Climate Change and the Reconfiguration of Postcolonial Narrative in Ghosh's Novels

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Abstract

Amitav Ghosh explores the current generation's failure to understand the scope of climate change in the fields of history, literature, and politics in his nonfiction book The Great Derangement (2016). This non-fiction work's main assumption is that literature will eventually be held accountable for its role in the great insanity and its naive acceptance of the climate disaster. This essay will examine the ways in which Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional endeavors express a desire for more creative and cultural fiction genres that express opposition to materialism, which has the potential to wipe out our world. We'll examine how Ghosh's fictional endeavors relate to the field of postcolonial eco-criticism, which takes into account the idea of "material eco-criticism." I'll also discuss Ghosh's support for the environment in The Hungry Tide and The Ibis Trilogy, two of his fictional works. This essay will examine how The Ibis Trilogy is an eco-critical story that expresses opposition to the violence of climate change, in addition to being an examination of the especially horrific exercise of colonial power preceding the Opium Wars. Examining The Hungry Tide will also show how this literary hybrid serves as a historical narrative of the Marichjhapi slaughter as well as a call to protect the modern eco-system. As a result, I will talk about the difficulties that climate change presents for postcolonial writers as well as the changing literary forms grid that influences the imagination of narrative.

Keywords: climate change, eco-criticism, postcolonialism, environmental justice, literary fiction, biodiversity conservation, colonial history, global warming, and ecological displacement

Introduction

Ghosh examines the challenges of biodiversity conservation in both his fiction and nonfiction works. He also participates in the new paradigm of making a material turn, which involves thinking about ways to examine language and the real world, human and nonhuman life, and mind and matter without resorting to binary thought patterns. As a result, I will discuss the difficulties that climate change presents for postcolonial writers today as well as the changing grid of literary forms and norms that have emerged to influence the imagination of narrative. In Postcolonial Eco-Criticism, Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin describe Ghosh's eco-narrative as an imaginative form of fiction that depicts what they call "greening postcolonialism." This means that Ghosh provides a fresh viewpoint on issues and discussions that impact the entire world and how eco-narrative can be used to highlight these issues in contrast to ecological tourism, eco-critical activism, environmental support, and

aesthetics (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, p. 12). We'll see how Ghosh's fictional endeavor fits into the field of postcolonial eco-criticism, which examines the issues surrounding biodiversity conservation, disbelieves in the loftiness of meaningless claims and hypocritical discourse presented in the name of free trade, and emphasizes how postcolonial literature is full of discursive formulations and narrative matter stories with their tangible web of meanings that can act as signifying forces. "The world's material phenomena are knots in an extensive system of agencies, which can be 'read' and understood as forming narratives, stories," according to material eco-criticism. The stories of matter are a material "mesh" of meanings, qualities, and processes that are developing in corporeal forms and discursive formulations. Human and nonhuman actors are intertwined in networks that generate indisputable signifying forces (Iovino 2014, pp. 1-2). By legitimately asserting identity through an eco-narrative, Ghosh reconfigures fresh domains of postcolonial identity, as we shall show. The main idea of his fiction, which is to articulate resistance against the imperialist materialistic powers of a global imperium, allows the reader to empathize with it.

Challenges that Face the Postcolonial Writer

1. The Great Derangement and Complicity

Ghosh questions whether the current generation is insane in The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable. He investigates the causes behind the postcolonial writer's inability to come up with creative solutions to the problem of global warming. Ghosh has explored in his fiction the current generation's incapacity to comprehend the scope and severity of climate change, and he suggests that this is mirrored in contemporary literature, historical documentation, and the political context of our day. According to Ghosh, writers are now immune to and resistive to modern ways of thinking and imagination because of the drastic nature of the climate changes that are occurring now. Ghosh claims in The Great Derangement's "Stories" chapter that some events, such bizarre tornadoes and hundred-year storms, are limited to science fiction or fantasy instead of appearing in serious literary writing. Ghosh explores the complex network of the carbon economy, including its paradoxical and illogical components. He contends that politics, like literature, has perished and is now a question of individual moral responsibility rather than a forum for group action. He also contends that there are significant costs associated with restricting politics and literature to personal moral exploration. In the sections that follow, I'll go into detail about how Ghosh's eco-critical fiction has demonstrated that, despite the dangers of nature and the unpredictable nature of the weather, fiction is the most effective cultural medium for addressing the pressing issue of our day: bringing the climate change issue outside the confined realm of meteorological science and into the larger spheres of culture, politics, and power. It is a form of derangement to claim that we want an alternate dimension but act in a way that ensures the continuation of the current one, as Ghosh demonstrates through his eco-critical sleight of hand. Climate change is the result of a series of interconnected histories that encouraged and sustained our collective reliance on fossil fuels.

