International Journal of Environmental Sciences
ISSN: 2229-7359
Vol. 11 No. 3, 2025
https://www.theaspd.com/ijes.php

Analysing The Environmental Concerns And Human Interactions In Amitav Ghosh's The Gun Island

Dr. Asmathunisa Begum[1] , Dr. Kambhampati Rajesh[2], Dr. M. Suchitra[3] , Rajeswari Surisetty[4]

[1]Assistant Professor of English Kakatiya Institute of Technology & Science, Warangal (KITSW) Email: asma.mh@kitsw.ac.in
[2]Associate Professor Head, Department of English Central University of Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir State, India. Email: kambhampati.eng@cujammu.ac.in
[3]Head and Assistant Professor Department of English and Foreign Languages R.B.V.R.R. Women's College, Narayanguda, Hyderabad Email: mpsuchitrareddy93@gmail.com
[4]Assistant Professor, Division of CSS Koneru Lakshmaiah Education Foundation (KL Deemed to be University), Vaddeswaram, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh Email: rajeswarisurisetty02@kluniversity.in

Abstract

As the world comes to terms with the grim truth of climate change and environmental destruction, literature is more important than ever in both reflecting and shaping our awareness of these complex issues. With massive environmental crises like rising sea levels, deforestation, and the extinction of organisms unfolding on worldwide stages, the deep connection between human societies and the world of nature has never been more evident. Literature, therefore, is a mirror to our common acts and stimulates reconsideration of how we treat the environment we live in, the impact of our actions and decisions in the long term.

Amitav Ghosh's The Gun Island tells such a story, sad, as stated above, very sad, and as powerful, using instead a background of history, myth, and ecological disaster. Against the panorama of honey-hunters and school fire and a world essentially collapsing with the land upon which it lives, the novel traces Deen's quest, from continent to continent as he requests a freedom, he's not convinced he can handle and, in the process, uncovers not just personal fights, but the personal fight. Through his journey, Ghosh charts the plight of climate refugees, the world's dynamic ecosystems and how the degradation of the natural world has contributed to the devastation that we are now facing. The way the novel intertwines mythical with urgent real-world concerns highlights not just the profound, invisible links between human behaviour and the environment, but the fundamental relationship between these two-and the way in which such symbiosis can quickly sour. This article offers an ecocritical analysis of The Gun Island by analysing Ghosh's portrayal of the Anthropocene and its varying representations and criticism against human's exploitative attitude towards their environment. Combining personal stories with an insistence on the larger environmental tropes, Ghosh brings down hard on the need to fix our environmental mess. In so doing, the novel prompts a critical reconsideration of our relations, personal, political, and ecological and a radical change in orientation towards our environmental crises.

Keywords: *Myth, history, ecological disaster, climate refugees, environment, Anthropocene, radical change, etc.*

Introduction

India is a nation of rainbow hues, a land of numerous languages and dialects, a land of numerous beliefs, customs, and cultures, and, of course, a land with an abundance of ancient literature. It is a site where sacred rivers such as the Ganga, Yamuna, and the legendary Saraswati run like the veins of a living creature. India is without a doubt the home of major literary works such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the extra-ordinary works of Kalidas. Tulsi, Meera, Surdas, and the renowned saint poet Kabeer are just a few of the extraordinary minds who sprung from this region.

All of the country's languages, dialects, and other regional identities have been translated into the world's major languages due to their charm and spontaneity. When British colonial powers came to

the region in search of business and trade at the beginning of the 17th century, they brought with them a new language. It was the language that everyone speaks now, English. With their local policies, international vendors and merchants gradually took over the country. Therefore, it was essential for the indigenous population to acquire the language of their overlords. The writers of pre-colonial times could not believe how soon they were able to speak it fluently and communicate their feelings and thoughts in it.

Postcolonial English fiction looks at story - telling fragmentariness, which messes up the order of a story and makes it hard for the reader to make sense of it by putting together the different parts. It is also there when building a character. Uncertainties are still a big part of how people think about their lives. Postcolonial writers have been showing how absurd life is, how it has no point, and how people have trouble figuring out who they are. Postcolonial writers believe that their countries have had a rich culture, an interesting history, and a glorious past. In terms of theory and point of view, postcolonialism doesn't support changes to the way the West works. In this discourse, the things on the edges are brought to the centre. From a postcolonial point of view, the connection to one's own territory and cultural roots has been questioned. People also think that their migration gave them their roots, their unique personalities, and even their territory and cultural ethos. When the colonial powers departed and the West stopped striving to be the best, eastern philosophers and authors gained fresh perspectives. They were afterwards able to speak aloud. Postcolonial works were thus produced by repressed individuals who desired to convey the truth.

