

Water Consequences on Humane History as in Amitav Ghosh's novel the Hungry Tide

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Abstract :- Water has a significant role in the development and destruction of the coastal region between India and Bangladesh known as the Sunderbans. Amitav Ghosh's novel The Hungry Tide explores all the realities and circumstances of the region i.e. Sunderbans depends on the existence of water. In this paper, through the symbol of water I want to explore the power, anger and value of Nature. In Hindu mythology, water has an important existence. Water is a natural symbol related to fertility, immortality, place, creation and the feminine. Water is a symbol of Nature. It gives existence to humanity as well as destroyed their life. All creatures of the world totally depend on the existence of water. Through the story of Piya and Fokir Amitav Ghosh in The Hungry Tide wants to show the power of water. The man-eating habit of the Sunderbans tigers has also been attributed to the material properties of the water. Saltry water of the area damage kidney and liver, making the tigers irritable. Amitav Ghosh in his novel The Hungry Tide uses water as a symbol of Nature to express Hindu mythology, significance of river Ganga, endangered river Dolphin and Mangrove forest in Sunderbans area, human history, relationship, remind environmentalists of their own human nature.

Keywords :- Water, Hindu mythology, Nature, Conservation, Humane History, Sunderbans.

Research Paper :- Nature has always proved to be stronger than man. It has often shown its power by controlling manpower through natural calamities like famine, drought, flood, earthquake etc. Man's life and nature are so interlinked that it is not possible for human beings to separate themselves from its influence.

Bordering the Indian Ocean and its vicinity, mangrove vegetation is found in the Sundarbans in the estuary of the Ganges, Brahmaputra system, the Andaman Islands and the Irrawaddy delta. Small remnants of mangroves are also found in the estuaries of the Mahanadi, the Godavari and the Krishna on the East coast. The west coast mangroves can be divided into two forms the open scrubby mangroves of the

Kutch and Saurashtra coasts and the close forests extending from the mouth of the Narmada and Tapti southwards in the Karnataka and Kerala states. The southern part of the Gangetic delta situated between the Hoogly River on the west and the Meghna on the east represents the Sundarbans. Sundarbans is on the biosphere reserves of India. Sundarbans is the largest mangrove forests of the world with an area of over 15,000 sq. km. It consists of a number of low lying swampy islands formed by principal tributaries of the Ganga River. Its central and Western portions are occupied by extensive mangrove forests.

The Sundarbans area experiences scarcity of fresh water due to the shifting course of the Ganga. Consequently, species like Sundari (*Heritiera formes*) and a small palm (*Nypa fruticans*) are disappearing. The sea-date (*Phoenix paludosa*) is found all over the delta but always at the edge of the water. The greatest concentration of mangroves is in the Sundarbans. The essential conditions for the development of mangroves are a warm climate ranging from semi-arid to wet type, periodic flooding by tides and protected shore.

The mangrove dominated Ganges delta the Sundarbans is a complex eco-system comprising one of the three largest single tracts of mangrove forests of the world. Situated mostly in Bangladesh, a small portion of it lies in India. The Indian part of the forest is estimated to be about nineteen percent while the Bangladeshi part is eighty-one percent. Rivers in the Sundarbans are meeting places of salt water and freshwater. Thus it is a region of transition between the freshwater of the rivers originating from the Ganges and the saline water of the Bay of Bengal.

The Sundarbans Mangroves eco-region on the coast forms the seaward fringe of the delta and is the world's largest mangrove eco-system, with 20,400 square kilometer (7,900 sq. meters) of area covered. They have a thick canopy, and the undergrowth is mostly seedlings of the mangrove trees. Though it was extremely difficult to earn a living in the infertile soil of the Sundarbans Islands; they persisted on hunting and fishing, both risky jobs in the tide country.

In Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide* Piyali Roy (an American biologist), Kanai Dutt (a translator) and Fokir (a fisherman and native of Sunderbans) story shows the power of Nature. Piyali Roy, an American biologist of Indian origin, engaged in research on a rare endangered dolphin which is rumored to be alive in the rivers of the tide country. Mentioning this fact to Piya, Kanai asks, "Do you think

there are fewer dolphins than there used to be?” (The Hungry Tide 266) Piya grimly connects this fact with drastic and disastrous changes in the ecological system and comments, “When marine mammals begin to disappear from an established habitat it means somethings gone very, very wrong” (The Hungry Tide 266-267).

Fokir helps Piya in her research as he has good knowledge about the Sunderbans area. The element factor is very powerful and overwhelms all the characters but nature is not always malevolent, for though Fokir dies, the storm brings Piya and Fokir very close, something that man-made society never had. Even Kanai, who seems a little frivolous, is changed after this experience. Fokir’s death can be taken also as the catalytic agent that changes perceptions considerably.

