature. However, when they encounter human presence or human intervention, human beings are killed. The killing of people by animals is the consequence of human action and the disturbance they have created in the natural habitat. The act of killing humans by animals illustrates how nature resists human infringement and shows that nature and its inhabitants have the resistance to preserve their life as well as their surroundings. Consequently, it is the act of balancing eco system. Furthermore, nature and its inhabitant do not accept domination of humans over their resources. They do not embrace any control or autonomy over their system.

Development is commonly known as a positive change or progress. It is the modern discourse aligned with the progress of living standards, well-being, and the building of modern, concrete buildings with modern equipment and facilities. Such as infrastructure buildings, towers, roads, and modern houses, industry or factory for production to generate money. The model of development is a mode of survival for modern man through creating a modern, constructive society. On the contrary, it is the model of destruction for poor and marginalized people along with the natural resources such as water, land, and inhabitants of that place. Ghosh (2004) emphasizes rebuilding a new place, “wanted to build a place where no one would exploit anyone and people would live together without petty social distinctions and differences” (p.53). The land is exploited by authoritative people to implement their idea to create a new city. As a result, the inhabitants of that place is displaced from their land. The land is tested for innovation, exploiting its original forms and status. Then, in the long run, it erodes the communal and social value among the people. Eventually, society moves into an individualist sect. Because of that, there must be an open and free place which cannot be exploited by anyone in any condition, and people are able to live in that place without any social differences. In addition to that, Ghosh shows the value of a traditional occupation associated with the socio-cultural livelihood of people in their own land. Ghosh (2004) dreams about the place: “He dreamed of a place where men and women could be farmers in the morning, poets in the afternoon, and carpenters in the evening” (p.53). The field where men and women are free to continue their traditional occupation for their survival. They have free will to choose and engage to live their life where they can be a farmer, a carpenter, and even a poet. In that way, Ghosh highlights the value of communal life and its occupations that is not controlled by the state or any authority for innovation. Hence, development is not an indicator of progressive lives and society if it eradicates land’s original essence and creates a dependent society towards modern culture.

5.1.4 Indigenous knowledge and faith on Nature

Ecological retribution is an act of nature that restores, forgives, and heals in support of humankind and their survival. In the novel, Bon-bibi is a representation of ecological retribution. She supports the livelihood of the poor. Ghosh (2004) examines the power of Bon Bibi: “Bon Bibi; she was the savior of the weak and a mother of mercy to the poor” (p.97). Tribal people of Sundarbans strongly believe Bon Bibi is the guardian angel in times of crisis. She is a savior, especially for the marginal people who have no land, shelter, and means for survival. And eventually surrender themselves to nature for their well-being.

Folktales are forms of narration that narrate the oral, mythical, and mystical stories full of legendary deeds, rituals, and customs. Folktales represent the folklore tradition, customs, and values of any society. These traditions are



orally transmitted to new generations as a story or myth. In the novel, the mystic and mythical story of Bon Bibi illustrates how people living around the Sundarbans and Lusibari area follow folklore tradition. So, folktales are widely shared among community members. The narration is not only a source of information or entertainment, it is also a rejoicing ecology with environmental values, aspiration into human lives where there are no boundaries between the human and non-human entity. In this regard, Ghosh (2004) assesses this scenario of Bob Bibi: “Bon Bibi shows the world the law of the forest, which was that the rich and greedy would be punished while the poor and righteous were rewarded”(p.98). The statements are linked with the folktales in which a boy was rescued and revived by Bon Bibi. Bon Bibi is Mother Nature and a symbol of justice who rules over the forest. According to her law, the greedy and rich would be punished, whereas the poor and righteous were rewarded. So, folktales of Bon Bibi reveal that folklore traditions cherish ecological significance in the day-to-day life of the tribal community.

5.1.5 Marginalization and Erasure

The open land provides open access to humans for their settlement and betterment. When betterment turns into a captive level and imposition of human power, then it no longer remains the same as free land. The power, greed, and unlawful desire of a person or group of people control it for their selfishness. While fulfilling that will, they show hostility, ill manners, and inhuman behavior towards nature and other humans. Ghosh (2004) emphasizes the brutality of the state in Morichjhapi, “They came with guns...firing into the crowd”(p.262). The word ‘they’ here refers to the state control and its mechanism to inflict upon the open lands and their inhabitants. A power holder under the state mechanism enters with a gun and starts to kill the people. The scenario occurred when native people did not agree to leave the place. In the novel, the Morichjhapi episode illustrates the oppression of the state against both land and marginalized people. The people who are on the margins, poor, and who do not have land, build their homes in nature, on the bank of the river, or in open spaces, and are eradicated by the state to implement a development model. The land is ground, and the sky is a roof for marginal people. However, the authority captured the land and killed. The eviction of people like Kusum from the land exemplifies the brutality of the state mechanism against powerless people.