At first, colonial education and culture affected how the people who were being colonized, thought and felt. They thought, felt, acted, and reacted the way their master, the British race, taught them to. Gradually, they learned the truth about their lives, and the natives wanted to re-build their own identities. This gave them the chance to rebuild their art, architecture, history, and literature. This could also be said to have helped the people who were on the outside move closer to the middle. Literally anything from scientific discoveries to consumer items to literary motifs and methods can now be freely traded around the world thanks to globalization. The world is changed at the local level is an example of the emergence of a new phenomenon that combines global and local perspectives. The novels of Amitav Ghosh, an English writer of Indian descent provide a fascinating counterpoint to the current political climate. The earliest English novels were written in India in the 1800s, but they were largely ignored at the time. The Indian English novel evolved over time, with the 1980s being its most progressive decade since the publication of Salman Rushdie's Midnight's Children (1981). It prompted fundamental changes in both theoretical frameworks and practical strategies. Not only did it help the Big Three, especially Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan, and Raja Rao, and their successors keep their legacy alive, but it also did not hinder the survival of older, more established styles. The Circle of Reason, Amitav Ghosh's first book, was published in the 1980s and showcased his talent as a writer. The fictitious world he created was well accepted, and he was praised for his efforts all around the world.

Human itself on the Earth, is very young in terms of the history of the planet. But in such a short time period, we've had a remarkable and disproportionate effect on the ecosystems of our planet, changing the equilibrium that has been present for millions of years. In reality, the human's impact has grown to the point that humanity is now considered the primary driver of terrestrial health, outpacing the net influence of all natural agents considered together. For as Dickinson suggests the extent of this transformation is without historical precedent on the planet, with human practices assuming a dominant role in remaking the environmental provisions of the Earth (485). This change is so profound that some scientists insist that the Earth has now entered a completely new geologic age, the Anthropocene (Lewis and Maslin 171).

The phrase "Anthropocene" suggests that human actions, especially those that have escalated since the Industrial Revolution, now constitute the dominant influence on systemic changes in the natural processes of the planet. In the past, meteorite impacts, continental drift and volcanic eruptions were the primary drivers of change on the planet's surface. Nevertheless, as human activity (urbanization,

industrialization, deforestation) increases, and as humans add the release of greenhouse gases into the mix, we are not only changing the surface of the Earth we are altering the very climate and atmospheric composition of the Earth.

This time frame, scientists say, is a period during which the mass extinction of species, rapid climate change and other upheavals directly related to human activity are seriously altering the planet. This human footprint marks an era in which humans are not only passive occupants by are themselves drivers of the environment. The Anthropocene is an epoch of great sensitivity -perhaps the most sensitive epoch in the Earth's history, when nature and man are more interwoven than ever. In response to these pressing challenges, many experts advocate for a reconsideration of humanity's place on our planet, along with revaluation of sustainable practices that honour the limits set by the Earth and in turn encourage the vitality of all ecosystems. Accepting the Anthropocene as a new epoch is to recognise that what humans have done to the Earth is now irreversible. The fate of the planet, then, hangs not just on scientific understanding, but on humanity's capacity to act in cooperation to ameliorate this self-inflicted damage and usher in an era of sustainability for generations to come.

The anthropologist, journalist, educator, and scholar Ghosh desired to examine the past. Postcolonial issues of the Indian subcontinent are his primary area of interest, such as diaspora, emigration, migration, cultural blending, exile, displacement, the search for identity, and trans-border sentiments that lead to "Vasudhaika Kutumbam". The writings of Ghosh illustrate the modest lifestyles of the Indian subcontinent's middle class, peasants, and refugees. He captures the diversity of life's customs, norms, and transformations. Ghosh reveals the unknown, documents the undocumented, creates the lost, and seeks the 'self.' He places a great deal of stress on mysticism and self-contradiction, comparing them to the awareness and behaviour of untrained subcontinental people. The historical facts impacted by the West are presented with an emphasis on the East. Reason and rationality are employed to combat the West. Each of Amitav Ghosh's novels employs a unique method of story-telling to accommodate its respective subject matter. He does so with skill. Ghosh's efforts with various story-telling techniques provide a new depth to Indian English fiction, which becomes the dominant voice of a once-colonized nation.