2. Climate Change and Ecological Refugee Displacement

Ghosh remembers hearing family stories as a child about his ancestors, who were ecological refugees

who had been uprooted from their homes along the Padma River's banks when the powerful river abruptly changed its course in the middle of the 1850s. He describes in The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable how the few stragglers moved westward through woods and arid terrain to re-establish themselves on the banks of the Ganges, another river that houses civilization. Ghosh cautions us that the river, which had been a constant in his ancestors' existence, had changed into a raging force that could not be trusted or taken for granted, unlike the air we breathe. Similar to this, Ghosh describes the erratic behaviour of the Sundarbans' mangrove forests in The Hungry Tide, as they emerge and vanish, combine and submerge, surprise and upend human lives. "In those days the river wasn't here, and the village wasn't where it is..." is how even a youngster will start a story about his grandmother, Ghosh reflects. (Page 6 of Ghosh 2016). He goes on to describe how the air we breathe can also suddenly and fatally turn violent, as was the case in the Congo in 1980 when a large amount of carbon dioxide from Lake Nyos poured into the nearby valleys, killing livestock and men who may have been suffocated. He illustrates how our use of energy for production, transportation, and illumination causes its pervasive presence to irritate our sinuses and lungs by drawing on his experiences in the metropolises of Beijing and Delhi. Ghosh questions if modern authors take into account the implications of climate change for the future and are oblivious to possibly fatal risks and dangers. However, why? Can the familiar barques of narrative be used to manage the raging currents of global warming? However, the reality, as it is now widely accepted, is that we have entered a period in which the wild has become the norm: Certain literary forms will have failed if they are unable to navigate these torrents, and their failure will have to be accounted for as part of the larger cultural and imaginative failure at the core of the climate crisis (Ghosh 2016, 8). Ghosh also remarks on the fact that authors like Paul Kingsnorth and Arundhati Roy have opted to use non-fiction rather than prose to express their opinions on the climate catastrophe. He ascribes this inclination to the opposition to what is currently considered major fiction that climate change poses. We will see in the following sections of this paper why Ghosh believes that the history of the climatic issue facing modern civilization is directly related to globalization, empire, and the bourgeois novel.

3. In the name of free trade, materialistic colonial intent

The fictional world of Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy—The Sea of Poppies (Ghosh 2008), The River of Smoke (Ghosh 2011), and Flood of Fire (Ghosh 2012)—shows how the opium poppy, Papaver somniferum linnaeus, has been used in India for centuries as a palliative and poison since the Mughal era. However, through the two Opium Wars (1839–42 and 1856–60), the British forced their trade in Indian opium on China in the middle of the nineteenth century. This not only monopolized the supply of the drug to the European market, but it also altered the dynamics of East–West economic and political ties. As seen by the Orientalists' early search for spices like nutmeg, cloves, pepper, coffee, cacao, sugar, and tea, the West's infatuation with the East ultimately resulted in the discovery of the highly addictive chemical "opium." What Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin describe as "the rereading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record" (that) "is a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the postcolonial enterprise" (Ashcroft et al. 2002, p. 196) is similar to Ghosh's fictional endeavor of reliving the colonial period. Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy describes how a triangular trade

developed between Britain, India, and China in which "Indian opium provided the silver required to buy tea legally from China for shipments to London" (Chouvy 2010, p. 5). This is an intriguing point to bring up in Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy. Likewise, in Empire and the Global Political Economy: Opium, In River of Smoke, Ghosh's second volume of the Ibis Trilogy explains how "gold and silver from the West crossed the Atlantic or the Pacific, it ultimately found its way to Asia (east of Suez) to purchase the 'riches of the East' and to allow the otherwise deprived inhabitants of the northwest Eurasian peninsula to share in the fabled Oriental splendors" (Trocki 1999, p. 8). Carl Trocki asserts that "the British Empire, the opium trade, and the rise of global capitalism all occurred together" (Trocki 1999, p. 7). Ghosh's postcolonial textual response in Sea of Poppies, where the margins write back and lay bare materialistic colonial intent of the past by reconfiguring and reliving the opium trade in the fictional space, demonstrates the postcolonial enterprise in countering what Edward Said refers to in Orientalism as "the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority" (Said 1998, p. 42).

The numerous conversations with the Chinese government and the colonial traders show both the British merchants' cynical self-interest and the Chinese government's resistance to stopping the opium trade. The British merchants' opium-laden ships profit greatly from drug trafficking. By following the path of the sticky, addictive, canon-sized opium clay balls, also known as "foreign mud," from the wharves of the silty Hoogly River to the port city of Canton on the Pearl River, Ghosh illustrates the predicament of sailors in ships transporting opium in River of Smoke. Families are in debt as a result of the drug's outrageous cost. In the fictitious world of the Ibis Trilogy, the opium trade is draped in a garment of death, destroying families and family life while hindering business. Feudal India evolved into the zamindari system of ownership, when tax collectors or zamindars became landlords to the detriment of helpless peasants, as demonstrated by the numerous encounters with colonial and elite local powers. In Sea of Poppies, the colonial monopoly Ghazapore Trading Factory forces Deeti and her farming community to grow poppies.

Since growing poppies required a lot of work—fifteen ploughings—a few clusters of poppies were sufficient to meet a household's needs back then, with some extra to sell. As a result, no one was motivated to plant more. When it got chilly, the English sahibs would only let a limited number of other plantings; their agents would visit each farmer's house and demand financial advances, compelling them to sign asami contracts. Saying no to them was impossible since they would either throw their silver through a window or leave it hidden in your home if you didn't. The White magistrate would never let you off because he received commissions on the opium, therefore it was useless to inform him that you had refused the money and that your thumbprint was fake. Additionally, you would only make three and a half sicca rupees at the end, which would barely cover your advance. Ghosh (2008), pages 30–31

Opium was grown for domestic use prior to the 1830s, when the opium trade began to flourish. Poppies were permitted to grow in small clusters between winter crops like wheat, masoor dal, and vegetables for use in "... a dish of stale alu-posth, potatoes cooked in poppy-seed paste... or massaging hair with poppy-seed oil... to be used during illnesses, or at harvests and weddings" (Ghosh 2008, pp.

