Chapter 9

Of People, Refugees and Animals: Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

Born in Calcutta on 11 July 1956, Amitav Ghosh grew up in East Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran and India. An M.A. in Sociology from Delhi University (1978) and a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from St. Edmund's Hall Oxford University (1982), Ghosh worked as a journalist for *The Indian Express* in New Delhi for a while. He has been Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature at Queens College, New York (1999-2003) and Visiting Professor at Harvard University (2004). He spends part of every year in Calcutta. He lives with his wife Deborah Baker and children (Leela and Nayan) in New York (Hawley 1-2).

Ghosh has stated that his fundamental interest is in "people" and their everyday life which slips through the fingers of an academic historian or social anthropologist. He is interested in history only if it provides instances of "unusual and extraordinary predicaments" (Hawley 6). This anthropologist, sociologist, novelist, essayist, travel writer and teacher rejects the lines between fiction and non-fiction and negotiates a third space in his writings. Ghosh's fiction deals with deterritorialization and re-territorialization that negotiates between two lands separated by time and space, history and geography. This makes his writings redefine the present through a nuanced understanding of the past. His essays reveal a political sensibility that interweaves politics and aesthetics, as elaborated so well by Rancière. The rewriting of history and a concern for consequences of hegemony motivate Ghosh to grapple with the problems of the marginalized (Bose 19, 78).

Ghosh's rewriting of history uses various disciplines of knowledge and brings out the omissions and silences of dominant historiography. His writings exhibit a balance between the real and the imaginary in a manner outlined by Albert Camus. As

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39. According to the sociologist Nikos Papastergiadis, this space addresses the disruptive flows of globalization to track the dynamism within displacements (Bose 19).

This chapter studies Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* which is set in "Sundarbans" – the world's largest mangrove ecosystem located in the northern part of the Bay of Bengal and stretching across coastal India and Bangladesh (from Hooghly river in West Bengal to the shores of Meghna in Bangladesh). The land is half-submerged at high tide; the water gives birth to the forest in *falling*. The confluence of river channels, *mohona*, makes the tide country a place without borders where fresh water cannot be separated from salt water or river from the sea (Ghosh 7). Hence, Sundarbans is borderless, no place – where markers of identity shift constantly because the tide reshapes the island almost daily.

Just as the natural tides obliterate the sense of permanent division between land and sea, the narrative also dismisses social divisions. The novel consists of two parts – The Ebb: *Bhata*, and the Flood: *Jowar*. Sundarbans is the home of the

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40. The delta derives its name from a common species of mangrove – the *sundari* tree, *Heriteria minor*. The goddess of the forest Bon Bibi, believe the people of tide country, rules over the animals of the jungle (Ghosh 8).
endangered species, the Bengal tiger, and the government struggles to preserve its natural environment. The mud and mangrove, kā-dā ār bādā, under the vision of the Scotsman, Sir Daniel Hamilton welcome anyone who does not bring "petty little divisions and differences" to build a society run by co-operatives (Ghosh 51). Here Bengali, Oriya, Brahmins and untouchables struggle with adverse environmental conditions and fight animals (like tigers, snakes and crocodiles) to make the place habitable. The refugees, who inhabit Lusibari and Morichjhāpi, have been marginalized by the processes of globalization. This has resulted in a conflict between the local populace and the government. The policies of the State deny the people space as well as means of sustenance. This provokes a resistance from "below" – a tide of people's forces to confront the oppressive global and state forces. The novel brings out the protests of the refugees to secure a dignified space for themselves. It illuminates the struggle of people against the absurdities brought about by the tide, the State and the global forces. The reworking of tradition in transnational terms in The Hungry Tide gives visibility to the displaced (Swarup 13).

The narrative begins with the arrival of Piyali Roy, a cetologist from America, and Kanai Dutt, a translator from Delhi, to Lusibari. Piyali's study of the Gangetic and Irrawady dolphins and Kanai's reading of Nirmal's writings play a crucial role to voice the silence of the refugees (dispossessed): these reveal the events of Morichjhāpi as well as the ecological concerns of the writer. Ghosh cuts across the shadow lines that separate the colonized and the colonizer, the present and the past to reveal the movement of resistance of people who fight inequalities and injustices.