Ecological concerns are woven intricately throughout the novels of Amitav Ghosh, including The Shadow Lines, The Glass Palace, and The Gun Island. These concerns reflect Ghosh's commitment to exploring the complex relationship between humans and the natural world, as well as the impact of historical and contemporary events on the environment. Each of these novels engages with ecological themes in distinct ways. In The Shadow Lines, Ghosh subtly intertwines ecological motifs with broader narrative arcs. The novel's exploration of borders, both physical and psychological, reflects how human actions and decisions can lead to environmental consequences. The Naxalite movement, a significant backdrop to the story, is rooted in issues of social justice and land rights, which are inherently connected to ecological concerns, particularly in the context of resource exploitation. The novel demonstrates how borders, whether national, cultural, or environmental can contribute to conflict and disruption. The Glass Palace weaves historical events with personal stories, drawing attention to the economic and environmental transformations of the 20th century. The teak trade and the exploitation of natural resources in Burma (now Myanmar) serve as focal points, highlighting the impact of colonialism and war on the environment. Ghosh depicts the loss of forests and ecosystems due to these activities, and the resultant ecological imbalance resonates with broader themes of displacement and change. The novel highlights the intricate connections between human lives, economic pursuits, and the natural world.

The Gun Island explicitly engages with contemporary ecological issues, particularly the effects of climate change and environmental degradation. The novel follows the protagonist's journey from the Sundarbans to Venice, and their encounters with changing landscapes emphasize the vulnerability of coastal areas to rising sea levels. Ghosh probes into the scientific and cultural dimensions of environmental concerns, exploring the stories and myths that shape human perceptions of nature. Through this novel, he highlights the urgency of addressing ecological crises on a global scale.

The Gun Island contributes to his overarching exploration of ecological concerns. Through diverse settings, characters, and historical contexts, these novels highlight the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world, while raising important questions about environmental ethics and the consequences of human actions. In Gun Island, Amitav Ghosh's 2019 novel published by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, we meet Dinanath, or Deen, Datta, an intriguing book dealer originally from Kolkata, India who divides his time between Brooklyn and his hometown. To describe scientific and astronomical occurrences and to promote magic as the highest form of science, Satyajit Ray uses the word "magic" in a cryptic manner throughout his 1991 film masterpiece Agantuk.

The protagonist is both a total stranger and not a stranger at all. Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island (2019) also strives for the same achievement, as the author revisits the fundamental Vedantic idea of 'ekam' or the oneness of species in order to un-distinguish the slope between the empirical and the non-empirical, the story-like and the religious, dreams and facts, as well as faith and ritual. In reality, he is trying to establish a global religion by breaking down barriers between peoples and cultures. Reminiscent of Loyal Rue's Religion Is Not About God, Ghosh speculates about what religion might look like in the future in a way he thinks it may touch on myths, folk, biological findings, and tending the environment and maintain that way of like other animals and the ecosystems. The new religion is mythical, "dharmic," and eco-aware. Ghosh draws upon the Upanishadic principle of 'Vaudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is a family) to suggest that a religion is anything believed globally without a 'god' but including a 'Bhuta'.

Ghosh's attempt to find similarities in quasi-religious spaces exemplifies his argument in folk lore's and mythological symbols. In order to achieve this, he creates a mythological notion of religion, which is based on experience rather than dogma or ritual. This is more to do with the concept of 'dharma,' or the righteous path and is based on the premise that all living things on Mother Earth have a duty, or 'swadharma', to lend a hand in keeping the eco-system in balance and help each other to survive the climatic vagaries of life. (Bose 1988) In the field of religious studies theorists have been divided for too long over the ontology of religion. Since the beginning, detractors have tried to define what 'religion' truly is, calling it a social construct, an ideological motor and even a colonial tool. Fitzgerald asserts that "religion" is a social construct. According to Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1962), classical Sanskrit has no word for "religion," hence Hindu scriptures do not mention it. Pali doesn't have the word, so Buddhist scriptures don't either. Chinese, Japanese, Egyptian, and Native American languages have no religion word (92). There are no religious terms in the Hebrew Bible or the New Testament written in Greek. It is unclear whether the Reformation's splintering of the Christian church or the information explosion about non-European cultures led to the development of the concept of "religion" in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but only modern European Christians generalized or abstracted from their own practices to create the word "religion." (Smith 98)