7–30). Because it required fifteen ploughing sessions, four weeks of expert lancing, weeks of drying the capsules, and picking, spreading, and thrashing to obtain the seed crop, the country peasants used to grow opium for their own consumption rather than for trade. Poppy production was compelled by the colonial sahibs, or masters, who also forced the farmers to sign contracts as opium gradually became the medium of currency in trade connections. In the imaginary setting, poor peasants like Deeti must deal with the repercussions of revolving debt when they are forced to cultivate the crop at a loss or face a trial where the magistrate received commissions from the same opium. According to Ghosh (2008), p. 35, the growing opium production in the 19th-century colonial economy also led to the coolies or workers becoming "habitual opium-eaters, who sat always as if in a dream, staring at the sky with dull, dead eyes." The insects buzzing around the sap appear to be under the influence of the opium. To lessen their suffering, coolies like Hukam Singh, Deeti's spouse, turn to opium. In the opium factory, the fumes cause the monkeys to swing calmly as well. Deeti's visit gives the reader a glimpse of the abhorrent working conditions of the labourers at the Ghazipur Sudder Opium factory, also known as the Ghazeepore Carcanna.

The smell of liquid opium, combined with the dreary odour of perspiration, was stronger than the spices and oil, and she had to clutch her nose to prevent herself from puking. The air within was hot and foul, similar to that of a closed kitchen. As soon as she had regained her balance, she was confronted by a stunning sight: a group of dark, legless torsos were whirling in circles, resembling a tribe of devils in slavery. After her eyes had adjusted to the darkness, she learned the truth about those circling torsos: they were bare-chested males who were submerged waist-deep in opium tanks, tramping back and forth to soften the sludge. Despite having glassy, empty eyes, they continued to move, treading and tramping as slowly as ants in honey. In addition to being hatless and coatless, with their sleeves rolled, the white overseers who were policing the pathways were almost as terrifying since they were carrying terrifying tools like glass ladles, metal scoops, and long-handed rakes. (Pages 98–99, Ghosh 2008)

The coolies' senses—visual, olfactory, auditory, gustatory, and tactical—are all dulled by the numbing effects of opium. Despite being like a closed kitchen, the opium factory is reeking with rotten smells that contrast sharply with the delicious spices and oil that are connected to culinary flavours and scents in the cooking area. In order to brew the sap, labourers must wade waist-deep in opium tanks, and the stink of the noxious fumes from the tank's reeks of hard effort and unrelenting toil. The smoke not only obscures eyesight in the already dim and dreary factory, but it also intoxicates the many workers who grind the opium sludgy paste to the required consistency. The faces of anonymous males who are drugged convey a lot about their trance-like mechanical actions as they swirl the viscous liquid with their bodies. In contrast to inconsequential and slow ants, they continue their laborious work under the watchful eyes of white supervisors who, despite not wearing hats or coats in the hot factory, demonstrate their superior status by using "metal scoops" to check the liquid, "glass ladles" to encourage and push the slave-like coolies into action, or "long-handed rakes" that frequently struck a child or worker who faltered in his duties.

Set in the 1830s, Ghosh's story is historical in nature, with the protagonists' destiny overlapping and

resonating within the framework of the opium production and cultivation that supported the British Raj in India. As a subjugated native during the materialistic colonial commerce, Ghosh connects the disparate experiences and the opium traffic through a narrative that configures these experiences.

3. Environmental Advocacy

1. Define the "Unknown" and Become Known to the "Known"

The fluctuating tidal landscape, or bhatir desh, of the Sundarbans is the setting for Ghosh's The Hungry Tide. The ebb tide creates an ever-changing and unpredictable terrain with "no borders to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea as '... the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbars where there were none before'" (Ghosh 2004, p. 7). Ghosh leads the reader-voyager on a literary journey across the Gangetic delta in this undefined fluid fictional environment of the Sundarbans, told from the viewpoint of an outsider. This journey displays the eco-narrative's characters' numerous quests, excursions, expeditions, and voyages. As it meanders, changes direction, reshapes land before daybreak, and reconfigures it with new paths before dusk, the powerful River Hooghly controls the novel's literary voyage. Throughout its constantly changing path, the River Hooghly merges with the River Meghna, establishing the theme of metamorphosis for the animal and human occupants who adjust to the unpredictable river flows and cope with the difficult task of "naming" new, fresh, constantly forming islands every day. The novel's protagonists, the Sundarbans Orcaella, are cetacean dolphins who adjust their seasonal behaviour to tidal ecology in order to fit into the daily tide cycle. They swim back and forth to the peaceful Hooghly-Meghna River pools during the day with the dawn ebb and race back to the stormy Bay of Bengal at nightfall.