Ghosh weaves strands of scientific and historical research with folklore, fantasy, ecology and political events in a seamless narrative of human relationships seen against the larger forces of change in The Hungry Tide. The island Lusibari

41. Lines of demarcation constructed by the dominant forces – politicians, police and global forces.
attracts settlers because the "Burra Sahib," a rich capitalist – Daniel Hamilton (also an outsider) – promises free farmland to all (Ghosh 79). Sir Hamilton is a "venerated spirit" in Lusibari because of his democratic ideas and concern for the poor and oppressed. He gave them equal share of land irrespective of caste/religion distinctions (78). Hamilton thus laid the foundations of a democratic order in Lusibari which disregarded hierarchies and social divisions. This is also a place "where men and women could be farmers in the morning, poets in the afternoon and carpenters in the evening" (53). The non-hierarchical nature of life on this island encourages people to settle here despite the dangers that lurk in the form of the tide and the animals. These people hack at the forest when water falls, wait out the flood on stilt-mounted platforms and sleep in hammocks.

Similarly, another island, Morichjhāpi, is inhabited by the refugees from Bangladesh. These refugees have fled from the government resettlement camp in Dandakaranya, Madhya Pradesh. The prison-like conditions prevailing in the camp and the lack of knowledge of the local language oppresses the refugees doubly. They face the threats of the government and of the local people. In order to fight the strategy of the government and resist the attacks of the local people, they organize themselves. In the year 1978 they break out of the camp and move by train or foot to reach Morichjhāpi in the hope of better life (Ghosh 118). They assume that the Left Front ministry would have no objection to their settlement and make Morichjhāpi habitable with their everyday practices like farming, fishing and hunting. They also enclose little plots with fences. They work diligently against all odds: clear the mangroves to build bādhs and huts. Since Morichjhāpi is a protected forest reserve, the government decides to evict the settlers. This gives rise to a series of confrontations between these settlers and the government for about a year (till mid-May, 1979).
The refugees exhibit immense courage by walking to the island for a living. With every activity of theirs, they make "something new . . . unseen" (Ghosh 171). While Lusibari is "one man's vision"; Morichjhāpi is the dream of the "people" who have been displaced. These people constitute their own government, carry out a census (reserve a quarter of the island for people from other parts of the tide country) and divide the island into five zones giving each family five acres of land. Everybody contributes towards the feast at Morichjhāpi to make it a show of plenty. In this way they constitute an order that is democratic.

Even the leader of Morichjhāpi seeks the help of intellectuals, press, photographers, forest rangers, policemen and politicians so that the settlers are not labelled as gangsters destroying the place. The refugees realize the need to mobilize public opinion in order to tell others of their achievements and the true reasons for being in Morichjhāpi (Ghosh 172-73). Nirmal Bose writes about the achievements of the settlers after a visit to the island. Despite the ban, threats and inducements offered by the officials, the refugees adhere to their resolve – not to leave the island (223). The police encircles the island uses tear gas but the people have stored the ration beforehand (252). When the police destroys the tubewells, the refugees drink water from puddles and ponds as a result of which they suffer from cholera, but they do not give up. One of the settlers manages to escape the police cordon, swims to Kolkata and tells the newspapers about the siege. This provokes a furore; Citizens' groups file petitions, and the High Court rules out the barricading of the settlers, declaring it to be illegal. The siege is lifted (260).

This shows the indomitable spirit (which Camus admires in *The Rebel*) of the refugees to fight oppression. Though displaced and impoverished, the refugees make themselves visible as well as audible. They are victimized by those who love animals but kill people. They are oppressed by those who perceive their settlement as a crime.
The oppressors are blind to the fact that humans have always lived "by fishing, by clearing land and by planting the soil" (Ghosh 262). However, we see how the settlement of Morichjhāpi invites the excesses of the state which supports an economics of globalization that displaces millions. As the anti-poor globalization policies treat biodiversity to be a raw material and exploit life forms, the livelihood of the people is snatched on the pretext of national economic growth and development. *The Hungry Tide* foregrounds these issues with subtlety and sophistication.