The thought of a progressive and developed society or model is a threat to the existing one. It eliminates the natural sites. Consequently, land is disrupted, trees are cut down, and the barren land is cultivated for production and consumption. Then natural resources become the agent of commodity production and the site of materialism, which only fulfill the needs of humans, not the environment. In addition to that, the materialistic approaches lead to a tendency of exploitation by superior groups over inferior groups or marginalized people, especially women. A similar context is witnessed by Nirmal and the people of Morichjhapi in the novel. Because of that, Nirmal envisioned a new society “to build a new society, a new kind of country” (Ghosh, 2004,p.53). The envisioned land or place is where people and nature live together in harmony and nurture each other. Such a place is not interrupted by anyone for their benefit and purpose. Because of this, a massacre like in Morichjhapi would not happen. Nobody lost their lives, home, and means of survival.

Nature is a nurturer. It provides a settlement to the people and other species. It welcomes everyone with open arms and without restriction based on any condition or precondition. In the context of the Morichjhapi settlement, the Island welcomes people from different backgrounds, castes, sexes, and ethnicities. In the novel, Kusum states about Morichjhapi, “This Island has given us life...we have made it ours”(Ghosh, 2004, p.261). The statement by Kusum recalls that the island of Morichjhapi welcomes refugees, displaced and marginalized people, to rebuild their home. For Kusum and others, the island is not merely land but a source of survival, dignity, and identity that has been cultivated. They depend on it and are emotionally attached to it as their home.

Biocentrism believes that all living things have intrinsic values for their survival, and they act based on those values. In that sense, animals have a right to kill and be defensive for their own protection or as per their nature. This is an act of natural rule which is inherent and governed by a non-human entity in the ecological system. Ghosh (2004) asserts on biocentrism, “The animal had killed people...it had to be stopped” (p.300). The act of killing a tiger is instinct value of the tiger. If a tiger does not kill, then what are the means of survival for the tiger? Killing is the instinct and value of carnivorous animals. On the other hand, common people or villagers see tigers as a threat, lacking an understanding of the cycle of eco system. Thus, the idea of ecological balance and maintaining biodiversity among the species of that environment is only possible if common people are able to understand the importance of inherent values of each species in this world.

Nature has the resilience power to sustain itself. It is not dependent upon any human or non-human for its survival. On the other side, it's humans who are dependent on nature to fulfill their needs. Human are vulnerable and not able to sustain themselves without depending on their surrounding environment. The man has exploited and misused the environment to fulfill his interest. Human beings are so vulnerable that they do not have anything on their own. For example, humans get food from nature to reduce their hunger, water to quench their thirst, and shelter for the roof. Ghosh (2004) states on the dependency of humans on nature, “Hunger drives us to the forest” (p.211). Forest as a source of food. Humans drive themselves to the forest for survival. So, it raises a question: Is there any possibility that humans



can sustain without nature? And is it whose survival? Not of nature, but of humans. Alternatively, nature supports the needs of humans. It is the giver, not a taker. Humans are the takers only, not the giver.

The power of nature is unpredictable and uncontrollable because it has its own rules and laws. The domination of any force cannot be tolerated by nature, and humans cannot fully understand natural forces. Ghosh (2004) says on the unpredictable power of nature, “the storm came without warning” (p.205). Nature has its flow and rules. Nature seems quiet and passive at some point, but it is not. It is rather active in its own way. It has a destructive form as it changes. At the moment of change, it challenges humans and their existence. Therefore, humans are ignorant of keeping themselves in a top position, undermining the power of nature. The act of underestimating the impact and effects on ecological imbalance.

VI. CONCLUSION

The exploitation of nature causes the extinction of certain plants, animals, and seeds, which in turn causes the disappearance of biodiversity. Industrial and trade expansion has harmed vulnerable communities because of their use for resource management. Certain seeds get displaced while others become obliterated. Sundarbans symbolizes a primordial landscape for preservation. Marginalization leads to extinction of communities and people. Rivers, plants, animals, trees, and humans need the primordial flavor. For this, there has to be preservation and protection. Therefore, sustainable development means the preservation of all the members of the communities because vulnerable communities disappear faster than others. This study implies that vulnerable communities need to be protected for the preservation of biodiversity and the multiplicity of plants and seeds. This study infers that resource extraction leads to biodiversity extinction that in turn harms indigenous communities. Therefore, protection of the communities goes side by side with the protection of diversity.

Declaration of Interest

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