In The Hungry Tide, Ghosh makes conjectures regarding the anthropological, botanical, geotidal, and historical factors that contributed to the “Sundarbans” mangrove forests’ name. The Sundarban, which translates to "the beautiful forest," is the name given to this archipelago by the rest of the world, despite the fact that there is nothing attractive about it to draw in a stranger. Some people think the word is taken from the name of the Sundari tree, Heriteria minor, a common kind of mangrove. The word's origin is more difficult to explain than its current popularity, though, as this location is named after a tide—bhati—rather than a tree in the Mughal rulers' record books. The islands' residents refer to this region as "bhatir desh," or "the tide country," but they believe that "bhati" refers to more than simply the "tide"; rather, it refers to a single tide, known as the "bhata," which occurs only when the water falls and gives rise to the forest. One can see why the term "tide country" is not only appropriate but also required by observing this peculiar parturition that is facilitated by the moon. [Pages 98–99 of Ghosh 2004]

Given the accidental botanical and semantic reference to the sundari tree, which gives the Sundarbans their name, or the tidal mangrove forests in the Bengal basin, calling the tidal country "beautiful" seems both humorous and relevant to the reader. Although the Mughals attempted to document the tidal history of the web tide, it is difficult to pinpoint the etymological route because in a world that relied on the waxing and waning of the moon's lunar cycle, "unrecorded" and

"undocumented" time designates the ebb-tide as the force that sustains existence and rebirth. The garjon tree mentioned in the novel, like the Sundari tree that gives the Sundarbans their name, also gives the settlement of Garjontola their botanical name. This emphasizes the fact that onomatopoeic references are frequently lacking in tidal country because the word for "garjon," which means "roar of a tiger's cry," has no meaning in the etymological lay of the fictional region. Ghosh also makes the point that renaming locations can be misleading, as seen by Kanai Dutt's sporadic mispronunciation of Calcutta as Kolkata. The reader-voyager also categorizes references to the past and present at the same time during the literary journey by classifying concepts and saving the usage of "Calcutta" for references to the past and "Kolkata" for references to the present. Furthermore, in the fictitious world, naming is a practice used to acquaint the "known" and pinpoint the "unknown."

So far, she had been a little fascinated by this and had shown little interest in pointing to objects and naming them in Bengali. In her experience, people almost always went through a naming ritual when they were with a stranger who spoke a different language, so she had been a little interested by this. (Page 93 of Ghosh 2004)

According to Piya, an Indian cetologist who was born in the United States, "naming" turns into a ritual of familiarization, but one that is oddly fleeting and ephemeral in character, much like in the tidal nation, where limited human belongings and transitory land are subject to daily immersions and methodical renaming. The "naming" and "re-naming" processes in The Hungry Tide are accompanied by a simultaneous attempt to "classify," "categorize," and "label" cetacean aquatic life as well as various ecological niches with differing salinity and turbidity levels that had eluded the microscopic scrutiny of ardent botanists and zoologists worldwide because of the nature of the dense, impenetrable forests. Piya's efforts to differentiate the behavioural patterns of Orcaella brevirostris and its cousin, Orcaella fluminalis, resulted in the intriguing discovery of unidentified local species in the marshy estuarine regions of the Sundarbans, ranging from enormous crocodiles to microscopic fish living in floating biodomes full of rare, endemic, and botanically unclassified flora and fauna. The eco-sensitive existence of micro-environments with their own patterns of life, floating midstream and wafting back to shore or retreating into deep islands only to reopen with new aquatic forms of life that perplexed human attempts at scientific and systematic "naming" and "labelling," is highlighted by Piya while documenting the teeming marine ecology.

The nomadic expedition led by Piya focuses on the intricate relationships between the various "microenvironments" of floating biodomes of endemic aquatic life forms. It also highlights the water depth, underwater concavities, tides, and currents of the as-yet-unnamed Sundarbans aquatic ecology. By giving names to unnamed animals, Piya challenges the idea that they are a lower social class or subaltern Indian. Persecuted minorities who are classified as Other are limited by their language skills, excluded from hegemonic power, and denied the chance to self-represent, according to Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" In contrast to Spivak's argument that "epistemic violence" hinders and undermines non-Western methods or approaches to knowledge and that "... the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (Morris and Spivak 2010, p. 28), Ghosh's eco-critical fiction emphasizes the interconnectedness of

various life forms, and Piya's attempt to name unnamed species can be viewed as an artistic attempt to think about how these ecologically related groups can be creatively transformed. By establishing a new mode of representation, Piya challenges the prevailing Western narrative through the naming of undiscovered Western species. The goal of Ghosh's postcolonial narrative is to demonstrate how colonial exploitation victims protest against the power disparity between colonists and colonial subjects through their subaltern forms of resistance. This illustrates a type of resistance that Bill Ashcroft describes in Postcolonial Transformation, where subaltern resistance can find expression in "any form of defence in which an invader is 'kept out'" (as) "these subtle and more widespread forms of saying 'no' that are most interesting because they are most difficult for imperial powers to combat" (Ashcroft 2001, part 20).

