Conclusion

The present study attempts to illuminate four novels of Amitav Ghosh from an eco-critical perspective. The fundamental premise of the study is to explore Ghosh’s treatment to nature vis-a-vis the historical changes/Postcolonial trends in literature and treatment to nature. Ecocriticism covers a wide range of theories and areas of interest, particularly the relationship between literature and the environment. The thesis has been written by proper examination of language and metaphors used by Ghosh to describe nature, as ecocriticism investigates the terms by which one relates to nature.

The Introduction provides a detailed overview of Ecotheory from its origin and history. It examines how Ecocriticism differs from other critical approaches. It also gives a brief survey of Ecocriticism in India. It further presents the biographical details of Ghosh depicting his close association with the natural world. There is description in fair details of the different and important concerns of Ecocriticism pertaining to the novels under study, like Ecological Imperialism, Ecocide, Deep Ecology, Environmental Justice and Social Ecology.

The first chapter “Nature as a Cultural Construct in The Glass Palace” describes the ecological devastation done by the European intervention in South Asia. It gives an account of historical events like Britain’s invasion of Burma, Japan’s victory over Russia, World War I, and World War II. While connecting the lives of the characters to these historical events, an attempt has been made to show the struggle of native people to assimilate with the culture imposed by an invading government. The chapter throws light on how the colonial settlements have been adversely changing the world view of nature. The novel is an open critique of imperialism and its ecological dimension. Viewing eco-critically, it is shown how ecological imperialism has encouraged anthropocentrism. Ecological Imperialism is manifested here in form of timber business, rubber plantation, petroleum extraction business and other forms of resource depletion. Detailing ecocide, an attempt is made to show how British intervention in Burma is followed by a bizarre flurry of deforestation which results in ecological imbalance and loss of homelands for a large species of flora and fauna. Ecological degradation due to
excessive exploitation of nature is underscored by Ghosh, when he refers to the
deceptive ways in which Rajkumar and Saya John make money through
deforestation and by transporting indentured labourers to work in the plantation
and resource extraction sites. Through the reckless exploitation of land by way of
deforestation, introduction of cash plantation, and extraction of natural resources in
Burma, Ghosh in the novel admits that the nature behaves like a battle field,
fighting back every inch of the way. It is pointed out that if humans intervene,
damage and remould the ecosystem, nature will resist and fight back. Ghosh
clarifies the fact that the destruction on account of colonialism and wars adversely
affects humans as well as physical environment leading to ecocide. There are clear
cut illustrations of the deep ecological visions in his novels. Chapter highlights
Ghosh’s innate concerns that animals should not be seen as subordinate or inferior
to humans. They should be regarded as humans having intelligence, sensitivity and
passion. An attempt has been made to show that humanity should establish and
maintain balance with nature. It offers a friendly insight into human relationship
with other species and with the nature as a whole. The novel highlights the
correlation and mutual relation between nature and culture.

The second chapter “Humanity and Nature in The Hungry Tide” is an
account of Ghosh’s exploration of the tensions between and within human
communities and their respective relations with the natural world. It presents the
emotional bond between the human and non-human members in a micro world of
Sundarbans— an immense archipelago of islands located at the southern most tip
of West Bengal. It is a landscape in which the sea, the river, the land, humans and
non-humans all co-exist. This co-existence is sometimes in harmony but often in
competition. Ghosh deliberately writes about hostility of nature by portraying that
nature is made more hostile by certain group of people for their own benefit; as
mangroves are axed down, animals are ruthlessly hunted and poached and fishes
and prawns are caught along with their eggs. As a result of this non-stop human
intrusion, nature adopts an ugly face and decides to take revenge. Ghosh presents
extreme hostility of the terrain by way of human-beast encounters and other natural
catastrophes.
Introducing a rediscovered diary as primary source, Ghosh refers to a tragedy in 1979 of refugee settlers on the land of Morichjhapi in the Sundarbans. The insensible behaviour of government becomes evident through Morichjhapi incident where refugees who occupy the island are forced back with lot of violence resulting in ecocide and genocide. *The Hungry Tide* is a clear cut notion about a troubling issue of conflict between environmentalists and humanists. Environmentalists hold their efforts for the protection of wildlife without any regard for the human costs. There is a clear description of ecological racism and environmental injustice issues faced by the indigenous people. Deep ecological insights are found in the novel especially through the character of Piya. Through her point of view, Ghosh raises profound and fathomless questions regarding the conservation of fishes, dolphins and small insects like crabs and glowworms. The fusion of deep ecological vision and social ecological vision in the novel is portrayed by Ghosh in the character of Nirmal Bose, who mourns over the dullness and hollowness of the sky due to avian changes. Having a deep ecological vision, he is conscious of the fact that there are abrupt changes in the ecosystem of the island as birds are vanishing, fishes are dwindling and rivers and seas claim and reclaim due to changes in the sea level. His social ecological vision is depicted as he opposes the indifferent behaviour of government towards the refugee settlers of Morichjhapi.

Ghosh creates a subtle piece of literature which enable the readers to acknowledge the immense difficulties inherent in sharing of a planet. *The Hungry Tide* remains open ended welcoming the solutions for the age old conflict between environmentalists and humanists. Ghosh proposes a co-path in terms of social and environmental justice by urging humankind to inculcate social ecological and deep ecological vision to make possible the co-existence.

