

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA
2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

ECOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE HUNGRY TIDE*

P. SARAVANAN^{*1}, Dr. S. ALEXANDER²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, ²Associate Professor & Head

Dept. of English, Govt. Arts College (A), Karur – 5

*E-mail id: sarofriendly@gmail.com



P. SARAVANAN



Dr. S. ALEXANDER

ABSTRACT

'Ecology' is delineated as the scientific study of the relationship between the organisms and the environment. The theory Ecological Imperialism insinuates that colonization or annexation was not only a way of cultural and political oppression or tyranny, but also a kind of environmental intimidation and violence. Ghosh in this novel, *The Hungry Tide* created two groups of characters in order to contextualize an enormous ecological catastrophe faced by our world today. One group embodied to maintain the ecological sustainability is the representatives of deep ecology. The other group pursuing material prosperity with the aid of recent emerging technologies is represented as the supporters of shallow ecology. Man-made ecological crisis paves the way for ecological imperialism. In this novel, the forest officers did man-made crisis. The notion of ecological imperialism is vividly expressed in the incident Morichjhapi in this novel. Ghosh emphasizes the obliteration of the settlers of Morichjhapi by policemen, on the basis of enhancement and conservation of wild life. Man's avarice for earthly pleasures has persuaded him to behave unsympathetically towards nature which is now on the verge of imperils. Our present ecosystem demands a mutual relationship between human beings and nature. If not people are ready to throw away some of the irrational notions for the enhancement, global warming and such other calamitous consequences of modern technology will smash us altogether. This article discusses the imperialistic practices of policemen and avarice of mankind, the roles of deep ecology and shallow ecology.

Key Words: Ecological Imperialism, Shallow Ecology, Deep Ecology, Man-made crisis, natural environmental crisis.

Being in natural system, human beings are relying on the healthy and harmonious nature. The momentous of nature and ecological stability is vital for the salubrious life on earth. Consequently, to prevent nature most people and our government have made some deeds and established the awareness among the people. The feeling of concern for nature and its replica in literature has given advent to a novel branch of literary theory namely Ecocriticism. Ecocriticism is the novel critical

approach which examines literature on ecological theory. Greg Garrard in his canonical text *Ecocriticism*, demarcates it as "the study of relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term 'human' itself" (Garrard 5).

An eminent ecologist Haeckel outlined the term 'Ecology' as the scientific study of the relationship between the organisms and the

environment. Our antediluvian writers in their works extensively used this concept of ecology. Nature has been closely integrated with life in Indian tradition. It delineates with ecological issues like contamination, global warming, climate change, deforestation, species annihilation and other ecological destructions. It is concerned with the longing to examine and alleviate the contemporary ecological issues. It is the exploration of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary approach where all sciences congregate to examine the ecological issues and devise probable solutions for the amendment of the existing ecological issues.

Imperialism is the strategy of prolonging the control or power upon alien entities as a means of attainment or preservation of empires, either via direct territorial or through indirect methods of exerting control on the politics or economy of other countries. The term is employed by some to elucidate the policy of a country in maintaining colonies and dominance over detached lands, regardless of whether the country calls itself an empire. Imperialism is the rational augmentation of colonialism on the political front as Capitalism is on the economic front. Imperialism was founded for numerous purposes like economics, politics, chauvinism, security and strategy, humanitarianism, avarice and the like.

A distinguished theorist, Alfred Crosby in his acknowledged work *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe* (1986) concocted a theory called 'Ecological Imperialism'. This theory insinuates that colonization or annexation was not only a way of cultural and political oppression or tyranny, but also a kind of environmental intimidation and violence. Further this theory emphasized that wherever colonists perched they fetched with them diseases that obliterated the local inhabitants (of both people and plants and animals) as well as invasive pests and weeds that infringed on the prevailing flora and fauna and in due course ravenously them out of existence. Ecological imperialism demarcated as the deliberate obliteration, through exploitation, obtaining and transmit of natural resources of the annexed lands in an enthrallment of scientific and economic enhancement. Being a chief concern of

eco-criticism, ecological cognizance investigates the nexus between literature and environment. It believes that the natural world is a living, sacred thing in which each individual feels intimately integrated to a precise place. This article highlights the idea of ecological imperialism in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. Further discusses the imperialistic practices of policemen and avarice of mankind, the roles of deep ecology and shallow ecology.

Human settlement in the milieu meant for plants and animals, recuperation of littoral areas for the establishment of buildings and annihilation of mangroves which are habitat for amphibians, seabirds and the aquatic animals are hunted out as the fundamental reason for the environmental and ecological issues and the cause for hungry tides and earthquakes. Ghosh in this novel, *The Hungry Tide* created two groups of characters in order to contextualize an enormous ecological catastrophe faced by our world today. One group embodied to maintain the ecological sustainability is the representatives of deep ecology. The other group pursuing material prosperity with the aid of recent emerging technologies is represented as the supporters of shallow ecology.