According to Graham Huggan's 2004 article "Greening Postcolonialism: Eco-Critical Perspectives," postcolonial literatures will inevitably grapple with these facets of colonialism as global environmental and ecological issues gain more attention. "The inseparability of current crises of ecological mismanagement from historical legacies of imperialistic and authoritarian abuse" (Huggan 2004, p. 702) is the issue he mentions. When analysed in this context, Ghosh's fiction can be seen as a place where ecological and environmental concerns are skilfully problematized in light of the harsh Sundarbans environment and the delicate ecological equilibrium that needs to be preserved in a region with erratic tides. Examining Huggan's opinions on the growing overlap between postcolonial literary studies and eco-critical literary studies is intriguing. He notes that postcolonialism's "green" shift was an indication of the academics' recognition that it was impossible to study contemporary colonialism and imperialism without taking into account the enormous amount of environmental destruction they entail. The interconnectedness of various life forms is thus emphasized in Ghosh's fictional endeavour while establishing a postcolonial green, and Piya's attempt to give names to unnamed species can be viewed as an artistic attempt to think about how these ecologically related groups can be imaginatively changed. In The Hungry Tide, Ghosh emphasizes how the Sundarbans' tiger inhabitants' lives are treasured more highly than human lives. Humans are left to rely on government initiatives to carry out Project Tiger, while environmental injustice promotes the presence of man-eating tigers in the guise of preservation.

Kanai remarked, "Piya, that tiger had killed two people." That was only in one village, too. Every week, tigers kill an estimated number of humans. Consider the horror of that. A genocide would be declared if such mass murders occurred anyplace else on the planet, yet here they go mostly unnoticed since they are never documented in the media. Simply put, these folks are too impoverished to make a difference. Even though we all know it, we refuse to see it. Isn't it also horrifying that we are able to experience an animal's pain but not a human? Ghosh (2004), pages 300–1.

The novel's episode aims to draw attention to the disparity that exists between tigers that attack and devour vulnerable humans who are unwilling to defend themselves. Kanai refers to the mass murders that occur as a result of government attempts to save the tiger species as "genocide." The incident in the novel illustrates how governments have thoughtlessly made the Sundarbans, a UNESCO heritage site, "inhabitable" for humans but "hospitable," "reserved," and "protected" for the tiger species in the

name of the common good. This is done through metaphors of blindness to human suffering and the resulting numbing of senses and feeling. Remember that the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve was established in 1973 to protect the rapidly declining numbers of the species, and in 1997 it was designated a World Heritage site to protect the vegetation and mangrove environment that are vital to its survival. Indigenous people who farm, forage, fish, and otherwise depend on nature for their livelihood are frequently disadvantaged by ecological conservation initiatives aimed at saving tigers and forests. It's fascinating to think about how global pressure on postcolonial nations to protect their flora and fauna has led to a revolt between ecologists who want to put the environment before all human needs and social justice advocates who contend that human equity must come before green conservation and preservation. Ghosh also aims to demonstrate in the book how government plans to develop the Sundarbans into an ecotourism destination at the expense of endangered species are typical of the self-centred human choice to live at the expense of animal decline and "... exploiting nature while minimizing non-human claims to a shared earth" (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, p. 5).

2. Using an Eco-Narrative to Express Resistance

The reader follows the tussle between two storm-tossed ships in Ghosh's Ibis Trilogy, an eco-narrative set in the turbulent waters of the South China Sea: the Anahita, a lavishly constructed cargo ship loaded with opium and owned by the Bombay merchant Bahram Modi, and the Redruth, a two-masted vessel with a Cornish the botanist searching for rare plants like the golden camellia and Paulette, his assistant, who tends to the flora during the tumulinary voyage. The renowned plant hunter Fitcher Penrose finds Paulette living in the remains of a botanical garden in the sequel River of Smoke. In Sea of Poppies, the orphaned Paulette cataloged the Plants of Bengal and added to the collection of knowledge known as the Materia Medica. Together, they look for a rare camellia species and use botanical investigation to discover newer views. According to the story, Penrose was a plant hunter who had amassed a fortune by selling plants, cuttings, seeds, saplings, and horticultural tools. The selling of Chinese imports of plumbago, blooming quince, and winter sweet brought him wealth by honest methods. His tour of the Botanical Gardens of Pamplemousses in Port Louis follows the adventures of like-minded founders and curators in botanical history, like Philibert Commerson, who discovered bougainvillea, and Pierre Poivre, who discovered the authentic black pepper. In his eco-narrative, Ghosh describes the pilgrimage path traveled by early horticulturists to the Pamplemousses garden. Penrose finds a chaotic botanical park in Port Louis, where a tangled and untamed mess of foliage depicts a primordial jungle "where Indian shrubs and Brazilian vines were locked in a mortal embrace, nor one where African creeper were at war with Chinese trees." "This was a botanical Babel, a work of Man" (Ghosh 2011, p. 39). The Redruth's sleek, angular, and curving features appear to have been designed to withstand strong winds and successfully safeguard the onboard vegetation. The Redruth distinguishes out from the others with her stack of "Wardian cases" of "glass-fronted boxes with adjustable sides, they were, in effect, miniature greenhouses" (Ghosh 2011, p. 81), despite the fact that plants bred for sustenance or ornament on sail ships were not an unusual sight during that time. The Redruth included movable awnings in the greenest part of the quarterdeck, which were intended to offer shade and shelter from the sun and other bad weather.

Fitcher had even developed a rainwater collection system to ensure that not a single drop was wasted because of the ever-thirsty flora aboard. As the leftovers of the salted meats, tea leaves, coffee grounds, rice, pieces of old biscuit, and hardtack were stacked together and emptied into massive barrels that hung over the stern, the sailboat could also brag of its novel waste management practices. All waste that could be utilized as plant nutrition was carefully separated from this waste. Fitcher himself had personally chosen every plant aboard, which ranged from Far Eastern medicinal plants to American flora.