Faith or belief in an all-knowing deity is vital to religion, and thus requires the disciplined parading of a social society in Favor of the religion. Inculcating unquestioning adherence to its core ideas and practices, each religion uses rituals and myths to emphasize its superiority as the ultimate vehicle of spiritual or metaphysical thought. For every performance that is denied, there is another that proves its existence. Many different religions have been born and died over the years. Over the course of human history and beyond, people have worshiped various forms of a higher power. Religion, in all its forms from nature worship to underground cults, has undeniably enthralled the public and expanded their definitions of what it is to be human. Religion is a social institution that has used stories to influence the beliefs of the people it has sought to dominate. Patnaik writes (2003):

> The bounds of both oral and written religious traditions are firm. Unlike religion, 'dharma' is not limited to any particular sect, unless one considers the Hindu religion to be the only legitimate interpretation of dharma. Colonialism also gave rise to Hinduism, sometimes known as Hinduism, as a spiritual social order (3).

The region beyond the river the Greeks called the Indus and the locals called the Sindhu came to be known as Hind or Hindustan by the Persians and the Arabs. Hindu was used to describe non-Yavana and non-Muslim locals in sixteenth-century Sanskrit and Bengali writings. The British colonizers of India grouped all northern Indians who spoke Hindi together under the umbrella title "Hindu." Later, it evolved to describe those Indians who didn't call themselves Hindu, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, or Jain. Patnaik and Patnaik further adds:

> At the beginning of the 1800s, Hinduism became a catch-all term for a number of different South Asian groups and regional religions that had similar core beliefs, rituals, and cultural symbols. In particular, experts started using the term "high-caste brahmanas" around 1830 to describe their religion, which is now called "Brahmanism" and is thought to be the most common and important part of Hinduism. (3)

The current era, known as the "Kali-yuga," is the worst of all "yugas" or time periods in Hindu mythology and must conclude with a "pralaya" (total dissolution of the creation). This should occur at the same time when "dharma" is fully restored and the Kalki avatar is born. (Olson 37) Instead of an apocalyptic Pralay, Gun Island ends with a concerted performance by the creatures of the three Lokas (Swarga, Marta, Paatal), as if a superior force (God or not) directs their performance, showing that the ultimate salvation lies in the co-existence of all creatures, or "Bhutas"(beings).

The responsibility of establishing the reliability of mythology has always been on its shoulders. Researchers have tried to show that myths have a basis in reality, although a distorted reality, by employing the tools of history or by turning to science. In India, myth and religion coexist for the sake of the latter's viability. In India, legends live on forever. They are told from one generation to the next, and almost always end up different by the time they make it to the big screen. Unlike classical mythology, Indian mythology does not lend itself to comparisons. (Patnaik 2) Throughout Hindu history, there have been many reformist groups that have helped to dispel falsehoods. In the nineteenth century, for instance, Raja Rammohun Roy sought to rewrite the Upanishads. Indians, according to Rammohan Roy, the famous Hindu reformer, must "advance" from "superstition" to scientific and rational existence by moving beyond the mythic frame of reference. In the eyes of contemporary philosophers and theologians, he "demythologizes" religion. He used the Vedas, especially the Upanishads, to argue that Hindu mythology was not literal but rather allegoric. In myth, we saw reality.