Ghosh is not merely concerned with the misery and struggle of the refugees in *The Hungry Tide*. He also gives space to the animals and the environment. While the survey on tigers or crocodiles is commonly known, Ghosh draws our attention to the rare study of the cetacean population (11). Through Piyali Roy's research project he focusses on the adaptation made by the cetacean population to the tidal ecology. For the cetologist Piyali, "home is where the Orcaella is" (400). She argues for preserving the endangered animals in their habitat so that man is not left alone in the universe (301). She is against the killing of tigers and of dolphins. It is the hunting down of dolphins for fat, used as fuel, that makes the species vulnerable (294-95, 305-07). It is Piyali Roy's concern for the endangered species which makes her travel from America to Sunderbans. Also known as Piya, this cetologist convinces the people about the importance of wild animals which are usually considered by them to be enemies. With the help of an ordinary fisherman, Fokir, and later the local fishermen Piya carries out her research to bring some changes in the order.

Just as Lusibari and Morichjhāpi accommodate people of all faiths, the waters of the Sundarbans also accommodate a varied composition. This results in micro-environments (a floating biodome full of endemic fauna and flora) of dazzling aquatic life forms (Ghosh 125). The varied composition also suggests the equality of all life forms.

42. Because the waters of river and sea do not intermingle evenly in the delta, they create hundreds of ecological niches with streams of fresh water leading to turbidity and salinity, which helps in the proliferation of species (Ghosh 125).
forms. It demonstrates a restructuring and settlement of a new order in water. Even a small creature like the crab occupies a significant place because it removes litter and debris from the mangroves. Ghosh narrates the settlement of human beings as well as the harmony of the new order in the waters of Sunderbans. In the chapter "An Epiphany," he discusses the manner in which Orcaella in Sunderbans adapt to the tidal ecology by compressing the annual seasonal rhythms into the daily cycle of tides (124). It is because the specie adapts to the ecology that Piya is able to find even a riverine Orcaella in the salt water.

Piya displays her environmental concern through disagreement with the local populace. She argues with the local fishermen and Kanai for the preservation of the tiger. She snatches a spear from a man who is about to kill a tiger. Kanai, Horen and Fokir, who empathize with the suffering people, oppose Piya (Ghosh 297-300). Ghosh juxtaposes these contradictory concerns and thus yokes the heterogeneous to effect a change in perception, the kind of change conceptualized by Rancière. Through Piya's character Ghosh also demonstrates the role of women in dealing with the environmental issues (Lechner 375). He uses the local characters – Kanai, Fokir and Horen – to reveal the economic woes and the homogenisation of cultures brought by globalization (1-3). As homogeneity undermines local autonomy by snatchling livelihood and home, it leads to the clash between the local and the global forces. When the globalization processes displace people, the sufferers resist in order to re-root and regenerate themselves in their own spaces.

Ghosh assigns to Piya a role similar to that of Greenpeace,43 to disseminate an ecological sensibility which also serves a political function in order to come to terms with the threats to environment. Moreover, he establishes an egalitarianism as he defies the gender bias through the incorporation of women like Nilima, Kusum,

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43. A transnational environmental group that creates awareness through campaigns to protect environment (Lechner 378-79).
Moyna and Piya in the resistance movements (Foran et al. 159). He also makes the indigenous people participate in the achievement of sustainable development which is in accordance with Principle 22 and 23 of the Rio Declaration (Lechner 375-76). Since Ghosh realizes that peace, development and environmental protection are indivisible and interdependent, he interweaves the political and the aesthetic to reconfigure the given order. For this purpose he gives agency to the people who attempt to establish an equal order through their everyday practices. The courageous people share a sense of solidarity (noted by Camus) and restructure the oppressive order with their daily activities without running away from it (as discussed by Certeau). The women are as courageous as men as they fight the challenges of widowhood, poverty and injustice.

Piyali Roy tries to give meaning to her life through her affinity to biology. She struggles with her disturbed childhood, inadequate funds for research on dolphins, and the language problem in the Sunderbans (Ghosh 126-27). The arduous task of staying in water for days, stiffness of the Forest Department towards carrying out research in the delta and the rough behaviour of the boatman and escort cannot stop Piya. In the absence of a translator, Piya uses gestures and signs to communicate with Fokir (32). She uses display cards and pictures of dolphins to communicate with the fishermen. The fishermen, on seeing these pictures, point towards places where the species could be found. Piya shows immense stamina by staying in water through a whole cycle of tides. She carries with her a sufficient supply of drinking water, nutrition bars and equipment like the Global Positioning System, range-finder, depth-sounder and the binoculars (72, 73, 137). In recognition of his invaluable help, she offers Fokir a small token of gratitude and reward.