Furthermore, nothing about the Redruth's cargo was random. Fitcher himself had personally chosen all of her plants; the majority were native to the Americas, had just lately been brought to Europe, and were therefore unlikely to have made it to China yet. Among this collection of plants were georginas, lobelias, and antirrhinums, which Alexander von Humboldt brought from Mexico; the "Mexican Orange" and a stunning new fuchsia were also brought from Mexico; and from the American Northwest came the magnificent new conifer and the ornamental and medicinal plant Gaultheria shallon, which David Douglas brought from the Northwest. Fitcher was confident that the latter species would particularly appeal to the pine-loving Chinese. Additionally, shrubs were not overlooked: Fitcher had great expectations for the blooming currant species (Ghosh 2011, p. 82). Fitcher's attempt to substitute these American plants for Chinese species that had not yet reached the West is noteworthy. However, the materialistic goal of selling these plants for profit in the more affluent Western pastures is linked to his capacity to recognize the uncommon flora of the mangrove woods. He even compares his botanical quest to the endeavors of D'Incarville, a Jesuit who had worked for a number of years at the Emperor's court in Peking. The journey of tulips, cornflowers, and columbines over the North China Sea to Europe was brought into the imaginary world by the clever priest who had thought of the notion of suggesting a botanical exchange between the French King and his royal equivalent in China. One commercially valuable example mentioned in the book is Camellia sinensis, which produced camellia tea and contributed "... a huge amount to global trade and a tenth of England's income" (Ghosh 2011, p. 107). Fitcher carefully selected a few types, including "two varieties of wisteria, a seductive new lily, a fine azalea bush, an unusual primrose, a lustrous camellia and much else," that he believed would be profitable and appealing to English gardeners (Ghosh 2011, p. 109). According to Ghosh (2011), p. 83, the Redruth was stamped as the “handiwork of a diligent nurseryman—not a man who was a speculative thinker, but rather a practical solver of problems, someone who looked upon Nature as an assortment of puzzles, many of which, if properly resolved, could provide rich sources of profit”. Fitcher is depicted as a man who had struggled to make ends meet despite his materialistic trade, but he had little use for the money he earned from plants because "his wealth was a source not of comfort, but of anxiety—it was a burden, similar to the sacks of cabbages that had to be hoarded in the cellar for seasons of scarcity" (Ghosh 2011, p. 84).

Paulette, on the other hand, seemed to be accustomed to identifying the herbs and shrubs by their botanical names. Paulette, the main character of the fictitious world, advocates for the preservation of environment and greenery against those who would devastate it. Being a natural child, she had learned to appreciate nature and view it as a form of spiritual pursuit in which the goal was to

understand the inner energy of every species from her father, Pierre Lambert. Horticulture was the religion's form of worship if botany was its Scripture. For Pierre Lambert, caring for a garden was more than just planting seeds and trimming branches; it was a spiritual discipline that allowed people to communicate with life forms that were mute by nature and could only be understood by closely examining their own languages, which are efflorescence, growth, and decay. Only in this way, as he had taught Paulette, could people understand the vital energies that make up the Spirit of the Earth. (Page 83, Ghosh 2011).

Paulette recognizes a wide range of plants while traveling across the North China Sea and cares for them in the same way a priestess would during a religious rite. Paulette's attempt to identify unnamed plants from Chinese land can be viewed as a creative attempt to think about how these environmentally related groups can be creatively modified, as Ghosh emphasizes the interconnectedness of many life forms. Thus, the spaces that the subaltern characters in Sea of Poppies establish serve as an example of the ideology of resistance. Through their subaltern forms of resistance, colonial exploitation victims express their disapproval of the disparity in power between colonists and colonial subjects. The routine chores of watering, trimming, and planting turn into disciplined practices and a channel of connection with silent forms of life that express many essential forces that make up the Earth's spirit. During storms, she pays close attention to the ship's procedures and protocols. As Fitcher's pupil, she discovers how to determine the reasons behind wilting by linking the plant's ailments to the makeup of the soil in which it was grown. On the high seas, she revives withering plants by summoning the ideal combination of "hot" and "cold" soils. When the botanists dried, crushed, and applied the mortar "in pinches, as though it were a rare remedy," they discovered that the sea, with its enormous amounts of seaweed, also provides nature's solution to the rare plants on board (Ghosh 2011, p. 103). Every bone on board was boiled, ground into powder, and turned into manure that was high in phosphates, lime, and magnesia in a major effort to preserve the unusual flora. Simultaneously, the eco-conservationists in the fictitious world have to cope with the resentment of the sailors who saw the plants as dangers to their survival and either refused them water during periods of scarcity or drained the pots of valuable water when storms threatened. The reader comes across a multitude of concerns that speak to the need to establish a "green" paradigm free from the mark of profitable colonial trade, as well as a multitude of voices that articulate the challenges that the globe faces today.