Thus, if accepted at face value, myths and gods were symbols for actualities and false idols. When he said "idol," he did not mean it in the Puranic sense of murti, which are material representations of the intangible deity. Rammohan Roy means by "idolatry" that worship of false and demeaning legendary beliefs and idols. He thought it led both onlookers and the user astray. Along with detailing the elements that contribute to ecological derangement and the destabilizing impacts that further force people to escape, Ghosh's Gun Island (2019) examines the plight of climate migrants. Two young Bengali boys, Tipu and Rafi, are caught in the web of human traffickers as they attempt to leave their home country. They are transported from Bangladesh to Turkey through India, Pakistan, and Iran, disguised as animals in minibuses. Meanwhile, they are halted at 'connecting homes' near border crossings. They must pay to continue their journey at these 'connecting houses' (182). Ghosh explains the heinous and brutal torture these people endure on the voyage; they are beaten, slapped, and assaulted physically and sexually. (238)

Gun Island, the novel by Amitav Ghosh, tells a story about a whole variety of ecological concerns and in particular, the exploitation of the all things natural by the man, which is affecting the humans' lives, as well as the lives of all living organisms on the planet. It examines the consequences of climate change as a result of human-induced actions and the difficulties of migration because of these environmental shifts. In the olden times the main determinants of climate change were the geological forces integrated with the micros that formed the Earth. In contrast, the primary cause of climate change in the Anthropocene is anthropogenic (Steffen, Crutzen, & McNeill, p. 614). So, in the wake of the industrial revolution man's impact on the environment comes across loud and clear in this novel, showing

the implications it has held and driving home the reverberation these consequences have made to all us living entities. The novel shows how micro disarray created by a human being turns into a macro disaster, which leads into a global climate distortion in other stages. The erratic and oscillatory changes impact all life forms, and under extreme conditions, may even cause some species to become extinct on our planet.

Ghosh ascribes ecological disorder to climate-induced migration and attempts to demonstrate that disruptive local ecosystems drive internal and international human movement. Over 13 million Bangladeshis, mostly those residing on the periphery of the Sundarbans, may be forced to relocate by 2050, according to the World Bank, because of the climate problem. Recognizing the role of ancient stories in describing the apocalyptic effects of climate change, Ghosh recognizes that these ancient legends had encountered many of the same events that we have, such as floods, droughts, famines, and storms. In Gun Island, he weaves together the ramifications of climate change in the form of human and nonhuman migration and displacement with a Bengali tale that connects the Sundarbans to Venice. The novel offers a contemporary retelling of the legend of Bonduki Saudagar, a seventeenth-century merchant who travelled to Venice. (141) The Merchant's country, eastern India, suffered drought and floods due to the climatic turmoil at the time. As a result, he lost everything, including his family, and chose to travel to Venice to retrieve his money through commerce. During that period, the Mediterranean saw unseasonal weather, including fierce storms and devastating floods. (141) If one wants a peaceful planet by the end of the century, he can't keep living the way we are. Living prudently will necessitate significant modifications to our society's major frameworks. This is not simply a logical, financial, humanistic, and political test but a test of our creative thinking and ingenuity.

Mystery Beyond Memory

Gun Island picks up where The Hungry Tide, a story caught between the human and natural worlds, like Kanai stuck on his sandbank and left off at the mercy of the tiger.

Dinanath (Deen) Datta, who tells the story, is weaker, needier, less proud, and less sure of himself than Kanai. He is, if not by blood, at least by Bengali kinship networks, another nephew of the powerful Nilima Bose who, like Kanai, was sent to the Sundarbans at her request. In The Hungry Tide, the reason for this summons was a text, the diary of Nilima's long-dead husband, a Marxist schoolteacher. Here, the reason is a shrine, a temple built by the mysterious Bonduki Saudagar, or Gun Merchant, for the snake goddess Manasa. Both instruments do precisely what they're meant to do in the fragile, doomed ecosystem between land and water that is the Sundarbans, which Kanai calls "the frontier where commerce and nature look each other in the eye." But unlike Kanai and Piya, whose quests were limited to the changing landscape, aquatic and human life, tides, and storms of the Gangetic delta, Deen's inquiries take him much further afield, from the Bay of Bengal to the Adriatic Sea, from Kolkata to Venice, following the paths of merchants, migrants, and refugees.

Neither Deen Datta's job as a dealer of old books nor his field of study, the Manasa-Mangala-kavya of premodern Bengal, serve that purpose. Instead, it is the hesitant, uncertain, and even "possessed" figure of Deen himself who acts as both a witness and a detective. He is a hunter of secrets, torn between rational scepticism and irrational belief. He is the one who has the modern-day realization that we are all owned by the impersonal systems that "run" the world. But, at the same time, and in line with the book's philosophy, Deen is just a pawn, a minor player in the game of much bigger forces than he realizes.