In this novel, Ghosh depicts the anthropocentric attitude of human beings towards animals through some fictional characters like Kanai and Fokir and the village people of the Sundarban Islands; are the exponents of shallow ecology. According to them any animal that hinders the salubrious life human beings is to be slaughtered. Whereas, Ghosh on the other hand highlights the significance of deep ecology through the character Piyali Roy who impartially esteems nature of its usefulness to humanity, she further voices for the ethical concern. She firmly believes that all living and non-living things exist in integration with each other.

Ghosh vividly portrays the historical Morichjhapi incident on the basis of ecological imperialism in this novel. In 1979, the Government of West Bengal vigorously expelled the thousands of refugees from the island of Morichjhapi in the northern western region of the Sundarbans. On the basis of ecological reasons this banishment is justified by the Government. Few months after their

annexation in Morichjhapi, the refugees cut down the plants and trees and constructed dams and put up huts for them. As a result the government declared this island as a protected area, hence people are advised to leave the Island at the earliest. As the settlers were obstinate in living Island, thousands of policemen obstructed the settlements, seized the supply of food items as a consequence, the refugees were decreased to eating grass causing harm to the ecology of the area. Later the tube wells were annihilated so there was no drinking water, they drank water from ponds and puddles as a result an epidemic Cholera had affected the settlers. Fokir's mother Kusum faced the brutality of the policemen. By expressing her pain, she conveys to Nirmal:

The worst part was not the hunger or thirst. It was to sit here, helpless and listen to the policemen making announcement, hearing them say that our lives, our experience was worth less than dirt or dust. Every day, sitting here, with hunger gnawing at our bellies, we would listen to the words over and over again. Who are these people I wondered, who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them?...No human being could think this is a crime unless they have forgotten that this is how humans have always lived by fishing by clearing land and by planting the soil (*THT* 284)

Ecological problems can be pigeonholed as man-made crisis and natural ecological crisis. Man-made ecological crisis paves the way for ecological imperialism. In this novel, the forest officers did man-made crisis. They are seeking money rather than preserving the life of innocent victims and the animals. Once when these officers were on their motor boat, the driver hit the dolphin and it was floating in the river. The preventing methods have to be taken by these officers to preserve the wild life. It is absolutely unscrupulous that the nonchalant officers do not obey the common eco conventions of life.

In the similar way, one can witness the man-made crisis in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, where the land which is regarded as the quintessence of

nature and tradition has been obliterated by the British Empire and the egocentric Zamindars and the Kings. The subjugated people have no voice or human rights. As a consequence, the oppressed people of India have been coaxed to plant poppy instead of their routine cultivation to lead their life. As well as, in the novel *River of Smoke*, nature is destroyed not only by the superior people but also annihilated by the most voiceless humans. For instance, Mr. Ah Fey who is an accomplished and clever boy but he was victimized and utilized by the Britishers when he was fifteen years old. He is utilized by Mr. Kerr, the apprentice of Sir Joseph Banks to shift Chinese rich varieties of plants to Kew Gardens in England. As a consequence, he became the master in this illegal task. The praise of the whole victory is associated to Mr. Kerr and Ah Fey just remains a facilitator of Exploiters to expand their ecological mastery. As an ecological imperialist, Fitcher Penrose deeply engrossed in his task of earning income from plants as a consequence he creates whatever makes his work unproblematic. He seizes the birds, massacres them, undress their fat and put it into special barrel to decompose. His avarice and selfishness is exhibited in his act when he bestows rewards for imprisoning birds.

The notion of ecological imperialism is vividly expressed in the incident Morichjhapi in this novel. Ghosh emphasizes the obliteration of the settlers of Morichjhapi by policemen, on the basis of enhancement and conservation of wild life. Ghosh conveys from an ecological perception, the life of both humans and animals are equally significant to maintain the sustainability of our ecosystem. He further warns that if anyone of species of them would disappear from the land then ecological imbalance will occur and our ecosystem comes to danger.

On the basis of ecological balance, each human beings should preserve the ecosystem of our land. Due to the greediness and avarice of mankind, the above mentioned man-made crisis and natural crisis is occurred. Our ecosystem will be preserved, if people are conscious of utilizing natural resources and non-renewable resources in an appropriate way. When those resources are misused, it results in natural environmental crisis. Hence our ecosystem

and ecology depends on the mind and the maturity of people who dwells on the land.

Man's avarice for earthly pleasures has persuaded him to behave unsympathetically towards nature which is now on the verge of imperils. Apart from the ecological contamination caused by the current technological advancement, man is denying the right for other animals to live. They remain keen in minting money rather than preserving the life of the innocent victims and the animals. Our present ecosystem demands a mutual relationship between human beings and nature. If not people are ready to throw away some of the irrational notions for the enhancement, global warming and such other calamitous consequences of modern technology will smash us altogether. Thus Ghosh marvelously depicts the notions and the concept of ecological imperialism in this novel *The Hungry Tide*.

Works cited

- Crosby, A.W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986. Print.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2012. Print.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004. Print.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *River of Smoke*. New Delhi: Penguin Publishers, 2011. Print.
- Selvamony, Nirmal. *Essays in Ecocriticism*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons Publishers, 2007. Print