3. Eco-Narrative vs Eco-Materialism: The Material Turn

This study intends to call attention to the brutality and imbalance of colonial interactions and is inspired by Benita Parry's Postcolonial Studies: A Materialistic Critique. My work draws attention to a point that is absent from Parry's argument, even though he exhorts opponents to focus their study on a more materialism critique that links the material aggression and epistemic brutality of imperialism. Her argument for resistance theory is based on a narrow ideological framework that does not allow for many different types of resistance stories. Parry enthusiastically asserts that Britain was the location where the majority of anticolonial programs took off and where the majority of the indigenous anti-colonialists had received their training, and he commends British Marxists for their

participation in the liberation struggles throughout the book. As a result, she frequently ignores the contributions made by other regions of Europe and America and briefly touches on the transnational aspect of anticolonial struggle. My research demonstrates how Ghosh conducts a materialist, historically contextualized style of inquiry by presenting the politics of resistance in colonial India in The Hungry Tide and the Ibis Trilogy via the prism of little narratives or stories of subalterns. In order to balance the West's trade with the East, Ghosh depicts the British opium trade in China in the 1830s, highlighting the material impulses of colonials, the theft of land and natural resources, and the change in the landscape from one that produced necessary crops to one that produced opium using bonded labor. In order to demonstrate the "need to recall the long histories of injustice, to remember the obstacles in the way of building a just society and always to hold in view the prospect of a future," the eco-narrative attempts to both criticize the current political and economic situation in India and remember the materialist past and the suffering of the subalterns. "... our best hope for universal emancipation lies in remaining unreconciled to the past and unconsoled by the present," according to his eco-critical worldview as demonstrated in the Ibis Trilogy (Parry 2005, p. 193). Ghosh investigates "matter both in texts and as a text, trying to shed light on the way bodily natures and discursive forces express their interaction" (Iovino 2014, pp. 2) using a material ecocritical approach. At the same time, though, he constructs a fictional world whose history is partially known and partially conjectured to trace the opium trade. Ghosh aims to shed light on how displaced communities must contend with hostile natural forces and callous governments that disregard human survival attempts in the name of preserving the planet's larger ecological concerns by contrasting the British lucrative opium trade on the Anahita with a concurrent effort to protect rare plants and drawings of these plants.

The ocean plays a key role in the diegesis of River of Smoke. The ocean is the location of maritime trade, which influences agricultural output, environmental policymaking, and land-based politics. Sailors from India, China, Mauritius, Europe, and the US are welcomed in the Indian Ocean in the book, but the conditions of the commerce are imperial and set by the British Empire. As seen by the IOR-ARC treaty, which was signed by nations that share the Indian Ocean, this history of unjust trade persists in the modern world. The free trade association has come under fire for setting its tariffs and customs barriers too high or too low, despite its founding as a forum for the peoples of the Indian Ocean Region to reestablish connections, celebrate their shared cultural history, uncover their deep-rooted affinities, and forge their own paths. During British colonial authority in the 19th century, River of Smoke also exposes the devastation of the ecology and the loss of natural habitat. Along with the forced growth of opium poppies for financial gain, the rivers in the fictional region see the devastation of natural vegetation. It's interesting to note that Fanqui town, which is portrayed in the novel as the "threshold of the last and greatest of all the world's caravanserais" (Ghosh 2011, p. 197), is similar to the current situation in postcolonial nations that must combat the illegal drug traffic. Postcolonial ecology, in which the literary form becomes a critical engagement with an aesthetics of the earth, is typified by Ghosh's work. Imaginative and a catalyst for social action and exploratory literary study, Ghosh's literary activity is a full-fledged type of active cultural critique, with its covert purpose of social and environmental advocacy.

The cultivation of opium poppies is now controlled in postcolonial India, and farmers are only allowed to produce the quantity needed for research or medical uses. But because its growers receive such little compensation, drug smuggling has become a profitable industry. As a result, Ghosh also aims to demonstrate how government plans to establish a drug-free state at the expense of impoverished farmers are typical of current self-centered political choices to design programs that exploit the environment and minimize human claims to a shared planet. By stealing eco-friendly policy labeling, he attacks postcolonial governments' policies and practices that exploit impoverished peasants in the name of the general good.

Ghosh prioritizes the viewpoint of the colonized over that of the colonizer by using a polyphony of subaltern voices throughout the book. The recurrent theme in the Ibis Trilogy emphasizes how "opium, of course—is a monopoly of British government." Everything is financed by opium; the governor's residence, the hotel, and the church are all constructed on it (Ghosh 2012). It's intriguing to think about how the opium trade's profit-driven prospects artificially unite the main characters in spite of their disparate goals. The different motivations underlying the huge migration of these workers and their pursuit of an uncertain goal of success across the Indian Ocean's Black Water are made clear by Ghosh's stories of the several protagonists in Sea of Poppies. Honest sailors avoid the Ibis because of its negative reputation as a slave ship, but it draws lascars from a variety of backgrounds, including "East Africans and Chinese, Arabs and Malays, Bengalis and Goans, Tamils and Arkanese, and had nothing in common except the Indian Ocean" (Ghosh 2008). The protagonists' fortunes intersect and intertwine within the framework of the opium trade, which provided funding for the British Raj in India, as the new owner of Burnham Bros. hires indentured labor for the journey to Mauritius. Despite their distaste for war, the British protagonists in the book argue that it was a necessary evil for maintaining the balance of trade between China and Britain, thereby voicing the imperial viewpoint of conducting the opium war. "No one hates war more than I do—in fact, I detest it," Mr. Burnham states. It is indisputable, though, that there are instances in which war is not only necessary and just, but also humanitarian. That moment has arrived in China: nothing else will suffice. Ghosh (2008). The proclamation of war in the name of freedom conceals the British intention to wage war for self-serving purposes, since opium is used to buy Chinese tea and silk.