The third chapter “Monoculture: an Environmental Curse in *The Sea of Poppies*” discusses and analyzes the role played by opium cultivation in the lives of poor natives and poor landscape of northern India especially Bihar and Calcutta. In the novel, Ghosh depicts how the cultivation of opium overwhelms large areas of India and breaks the existing crop cycles and as such damages irreparably the
sustainable way of land use. The impact of enforced land conversion to production value, regardless of its suitability to the local ecosystems, in the indigenous environment represents ecological imperialism that results in damage and destruction of indigenous people and non-human resources. The issues of monoculture detailed in the chapter, brings forth the ecocide caused as a result of ecological imperialism. Ghosh laments about the fact that the colonial rulers bring about social and ecological ruination to colonized nations by drastically exploiting their natural resources. *Sea of Poppies* highlights the need of unity in diversity and it is made clear that in nature, balance and harmony are achieved by ever-changing differentiation and by ever-expanding diversity. An attempt has been made to explore the fact that ecological imperialism is actually a manifestation of anthropocentric thought of British Empire to exploit and re-shape the ecosystems of colonized bio-regions for their own economic welfare.

Further more, Ghosh wishes to create a complete parity or equality between all the individuals. He imagines and yearns for an ecological society, as proposed by Murray Bookchin, where there are no superior beings and hierarchy is replaced by interdependence. The concept of this type of society is presented by Ghosh in form of a schooner, *Ibis*. He creates a vivid world, peopled by characters of different cultural backgrounds on this ship. The ship becomes a new home for them wherein they creatively reclaim new familial relations. He tries to assure that hierarchical level that humans have set up with other human beings or with nature are worthless and transitory. He brings forth his social ecological wisdom wherein he makes it clear that environmental problems are not caused by anthropocentric attitudes alone, but follows from system of domination or exploitation of humans by other humans. Ghosh points out that one cannot happily expect to treat the natural world appropriately if one does not treat other human beings appropriately. The idea put forth is that each individual being on this planet whether human or non-human deserves respect, right treatment, due consideration, should not be made slave and should not be exploited. The novel aims to prove that literature holds the power to take up a socially responsible cause pertaining to ecological conservation.
The fourth chapter “Visions of Nature Relationships in River of smoke” discusses different approach of different characters of the novel towards nature. Ghosh presents various characters in the novel—migrants, lascars, traders, government officials, British officials, businessmen, botanists, horticulturalists, boatmen and even painters. The novel details Ghosh’s description of the nineteenth century Asian subcontinent with creative enthusiasm and deep historical insight. The most obvious aspect of the novel is the cultivation of poppy flowers and the processing of seeds into opium in India and its illegal sale in China. It details opium wars of 1839-42. The chapter focuses on the ecological dimension of British imperialism. A detailed description of how the degradation of nature is legitimated by imperialists in the name of free trade and superiority or dominance is presented.

Ghosh in the novel seeks to present his eco-critical viewpoint by opening the vistas of the cliffs of Mauritius, picturizing the Chinese landscape and gardens and by highlighting the ill effects of opium on Chinese people and their environment. The cliffs of Mauritius are presented as hostile dwellings where in the indentured coolies and labourers involving Deeti from northern India are forced to live and work. This section is studied under the concepts of environmental justice. In contrast to the hostile landscape of Mauritius, Chinese landscape is described as fascinating and mesmerizing. It is portrayed rich in botanical varieties. It is blessed with unique, beautiful and useful varieties of flora. China’s rich landscape entices Britishers and other foreigners to accelerate their efforts to obtain its most valuable trees and plants. In order to grab the valuable commodities like silk, tea and porcelain, Britishers forcefully introduce opium in China. The Chapter presents the disturbed life that people of China go through due to ill effects of opium on their environment and their physical senses. The foreign merchants react with war against the resistance offered by Chinese authorities to opium trade. As war is considered to be the stark example of ecocide, details of the ecocide followed due to opium war on China are discussed in the chapter.

The chapter with all the above descriptions gives the details of ecological imperialism with anthropocentric world view of western nations over third world nations leading to overall dominance, ecocide and environmental injustices. It
documents plethora of incidents witnessing human exploitation of the earth and the less powerful. Through the characters of the novel, Ghosh presents myriads of deep ecological, social ecological and ethic illumination and thoughts in pursuit of the ecological balance between nature and human beings.

The main factors responsible for the destruction of nature revealed in the study are:

The solution to these sort of ecological crisis offered by the present study is:
Thus this research thesis analyzes four novels of Amitav Ghosh by claiming them ecoconscious. In all the above researched novels, Ghosh characterizes nature in clearer and more defined ways and brings forth the fact that the earth is alive and humans definitely need to stop viewing themselves outside of nature. The study reveals that humans should start learning how nature works and seek itself to fit in as a part of a balanced whole, reverencing nature’s innate intelligence and perfection rather than bulldozing it. There is a need of paradigm shift from the anthropocentric to the ecocentric set of values. As such it is revealed during the study that Ghosh’s writings advocate and consider non-anthropocentrism as one solution to alleviate the ecological crisis. He further proposes inculcation of deep ecological vision, social ecological vision, eradication of ecocide and mass awareness about environmental justice issues as a solution to the ongoing ecological crisis. The research thus arrives at the conclusion that there is a need to preserve nature as humans are primarily members of the natural world. Above all, the study reveals that Ghosh’s novel selected for the research work shows ecological holism.