Piya's love for her work makes her put up with all the discomforts. She contemplates extending her stay in the Sundarbans as her perception about India also
changes because of her association with Kanai, Nilima, Moyna and Fokir (Ghosh 267-68). Born in Calcutta, Piya now lives in Seattle (America); but she overcomes language barriers, and suffers hardships on the sea and the indifferent attitude of the forest officials. She carries the data collected after observation (of the dolphins) in a waterproof backpack. When she loses the data in the cyclone, it hardly unnerves her. She pursues her study with whatever is available. She stays with her aunt at Kolkata, contacts her friends to tell them about the loss of data and Fokir's death in the cyclone. By circulation of a chain letter, Piya successfully raises money for Fokir's wife and his son, Moyna and Tutul (396). She names the project after Fokir because it uses the routes shown by him which have been stored in her Global Positioning System (398). The report on her dolphin sighting sparks a lot of interest and several environment groups assure funds to her. She also seeks the sponsorship of the Badabon trust for consultation with the local fishermen for her project work. She rents the upper floor of the Guest House to set up a data bank, a small office where Moyna could work after her duty at the hospital (and also teach Bangla to Piya). She also has to get a permit to continue her project. Piya's perseverance and courage thus help her to accomplish her task. As the profits from the project would be shared, these would provide Moyna and the fishermen some financial help. Piya thus makes a space for herself and also gives the people their due space.

Another woman character in the novel Nilima Bose, popularly known as "Mashima," struggles against many odds to bring changes in Lusibari. Even at the age of seventy six she is heading the organization called the Badabon Trust (a model for NGOs working in rural India) (Ghosh 14). Nilima and her husband Nirmal had to leave Kolkata because of the latter's revolutionary activities. They settle in Lusibari. It is due to their efforts that zamindari got abolished in Lusibari. Nilima starts Mohila Sangothon, the Women's Union, to free the widows on the island from a lifetime of
dependence, abuse and exploitation. The Union also offers medical, legal and agricultural services. Several times a week the Union would gather in the courtyard of Nilima's bungalow to work on "income-generating projects" like knitting, sewing and dyeing yarn (89-90). Later the union is reorganized into the Badabon Development Trust as the area of its function increases.

The Union meetings bring to light the sufferings of women. The exploited women recount their stories to disclose the injustices perpetrated by men as well as those inflicted by the oppressive structures. Such narrations address a common wrong. With the spatial practice of speaking (narration) these women break the consensual logic of the oppressive order and mobilize people to change the order. In a way, the meetings of this Union are similar to the people's meetings in Animal's People.

Nilima immerses herself in her work to cope with her husband's illness and the loneliness that follows his death (Ghosh 128). She is the daughter of an eminent barrister at Calcutta High Court and granddaughter of one of the founding members of the Congress Party. She defies society to marry her love, Nirmal, her teacher at college, in a civil ceremony (76-77). The time spent in the tide country strips off the inflections of her urban upbringing. Nilima's Bengali converges with the local dialect as she freely mingle with the ordinary folk of Lusibari. She keeps her work above everything else: upbringing, social status, colonial influences. Her social services benefit all alike. The working of the trust defies the divisions of superior/inferior and high/low and thus enables Nilima to establish an order of equality and justice for all.

The services of the Trust initiate a process of transformation in Lusibari. Nilima starts a "barefoot nurse" program to provide medical assistance to the people. The nurses trained in basic hygiene, nutrition, first-aid, midwifery and other things educate the villagers. The training helps them to fight the adverse conditions of the tide country. Nilima starts a well-equipped hospital to provide medical aid on nominal
charges. The hospital leads to the growth of a small service industry – tea shops, guest houses and stands for cycle vans. Thus, indirectly the hospital provides employment to a large number of the inhabitants of Lusibari (Ghosh 128, 132-33). Nilima's social service and welfare projects help the poor to earn with dignity.