Cyclones and earthquakes will become a common factor taking toll of human and animal kingdom. The novel is left open-ended and the readers are left to ponder over the issue and suggest solutions. There are other hints of similar meaningless exploitation of nature and consequential stasis of human life in The Hungry Tide, the vast waterway of Malta river is reduced to a narrow ditch. This dilapidated state of the river has practically closed the Canning port and people prefer to go to Lusibari through Basonti. Retaining the contemporary perspective The Hungry Tide shows that even the less bountiful natural surroundings are thoughtlessly exploited by man, wreaking havoc on the already precarious ecological balance.

Ghosh contextualizes the great ecological disaster faced by the world today by creating two groups of characters in the novel; one representing those who work to maintain the sustainability of the eco-system and the other, seeking material prosperity with the help of the newly emerging technologies. Those who work for maintaining ecological balance are represented in the novel as spokesmen of deep ecology and those who work for material benefits as the supporters of shallow ecology. Some of the fictional characters introduced in The Hungry Tide serve to highlight the anthropocentric attitude of human beings towards animals. Kanai and Fokir and the villagers of the Sundarbans Island who killed the tiger which strayed into the human habitat are more anthropocentric and the supporters of shallow ecology. They hold the opinion that any animal that obstructs the smooth life of human beings is to be killed. But Piyali Roy values nature independently of its usefulness to humanity and argues for the extension of ethical concern to include all life on earth; not just human life. She holds the opinion that all living and non-living

things exist in relation to each other. Great plan of nature must not be impeded by disastrous human activities. The selfishness and the cruelty showed by the villagers of the Sundarbans Islands towards the tiger pains her a lot. Her compassion towards animals reveals her as a staunch supporter of deep ecology.

In the Sunderbans river Ganga and Brahmaputra do an entwined dance. Dolphins are locally known as 'susu' due to the noise they make while breathing. This species inhabits parts of the Ganga, Meghna and Brahmaputra rivers in India, Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. The Ganga Dolphin is a critically endangered species in India and has been included in the wild life protection act, 1972. According to National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) sources, it would be the country's first national level survey for the head count the Ganga dolphin in river using the direct count method of the international union for conservation of nature. The survey is being conducted as part of the government's flagship 'Namami Gange' programme. Which integrates the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga river.

Amitav Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide* evocatively describes the ganges Brahmaputra delta. The place where there mighty rivers change form. Ghosh begins with the well-known Hindu legends from the Puranic tradition of Shiva taming the ferocious Ganga in his braids lest the river should have drowned the entire universe. However this region is associated not with the popular part of the legend but with its lesser known later part where there came a point when Shiva's braid was undone and the river separated into hundreds of thousands of tangled strands.

In our legends it is said that the Goddess Ganga's descent from the heavens would have split the earth had Lord Shiva not tamed her torrent by tying it into his ash-smearred locks. To hear this story is to see the river in a certain way: as a heavenly braid, for instance, an immense rope of water, unfurling through a wide and thirsty plain. That there is a further twist to the tale becomes apparent only in the final stages of the river's journey - and this part of the story always comes as a surprise, because it is never told and thus never imagined. It is this: there is a point at which the braid comes undone; where Lord Shiva's matted hair is washed apart into a vast, knotted tangle. Once past that point the river throws off its bindings and separates into hundreds, maybe thousands, of tangled strands. (*The Hungry Tide* 6)

In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh brings the river and the islands to life through the myth of the Goddess Ganga. Thus legends also go through a process of transition, travelling through the course of history as result of various socio-political dynamics. It is to this

legend that Sundarbans, an archipelago of islands owes its existence and to believe this one has to see it.

Until you behold it for yourself, it is almost impossible to believe that here, interposed between the sea and the plains of Bengal, lies an immense archipelago of islands. But that is what it is: an archipelago, stretching for almost two hundred miles, from the Hooghly River in West Bengal to the shores of the Meghna in Bangladesh. (The Hungry Tide 6)

In Hindu mythology, water has an important existence. Water is a natural symbol related to fertility, immortality, place, creation and the feminine. Water is a symbol of Nature. It gives existence to humanity as well as destroyed their life. All creatures of the world totally depend on the existence of water. Water has a significant role in the development and destruction of the coastal region between India and Bangladesh known as the Sunderbans. Amitav Ghosh's novel The Hungry Tide explores all the realities and circumstances of the region i.e. Sunderbans depends on the existence of water. This paper through the symbol of water shows the power, anger and value of Nature.

Thus we find that Amitav Ghosh in his novel The Hungry Tide uses water as a symbol of Nature to express Hindu mythology, significance of river Ganga, endangered river Dolphin and Mangrove forest in Sunderbans area. Through his novel Ghosh shows human history, relationship, humane values, remind environmentalists of their own human nature, myth and descriptions of the landscape together with the plight of the endangered Ganges dolphin and tiger. Thus humane history is nothing but a mere continuum of myth distinguished from it only by the act of witnessing. Myths have their roots in memory whereas history is the record based on evidence. Through these myths and symbols of nature (especially water), Ghosh wants to aware human about the power and existence of nature. Ghosh also wants to express the rich culture and natural beauty of India through river Ganga and waterways of the Sunderbans.

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