APPENDIX
Amitav Ghosh's latest book, chronologically ninth in number is a novel, following his four previous novels namely The Circle of Reason, The Shadow Lines, The Calcutta Chromosome and The Glass Palace. The Hungry Tide, Published in 2004 is a prophetic novel of remarkable insight, beauty and humanity. The novel is already an international success reminding the glorious days of Ghosh's biggest fictional art The Shadow Lines. In the present times which also is a large post-colonial world Ghosh points out on differences and on how people face it or handle it in locality, natural resources skin colour, values, dress, language religion etc. understandably it is the main theme in much contemporary writing.

Amitav Ghosh's The Glass Palace probed the differences that separate nation, race and class but now, in his fifth novel, the emphasis has shifted. In The Hungry Tide, insights into other people's worlds which give rise to a deep central sense of connection, the real essence of things. Ghosh's reputed ingenuity and brilliant imagination are further borne out by this book. In line with the title, the story has a rhythm, a tide flowing between events, perspectives and impeccably drawn moments in the lives of the characters. Ghosh's unmatched brilliance is expressed in very beautiful words on the jacket of the book which says: "Ghosh has established himself as one of the finest prose writers of his generations of Indians Writing in English". (Financial Times).

Ghosh's father and his businessman friend's stories were the base of The Glass Palace. In The Hungry Tide we again witness Ghosh's inspiration and his abilities to research. India, little more than two-fifth the size of Australia, is a land of dramatic extremes. Its eastern most coast, the Sundarbans, is a labyrinth of
rivers and islands. Subject to catastrophic famines, floods and storms, it is inhabited by tigers, crocodiles, snakes and several thousand of country’s destitute.

A century ago, Sir Daniel Hamilton, a wealthy Scot, attempted to set up an almost Marxist utopia on one of the flood-plagued island. Amitav Ghosh’s uncle was a teacher and manager in the project and it became the starting point for his nephew’s astounding body of research and fictional account at a later point in time.

Unlike the epic fourth novel, *The Hungry Tide* has a few character and covers the events of mere month. The most important thing the novel’s allure is not found by identifying with any particular character. The story begins at a railway station at the entrance to the Sundarbans, neither of whom initially shows much promise in their unidealised presentation.

Dedicated to his daughter Lila, Ghosh’s novel has two sections namely part one “The Ebb: Bhata” and part two “The Flood : Jowar”. We can find connections with his non-fictional work, an essay named “Folly in Sundarbans” The essay appeared in his website in 2003. “Folly in Sundarbans” can be called Ghosh’s expression of anxiety to save the natural environment of Sundarbans. In 2003 the business group, Sahara India Pariwar, submitted an ambitious plan to the government of West Bengal proposing the creation of an enormous new tourism complex in Sundarbans. The project will include many different kinds of accommodation: including 5 star floating Hotels, High Speed boathouses and Luxury Cottages etc. In Short an industrial house that has no special expertise in ecological matters is proposing a massive intervention in an area that is a designated World Heritage site and Biosphere Reserve.
Ghosh admits in the Author’s note that the characters of this novel are fictitious as are its two principal settings, Lusibari and Garjontola. He further continues with his emotional attachment with the Sundarbans as follows:

My uncle, Shri Satish Chandra Ghosh, was for more than a decade the headmaster of the Rural Reconstruction Institute, the high school founded by Sir Daniel Hamilton in Gosaba. For some years before his untimely death, in 1967, he was also the manager of the Hamilton Estate. To him, as to his son, I am greatly beholders for my earliest linkages of memory with the tide country.

(The Hungry Tide Authors Note)

Amitav Ghosh begins the novel with mythological tales in a very beautiful manner as follows:

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-smeared 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. Until you behold it for yourself, it is almost impossible to believe that here, interposed between sea and the plains of Bengal, lies an immense archipelago of islands. But that is what it is: an archipelago, stretching for almost three hundred kilometers, from the Hooghly river in West Bengal to the shores of the Meghna in Bangladesh.

(The Hungry Tide)
Amitav Ghosh is regarded as having a great talent for fashioning compelling plots out of apparently unpromising circumstances and characters. Geographically, the theme of The Hungry Tide is set in familiar territory for Ghosh – the archipelago of the Sundarbans, in the Bay of Bengal. The settlers of the Sundarbans believe that anyone who dares venture into the vast watery labyrinth without a pure heart, will never return.

Amitav Ghosh in a masterly manner describes the natural environment of the Sundarbans which compels the readers to feel as they are present in the area about which the author has written:

When the tides create new land, overnight mangroves begin to gestate, and if the conditions are right they can spread so fast as to cover a new island within a few short years. A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself, utterly unlike other woodlands or jungles. There are no towering, vine-looped trees, no ferns, no wildflowers, no chattering monkeys or cockatoos. Mangrove leaves are tough and leathery, the branches gnarled and the foliage often impassably dense. Visibility is short and the air still and fetid. At no moment can human being have any doubt of the terrain’s utter hostility to their presence, of it cunning and resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them.

(The Hungry Tide 7-8)

Ghosh has discovered yet another new territory, summoning a singular place from its history, language and myth and bringing it to life. Yet the achievement of The Hungry Tide is in its explorations of a far darker and more
unknowable jungle, the human heart. Its is a novel that asks at every turn: what danger resides there, and what delusion? What man can take the true measure of another? The actual story behind the name "Sundarbans" is presented by Ghosh in a very simple but impressive manner:

There is no prettiness here to invite the stranger in; yet, to the world at large this archipelago is known as "the Sundarban", which means, "the beautiful forest". There are some who believe the word to be derived from tree, Heriteria minor. But the word's origin is no easier to account for than is its present prevalence, for in the record books of the Mughal emperors this region is named not in reference to a tree but to a tide — bhati. And to the inhabitants of the islands this land is known as bhatir desh — the tide country — except that bhati is not just the "tide" but one tide in particular, the ebb-tide, the bhata. This is a land half-submerged at high tide: it is only in falling that the water gives birth to the forest. To look upon this strange parturition, midwived by the moon, is to know why the name "tide country" is not just right but necessary. For as with Rilke's catkins hanging from the hazel and the spring rain upon the dark earth, when we behold the lowering tide.