Nilima also raises her voice against the corrupt prawn traders whose business thwarts the livelihood of local fishermen. She has to confront the new colonizers (politicians and traders) because the traders bribe the officials to continue fishing with nylon nets. Nilima forsees the hazard of fishing prawn with these nets as the nylon nets catch the eggs of all other fish which would bring fishing to an end within fifteen years (Ghosh 134). Nilima raises her voice for a ban on the use of nylon nets so that the fishermen are not deprived of their livelihood. She is practical woman who shakes her husband out of the "dream world" of his revolutionary ideas (214). She keeps moving forward and definitely "mak[es] a few little things a little better in one small place" (387).

The improvement in the social order due to Nilima's efforts becomes evident in Moyna's (Fokir Mondol's wife) qualifying as a full-fledged nurse from the Lusibari hospital. Moyna's marriage to a crab-catcher, Fokir, thwarts her plans to go to college. She wishes to become a nurse after she delivers her baby in a hospital. Moyna challenges gender/class distinctions and displays enormous toughness as she moves forward to realize her ambition of becoming a nurse. She persuades Fokir to move to Lusibari (from Satjelia). Her training as a nurse and her son's education are the reasons behind this movement. Ghosh dismisses the hierarchies of knowledge through the figure of Moyna. She is an ordinary oppressed female who gains a dignified space in society by a respectable means of livelihood. Moyna wants to educate her son Tutul as she is aware of the coming times that would deprive the island inhabitants of their vocation of fishing. Thus Moyna thinks ahead of the times and never wants Tutul to
catch crabs like his father. Though Fokir's staying mid-stream alone and his sudden disappearing from Lusibari disturbs Moyna, she continues to do her duty. Unlike other widows, Moyna does not fall a victim to exploitation after Fokir's death. The reason is that she is capable of earning enough to support herself and her son. She soon gets associated with Piya's research project and makes a respectable space for herself.

While Moyna marches forward with the help of education she has acquired, Kusum (Fokir's mother) exhibits immense courage in fighting the unjust system. It is the death of Kusum's father that forced her mother into prostitution. After escaping a woman-trafficker Kusum comes alone to Dhanbad in search of her mother (Ghosh 29). Here she meets Rajen whom she marries with her mother's consent. Soon she loses her mother. After four years of their marriage, Rajen dies under a train. The loss of parents and husband and the responsibility of Fokir do still not rob Kusum of her will to live. Kusum endures suffering like a storm (jhôr) and marches on (131).

When Kusum hears about the "great march to the east," she joins the group of refugees. She walks with them as she shares a sense of solidarity and thus escapes the toil of the "city of rust" – Dhanbad – to settle in Morichjhâpi (Ghosh 165). Though illiterate, Kusum makes every effort to mobilize people to help the refugees at Morichjhâpi. She approaches Nilima for medical aid to the refugees. When Nilima refuses to help, Kusum seeks Nirmal's help. She invites Nirmal to attend the feast at Morichjhâpi. This shows how Kusum tries to mobilize others and change their perception about the "squatters." She exhibits great strength and courage during the siege of Morichjhâpi. Kusum starves herself to feed her son. Hunger cannot make her weep but the harsh words of the police that the refugees are "worth less than dirt or dust" hurt her (261). She narrates the story of Bon Bibi to Fokir to instil courage in him. She gets killed in the massacre but, before dying, passes Fokir into the safe hands of Horen.
It is evident that Ghosh's narrative defies the boundaries of caste/class/gender to initiate a process of transformation which would give some space to the people, the refugees and the animals. It does a politics of literature, as explained by Rancière, through the writings of Nirmal. Originally belonging to Dhaka, Nirmal has been a student in Calcutta. He establishes himself as a leftist intellectual and a writer of promise. He teaches English literature at Ashutosh College but leaves Calcutta after the police detains him for having participated in a conference convened by the Socialist International (Ghosh 76-77). Though the incident has an unsettling effect on his health, Nirmal moves to Lusibari. He supports his wife, Nilima, in her shomaj sheba. He becomes the headmaster of a local school and writes about the settlers of Morichjhâpi (May 1979) to give their true account (67-69).

