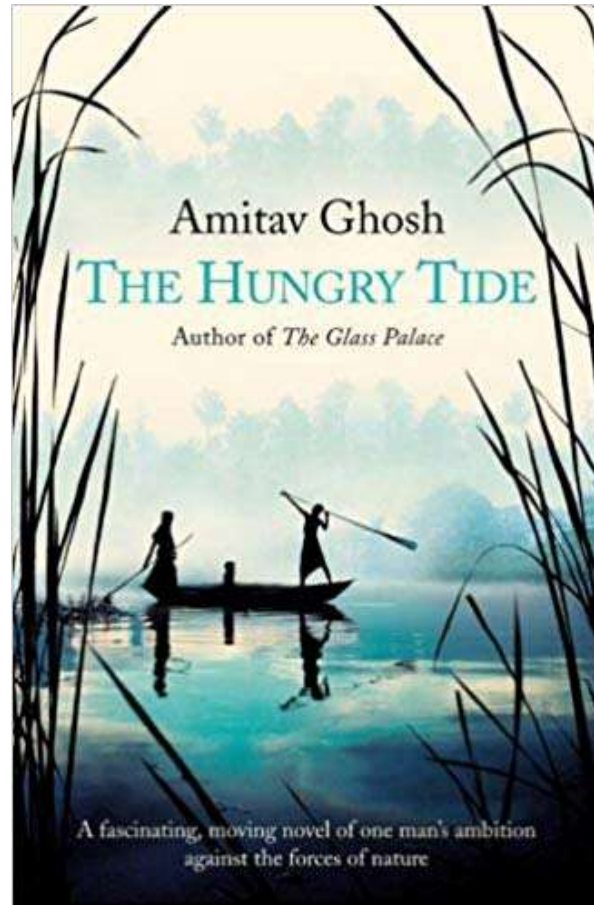


**Trans-Cultural Communication in Amitav Ghosh's
*The Hungry Tide***

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Courtesy: https://www.amazon.com/Hungry-Tide-Amitav-Ghosh-2005-05-03/dp/B01MTN72U9/ref=sr_1_2?keywords=Amitav+Ghosh%E2%80%99s+The+Hungry+Tide&qid=1562881941&s=books&sr=1-2

Abstract

The effect of post colonialism is related to colonialism which is the prime theme of the recent writings in India. The writers focus on the theme of identity of those who lost their generation and sense. They project the Indian way of life by showing their anger at the English Indians, who forget their culture and tradition. The cultural baggage, each one of them carries, is

different and unique to the region they belong to, with the result that when they give expression to their nostalgic outpourings, each one depicts a different landscape in every way. Their ways of coping are also different; in India we have vast differences in the ideas inculcated by families, ranging from the Judge who is westernized, to an orthodox cook. Thus, it is only natural that the peculiar characteristics of a particular area or hamlet are truth fully depicted by the novelist. Amitav Ghosh marks a tendency by presenting multiple aspects of human identity, cultural communication through the intervention of power in human relationships. This paper tries to look deeper into this aspect of the writer's view.

Keywords: Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, One's Identity, Post-colonial writing, Culture and Tradition, Eco-feminism, Institutionalised Oppression

Trans-Cultural Communication

The Hungry Tide is Amitav Ghosh's latest novel located in Bhatir Desh - the Tide country in the Sundarbans. Ghosh creates a sustainable ecology where human life is as changeable as the ebb, Bhata and flood, Jower, of water. The novel is situated in an immense archipelago of Bengal. The narrative technique is in the form of a jig-saw puzzle of different times, boyhood and adulthood which are related to memory. Most of the novels focus on the survival of the human beings who battle with the forces of nature.

Eco-feminism also echoes beyond the lines; it re-imagines what nature is and what kind of relationship can exist between the human and non-human world in the elimination of institutionalized oppression based on gender, class, race and sexual preferences, and what may aid in changing abusive environmental practices. Kusum represents nature as a woman, but at the same time, reshapes the culture with the help of her male counterparts.

Priyali Roy belongs to the present generation. She is a cetologist researching marine mammals, a rare profession for women. She comes to Sundarbans to study the Orcaella Brevirostris or the Irrawaddy dolphin. Her tenacious spirit impelling her to explore the penetrating secrets of nature extends her stay in India. Despite the norms that have been changed and variations in taste acquired through her contact with western culture, she remains essentially Indian in sensibility.

An ideal society needs the co-operative work of dreamers, historians of culture, scientists, social workers and economists. It needs visionaries to imagine and construct a new socio-economic system, a new cultural consciousness and also practical thinkers and implementers who would support the relation of mutuality, rather than competitive power.

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The necessity for intercultural dialogue is evident in today's world, where difference and multiplicity are to be encountered at every step. Globalization and internationalization, the two issues to which every discourse/text about the times must come back to are at the core. Though closely related, they are subtly different. Globalization generally refers to the movement/transfer of goods, services and knowledge around the globe motivated by economics. Internationalization, in another way, is marked by the desire for the sense of recognition as well as examination of the qualities of the culturally diverse groups. So, we see culture is a crucial element in the globalized world of today.