"Opium will not be the cause of the war when it breaks out. It will be for the principle of freedom—both the Chinese people's freedom and the freedom of trade. Ghosh (2008)

Burnham backs the British endeavor to wage war as agents in the service of a greater good in the name of free trade. The European attitude of bringing law and order, free trade, or material advancement is regarded as a Christian mission, which is typical of the Orientalist aspiration to undertake a "mission civilisatrice" and bring the gifts of civilization to the so-called uncivilized East. The British intention to eventually seize the monopoly of opium growing in its colonies is further reinforced by their imperialist position of altering the fundamental nature of free commerce and seizing total control of the opium trade because it is profitable in the name of God. It's interesting to note that the protagonists' definitions of "freedom" differ. Burnham expresses the sentiments of British trade lords who view independence as a way to improve their profitable business in colonies,

whereas Zachary views freedom as a chance to live one's life free from his former white rulers. It is clear that Zachary is shocked that the trade of slaves is not prohibited by English law. The British colonial venture lacked the "mission civilisatrice" of the Oriental quest in their endeavor to bring light to the uncivilized East. The reference to the African slave trade, which was made possible by the triangular trade, the Middle Passage across the Atlantic to sell the slaves in the West Indies and North America, the three-legged journey of trading African slaves for guns and brandy, and the final taking of cargo of sugar and rum to England. The ridiculous allusion to a slave in the Carolinas who was liberated from the despotic control of a sinister dictator exposes the British conceit in believing that opium could do for the Americas and Africa what sugar and wine did.

The astute reader is aware that economic, political, and social imperialism—the mechanism of exploitation typical of colonial times—continues to exist today. In order to frame an eco-narrative, or "greening postcolonialism," with its sub-stories of victims of colonial brutalities, Ghosh aims to draw attention to the material forces and power relations at work in today's postcolonial milieu in India. He thinks on how important it is to remember the lengthy history of injustice, the challenges in creating a just society, and the promise of a better future in today's materialist world. Through eco-narrative versus eco-materialism, eco-critical activism for the preservation of life, environmental advocacy, and aesthetics, he thus presents a fresh viewpoint on issues and debates that impact the entire world. He also brings eco-criticism closer to the material turn by emphasizing the ways in which narratives and stories help us understand the material forces and substance that govern the world.

Conclusion

In his eco-critical works, Ghosh explores the difficulties that mankind faces in the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch in which humans have a part to play in changing the earth and preserving it for coming generations. In addition to altering the Earth's most fundamental physical processes, he argues that the "Anthropocene presents an obstacle not only to the arts and the humanities, but additionally to our commonsense knowledge and beyond that to modern society in general" (Ghosh 2016). In an attempt to explain why modern society struggles to cope with climate change, Ghosh suggests that "the climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and that of the imagination" (Ghosh 2016). With the sea level rising to engulf the Sundarbans and the growing likelihood of cities like Kolkata, New York, and Bangkok being submerged, he cautions the current generation of writers that it is time to discover new forms of writing and art that highlight the current state of affairs. In order to connect situations and moments that are unique or exceptional in some way, Ghosh draws on his personal experience when writing: "... these are, of course, nothing other than instances of exception... Worlds are created through this process, using commonplace features that serve "as the opposite of narrative" (Ghosh 2016). According to Ghosh (2016), he argues that in the current era of "flash floods, hundred-year hurricanes, persistent flooding, spells of unprecedented warmth: sudden landslides, torrents of water pouring down from breached glacial lakes, and yes, freakish tornadoes," "we are confronted suddenly with an entirely novel assignment: that of finding other ways in which to imagine unthinkable beings and events of this era." Through the arrangement of these natural

phenomena in the time and space of his books, Ghosh crafts work that evoke worlds that are real due to their uniqueness and finitude. With its covert social and environmental advocacy objective, Ghosh's creative literary endeavours work as "a catalyst for action in society and exploratory analysis of literature into a full-fledged form of engaged cultural critique" (Huggan and Tiffin 2010). Ghosh uses a fictional place with a partially known and partially guessed history, a tide country with a continuous buildup of silt to conceal its past, to show how displaced people must contend with harsh environmental forces and callous governments that disregard human survival efforts in the name of preserving the planet's larger ecological concerns. By portraying the Sundarbans as an environmentally sensitive area, he advances the notion that addressing the planet's ecological problems requires a careful consideration of the cultural and human problems intertwined with natural ecosystems. In the same way, the reader of the Ibis Trilogy finds a multitude of topics that speak to the need to establish a "green" paradigm free from racial and socioeconomic inequities, as well as a multitude of voices that articulate the challenges that the world faces today. This endeavour to bring advocacy and fictional aesthetics together is typical of postcolonial eco-criticism, which aims to promote environmental and social justice in the postcolonial world of today. The fictional endeavour of highlighting the necessity of social and political change is reminiscent of Ghosh's vision of a "postcolonial green" that advocates for the shift from "red" to "green" politics and the necessity of living as responsible citizens who share the belief in sustainability and global justice.

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