While Nilima still thinks that her husband is a writer, he has actually given up even reading. On reading Bernier's Travels, Nirmal realizes that "silence is preparation" for writing (Ghosh193). When he witnesses the efforts of refugees to rehabilitate themselves in Morichjhâpi, he writes about them. This points to the interrelation of reading and writing as well as to reading being a silent consumption leading to production (writing) as theorized by Certeau. By choosing to write about the refugees, Nirmal brings these dispossessed people into visibility. The visibility would evoke a transformation in the distribution of sensible, as Rancière puts it, particularly of those who call them gangsters and squatters. He argues for the settlers. He believes that if Sir Hamilton could be allowed to take over the forest of Lusibari to realize his dream, the settlers should also be allowed to follow their dreams (213).

Nirmal supports the refugees and persuades Nilima to help them. Sharing their misery and dreams, Nirmal works for a humane cause through his writings. He cannot identify himself with any religion because of the horrors religion brought at the time of India's partition (Ghosh 222). He thinks that the unjust order can be reformed if the
people are taught "to dream" (172-73). He feels that his association with the refugees and telling their story would be helpful in "plant[ing] the seeds of . . . if not a Dalit nation, then . . ., a place of true freedom for the country's most oppressed" (191). Therefore, Nirmal wants the letters about the refugees to be given to Kanai so that these "supplementary" clamours for equality and justice may be voiced. His ill-health, Nilima's opposition and the forces of the State cannot stop Nirmal from pursuing his work. Since he is possessed by his dream, Nirmal leaves his writings for Kanai, expecting him to accomplish the incomplete task.

Kanai Dutt is a translator by profession and has mastered six languages (Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, English, French, Arabic). He runs a bureau of translators and interpreters in New Delhi. His flourishing business demonstrates how language, the spatial practice of speaking, could be used to make a space. It is through translation and the training for modifying the accent of people working in call centres that a person like him fights the global forces. Kanai provides services to the expatriate communities of New Delhi, foreign diplomats and multinational companies. Initially he contemplates translating Jibanananda into Arabic and Adonis into Bangla but soon realizes that both possess riches beyond accounting and hence successfully takes to the business of other kinds of translation (Ghosh 198-99).

It is because of his skills in translation that Nirmal wants Kanai to put together history, poetry and geology (Ghosh 386-87). Nirmal's writings tell the untold story of the refugees and articulate their aspirations. After reading these, Kanai also begins to support the movement of the people to rehabilitate themselves. He refuses to accept an order that protects wildlife but ignores the poor human beings (301) He opposes the insensitive postcolonial order that plays into the hands of the powerful. Hence, Kanai's arguments with Piya on wildlife and the appreciation of the efforts of the refugees cause a change of mind. His translation of "The Story of Dukhey's Redemption" for Piya powerfully brings out the perseverance as well as power of the
dispossessed (354). Though a successful man, Kanai crosses all barriers of caste and class. He eulogises Moyna's talent and also the efforts of the refugees to establish a democratic order.

Contrary to Kanai (a man of words) is the silent Fokir Mondol, who grapples with the difficult conditions of the island. He exhibits the power of the ordinary. Though illiterate, Fokir recites many cantos of the legend of Bon Bibi from memory (Ghosh 354). He knows from his mother's stories that dolphins are the messengers of Bon Bibi. They come during the bhata and scatter to the ends of the forest during the jowar. Fokir's knowledge of the dolphins helps Piya's project and he even leads her to the pod of dolphins in Garjontola (307). This ordinary fisherman has "river is in his veins" and is an extraordinary observer who adapts himself to the rhythms of water (245). At the age of five, he catches crabs even during the siege. It is, fishing, the everyday practice of Fokir that enables him to earn some extra money. In a tribute to his contribution, Piya names her project after Fokir. This earns him special respect and also secures the future of his wife and son.

An uneducated Fokir transcends language barriers and communicates with Piya through signs and gestures. He survives in the tidal ecology, braves the cyclone and is able to successfully steer the boat in fog. Fokir assumes authority over Kanai as he has more knowledge about the island. From the respectful form of address (apni) Fokir switches to tui, when they discuss about sea creatures and wildlife (Ghosh 325). He does not profess any specific religion but shows great concern for humanity. He dies while trying to save Piya during the cyclone.