Culture is the totality of living patterns of a community of human beings. Their thoughts, actions and interactions, the procedures they adopt for fulfilling their needs and wants, the meaning they subscribe to their life and its aims, the shapes of their material objects and their orientation towards them, their attitudes towards their natural environment and other communities of human beings, are all conditioned by culture which is pre-eminently transmittable and acquirable. As "the concept of zero integrates the mathematical, physical and engineering sciences, in the same way culture integrates social, psychological and philosophical sciences". (The Complete Review, 2000)

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* takes upon itself the task of identifying and dismantling this mutually exclusive divide between civilization and culture in order to generate a dialogue between the two. The process of inevitability of dialogue is traced through the following three stages of human perception:

The utopian dream vision embodied by Daniel Mackinnon Hamilton.

The acceptance of the fact that reality is far from utopia, and the consequent need for revolution as presented through the character of Nirmal.

The recognition of need for dialogue across boundaries as a matured means of surviving in today's globalized scenario.

The story of *The Hungry Tide* centres around the American Indian ethnologist Piya, the translator-businessman Kanai and their accidental meeting on their way to a common destination the Sundarbans. In a land totally unsuitable for human settlement he attempts to establish a casteless, classless human society. This idea could not take root because of two reasons. Firstly, the idea of utopia is in itself fantastic: Utopias subsist on an optimistic view of man's potential, character and destiny, and on his capacity to be excited by wonder. Tensions and complexities of

modern civilization tend to erode the one, and the actual achievements of science have weakened the other.

Secondly, the fact that Hamilton was merely an English colonizer, with no knowledge of the land and its people, doomed not only his enterprise, but also the lives of the settlers. Nirmal has the benefits of a western education, but he is irresistibly drawn to local causes. He is an embodiment of the romantic-idealist in whom the poet and the revolutionary co-exist. The elitist poet Rilke and revolutionary socialist Marx attracts him equally. He believes that Utopia can be achieved by revolution. However, even he cannot fully comprehend the vulnerability of the utopian settlement at Morichjhapi. The revolution at Morichjhapi cannot stand up against the combined forces of local and global reality. His unsuccessful attempt at translating idealism into reality is recorded in his notebook, which he wills to Kanai.

The comprehension of local issues and a romantic idealism are not enough to make one's way through the world. What is more important is the recognition of the fact that the opening of channels of communication, although more essentialist than idealist, is a better strategy for translating idealism into reality. Nilima and her hospital thrive in the hostile surroundings precisely because she recognizes this need. It is however through the interaction between Piya, Kanai and Fokir that Ghosh drives home the imperative of getting out of every preconceived mindset which has become a barrier to communication amongst the people living in the same world.

The pressures of modernization are reducing the diversity of plant, animal and human genetic pools and are consequently reducing, the diversity of cultures and the valuable human ideas developed in them: The advent of the science in the recent years has changed the behaviour of the human being of our time which becomes the major theme of violence. The people know the values of the science and democracy and how to maintain the living system of the living beings.

The integration of non-Western scientific traditions is depicted through the Fokir-Piya dialogue. The first obstacle to be overcome is that of the social and cultural hierarchy. Kanai had overcome this bias. When Fokir takes Kanai to the island where he loses the use of his language and the advantage of belonging to the civilized urban world, the power line dividing the translator, Kanai, and the translated is reversed. Kanai explodes into a helpless rage. The second obstacle in the problems involved in the act of translation is in itself. When Piya asks Kanai to translate Fokir's song he says, "You asked me what Fokir was singing and I said I couldn't translate it: it was too difficult. And this was a history that is not just his own, but also of this place, the tide country". (THT, 291)

The second and equally important idea is that of the cultural and religious syncretism especially to be viewed in “the light of Ghosh’s statement that post 9/11 the book is his attempt to praise the world”. (The New Yorker, Sep 24, 2001) In a continuity that extends from Kusum to Fokir, the cult of the Bon Bibi and Shah Jongli along with a tiger shows the evidence of Hindu ritual. However, the changing contained a word that sounded like *Allah*.

The cyclone towards the end of the novel serves to put things in perspective. It exposes the transitory nature of human constructs posited against elemental forces. It also shows the relevance of those things that are relegated as unfit for the demands of the new world order. The cyclone, as a symbol of natural forces, serves to dismantle the hegemonic construct of superior cultures and ways of life. In doing so it shows that the degree of syncretism with nature determines the resilience of a particular culture. The cyclone is, thus, an agent of nature, which leaves in its wake the realization for a need for dialogue with the indigenous cultures of the world.

Conclusion

The novels of Amitav Ghosh are meditations upon nature and the nation. The book is based on the men and women and their divisions. The relationship between the Kanai and Piya is the main story of the novel. And the relationship between Piya and Fokir is the other plot of the novel. After *The Glass Palace*’s complex family structure stretching over several generations, *The Hungry Tide* seems almost intimate. Nonetheless, it shares Ghosh’s concern for the individual against a border historical, or even, in this case, geographical – backdrop. One need not leap very far to discern in Kanai’s words some hint of the motivation that drives a good bit of Amitav Ghosh’s writing.

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