(The Hungry Tide 8)

Ghosh takes us into this mesh of vegetation, animal life and the ever-present river with Kanai, who has taken leave from a translating job in New Delhi. Here, he meets Piya, an expatriate Indian Scientist from the United States of America who believes there is an unusual species of dolphin in the murky waters
of the Sundarbans. Ghosh places these two characters along with Fokir, a native fisherman, at the center of his narrative. The natural calamities and fear of death is portrayed in a very realistic manner by Ghosh:

"I saw it, Piya. I saw the tiger." He saw Horen and Fokir crowding around him too, so he added in Bangla, "It was there, the cat – I saw it."

Horen shook his head. "There was nothing there," he said. "We looked, Fokir and I. We looked and saw nothing. And if it had been there, you wouldn't be here now."

"It was there, I tell you." Kanai's body was shaking so much that he could hardly get the words out of his mouth.

(The Hungry Tide 330)

The Hungry Tide is nominated in the top ten books of English Literature worldwide in Reader's Digest. Also The Hungry Tide is the winner of the 2004 Hutch Crossword Book Award for English Fiction. The prize was for the best work in the Indian Language Fiction. Amulya Gopalakrishnan in his Scholarly review of the book discloses Ghosh's masterly manner of writing fiction:

The book is that rare occurrence: a subtle and complex novel that sucks you in like the slime the Sunderbans where it is set. In a terrifying phantasmagorical interlude in Midnight's Children, Rushdie describes the primeval dankness of the Sundarbans. Here too, the tide country is a place of no mercy, and yet also a call in the blood for people who belong here and hanker for the soft yielding mud and shifting islands of this region.
Amitav Ghosh is a natural born weaver of tales. He expertly shifts mood and pace, from the relaxed expansiveness of Kanai’s diary to the gripping action–movie tension of the climax. Ideas, oddities, and stray details make the book an absorbing read. Amitav Ghosh has always excelled in bringing obscure areas of research to life in his fiction. In this novel, he makes cetology sound like an electrifying field of study and makes each little quirk and detail about the tide country appear momentous.

In The Hundyry Tide Amitav Ghosh shows off the sense of play, the spark of writers in the line of Rushdie, with surprising control – for example, the legend of Bon Bibi is told in a sing-song rhyme that echoes the doggerel verse of the Bengali original. It can also be argued that it is the unforced, graceful quality of his narrative that makes his ideas come alive. Ghosh tells his readers about the story of Bon Bibi through the character of Fokir:

That was the song you heard on Fokir’s lips yesterday: it lives in him and in some way, perhaps, it still plays a part in making him the person he is. This is my gift to you, this story that is also a song, these words that are a part of Fokir. Such flaws as there are in my rendition of it I do not regret for perhaps they will prevent me from fading from sight as a good translator should: for once, I shall be glad if my imperfections render me visible.

From the epic of the tide country, as told by Abdur – Rahim: Bon Bibir Karamoti or that Bon Bibi Jhuranama – “The Miracles of Bon Bibi or the Narrative of Her Glory”.
Fokir dies in a tragic accident when he tries to save Piya from the cyclone. While dying a sense of satisfaction was evident in his eyes which said that he has done something good: that a valuable life has been saved. Piya decides to dedicate her project to Fokir:

'I was thinking,' Piya said, 'that we might name it after Fokir, since his data is going to be crucial to the project.'

'His data?' Nilima raised her eyebrows. 'But I thought you’d lost all your data in the storm?

Piya’s eyes brightened suddenly. ‘Not all of it,’ she said. ‘I still have this.’ She took her hand-held monitor out of her pocket and showed it to Nilima. ‘See: this is connected to the satellites of the Global Positioning System. On the day of the storm, it was in my pocket. It was the only piece of equipment that survived.’ At the touch of a button the screen flickered on. Piya tapped a key to access the memory. ‘All the routes that Fokir showed me are stored here. Look.’ She pointed to a sinuous zig-zag line that had appeared on the screen. ‘That was the route we took on the day before the storm. Fokir took the boat into every little creek and gully where he’d ever seen a dolphin. That one map represents decades of work and volumes of knowledge. It’s going to be the foundation of my own project. That’s why I think it should be named after him.’
The Hungry Tide is an elemental rather than epic novel. It does not privilege the human position in the world as readers may rightly anticipate, and certainly not the intelligence of the educated class over that of another which is represented in the novel by Fokir, the illiterate fisherman. Fokir, the third protagonist is a key to both quests. He and Piya share no common language, but through his deep knowledge and the aid they can offer each other their communication becomes almost complete. The novel sometimes reminds us of The Calcutta Chromosome especially the character of Mangala, who is an illiterate woman having more knowledge than educated British Scientists.

We can almost accept that the local myths that are part of the fabric of the story are actual and very closely they provide an architecture for the local people’s interaction with their environment. On the other hand, it could also be called almost believable that Ghosh creates the myths himself, so tellingly and spontaneously do they reflect on global barbarism marring this century’s opening years. The Hungry Tide is a reassuring civilized book in which wisdom is embedded and the representation of experience is, for once, deeply satisfying.
Works Cited


(The Reference of *Financial Times* quoted on the Jacket of the same book).

*In the Tide Country* by Amulya Gopalakrishnan. 2004, 3 August

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