Horen, another ordinary fisherman, also shows courage in fighting the oppressive forces. He helps Kusum escape from the clutches of Dilip Choudhury, a trafficker. He defies caste hierarchies as he uses both Arabic invocations and Bangla recitations. He delivers Kusum's messages to Nirmal and thus indirectly helps the refugees.
"The Hungry Tide" institutes a democratic order not only at the thematic level but also at the structural level. Ghosh decentres the colonial heritage as he ascribes agency to the subaltern. The novel plots subaltern histories and realities through an innovative use of language. The vernacular words used in the narrative either explain something or fill a gap in the colonial English vocabulary. This incorporation of the vernacular distorts the given style and thus registers an aesthetic resistance. It also establishes a democracy of words. Such interventions at the structural level gestures towards political emancipation.

Ghosh's narrative, being an amalgamated kind of text, challenges the boundaries of genres and dominant discourses which normally ignore the marginalized. Ghosh weaves history and fiction, uses Hindi and Bangla, and transfers Indian cultural patterns into English prose. Such heterogeneity provides visibility to the hitherto invisible and marginalized. The narrative is also devoid of any fixed temporal mode. It is the shift at the temporal and spatial planes that brings into light the non-identities of the dominant global order.

This fictional work about "communities coming unmade or remaking themselves" suggests the movement of transformation of the powerless local people (Hawley 166). The division of the narrative into two parts, The Ebb and The Flood, indicates retreat and surge, a movement of change. The tide signifies that transformation is a "rule of life" (Ghosh 224). Just as islands are made and unmade, the economic, political, environmental and social contours can also be changed. Ghosh also powerfully uses the image of mangrove trees that can recolonize a denuded island in ten or fifteen years whereas otherwise forests normally take centuries to regenerate. The mangroves do not merely recolonize but even "erase time" (50). Though the dense mangrove foliage also signifies a danger to people (through tiger and crocodile attacks), Ghosh emphasizes the transformative and regenerative aspect of the mangrove forests.
Ghosh employs the trope of travel to situate the self in space and to rethink the structures of power and knowledge. It is used to open new possibilities and spaces for the dispossessed. He also weaves the present and the past and childhood and adulthood of various characters. This "achronology" cuts across the complex webs of relationship between nations and generations and it hints at universal humanity. Ghosh blurs the distinctions of place and time to give space to all subjects and objects. He also yokes together the dissimilar: the scientist Piya and the translator Kanai, the social worker Nilima and the revolutionary Nirmal, the cetologist Piya and the fisherman Fokir, the active Moyna and the passive and silent Fokir, the active Kusum and the passive Nirmal. He even mingles biology, literature, politics and sociology. Such a heterogeneity marks an aesthetic resistance which exposes hidden realities.

None of the critical studies available examine the democracy of words in the novel or study the role of the spatial practices (walking, speaking, writing, travelling) in shaping a space for the dispossessed.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* deals with contemporary issues. It provides visibility to the displaced and throws light on their resistance against the oppressive order. The narrative constitutes resistance in the form of literature and is committed to the cause of justice. The resistance is articulated in the narration, theme and vocabulary of the novel. This highly complex and rich work of Ghosh makes use of various disciplines of knowledge to bolster the artist's concern for the ecology, local fishermen, illiterate inhabitants, women and refugees. Ghosh does not invent an innovative language like Roy does in *The God of Small Things*. But his concern for the endangered species and the choice of the cetacean population for Piya's research project is of great significance. Ghosh exhibits exceptional sensitivity as he brings the rare species\(^{44}\) (animals) to visibility, those that cannot protest against their condition with "votes, demonstrations, or boycotts" (Hsiao and Lim 260).

\(^{44}\) Australian philosopher, Peter Singer's book *Animal Liberation*, popularized the term "speciesism" which became the founding philosophical statement of the animal liberation movement (Hsiao and Lim 260).
If Ghosh brings the endangered species and the refugees to visibility, Laxman Gaikwad concentrates on the animal-like existence of the “branded” community, Uchalya (of Maharashtra), in *The Branded*. The following chapter studies Gaikwad's treatment of the pitiable plight of the poor Uchalyas who are deprived of the respectable means of employment. It highlights the struggle of Gaikwad against the oppressive structures that deny the denotified tribes dignity and space in the order.