In contrast to the dense textual architecture of the first book, this one is made up of fragments, pictographs, and clues. These include a nearly lost oral tradition, an obscure shrine destroyed by the sea, a made-up origin story, and signs thought to be miracles. If it is Deen's job to put together the pieces of the Gun Merchant's account and figure out what his name, Bonduki Saudagar, means, then he must also reconcile the mystical faith of his Italian mentor Cinta with Piya's scientific rationalism, the legends of the goddess Manasa with the lives of illegal immigrants Tipu and Rafi, and the behaviour of dolphins and birds with the fate of a boatload of refugees. In the long, plodding span of everyday time, the limits of

human reason and abilities become obvious; in the quick, awful onslaught of brief instants of calamity, he must hear the voice screaming out to remember the world.

Gun Island is not an attempt to disprove the myth of the serpent goddess Manasa, but rather an exploration of the shared mythological ground between Bengal and Italy. On their behalf, he sets out on a journey. Gun Island is built on a foundation of history and remembrance. His plan is to write a work of climate fiction that explores the idea of time as a cyclical phenomenon, or the idea that history repeats itself. Belief systems in both myth and religion have been passed down from one generation to the next primarily through oral performance. There is a long and storied history of pseudo religious acts in Hinduism, including the performance of 'Vrats' and 'Kathas,' which have been passed down from generation to generation.

> Smriti, which literally translates to "that which is remembered," is a literary tradition that was generated and developed by humans and is entrenched in the culture's collective memory. In contrast to the revealed literature of the Vedas, which was prevalent in ancient India, the people embraced a body of literature known as smriti. Even after they were deciphered, the Vedas were passed down orally through a culture of memorization that lasted for centuries. (Olson 137)

Deen's observation of the journey of illegal immigrants to Italy through the same route lends credence to the idea that the mythical Banduki Saudagar made the same journey. With the help of Cinta, he is able to pinpoint specific spots in Venice that the Saud agar must have visited in the ancient past, a past that is still cloaked in mysterious riddles, symbols, and the holy legend of Manasa. To reconstruct the history of the time period when the relic was constructed, Ghosh argues, in the vein of "mnemohistory" (Arora 37), that myths and memories play an equal part. Mnemohistory is distinct from history in that it is solely focused on the remembered past. Traditional narrative arcs, intertextual networks, and the diachronic continuity and discontinuity of historical interpretation are all analyzed. Although it may sound contradictory, mnemohistory is actually a subfield of history. (Aurora 39).

The Genesis of Manasa Devi

Sages Kashyapa and Kadru had a daughter whom they named Manasa Devi. Sister of the serpent king Sesha, Vasuki is a powerful Naga in her own right. Manasa is a popular pre- Aryan goddess in Bengali religion. During rituals, sacrifices and offerings are made to her. The Abhutarajasas of the Rawal Manwantara refer to her as a Vishnu form that was created from Sambhuti.

Manasa Devi was the stunning offspring of Lord Shiva and an extra-ordinary woman. Since her stepmother Parvati did not approve of her, she decided to move in with Shiva's other daughter, Neta. Goddess Manasa was never fully recognized as a supreme divinity because of questions about her lineage. With the love of Chand Saudagar, a highly wealthy and powerful Bengali merchant- prince from Champak Nagar, Manasa believed she would be worshiped as a goddess with relative ease. He was a widower with six sons. Because of his doting care, his sons never noticed that their mom was gone. She tried to convince him for quite some time, but he was a dedicated follower of Shiva and refused to give him up for a snake goddess. Thus, Manasa repeatedly destroyed Chand's garden, only for Chand to use the magical abilities he acquired from Shiva to restore its splendour.

Manasa once appeared before the widower Chand in the shape of a lovely young woman, and the older man was immediately taken with her. He proposed to her, but before the ceremony could take place, she asked if she may have Chand's magic powers. Then Manasa showed who she really was and made Chand worship her once more, but Chand refused. Then Manasa had six of Chand's kids killed by snakebites, at which point Chand remarried and had a seventh son he named Lakhindar. Lakhindar matured into a handsome young man, and Chand wed him to the lovely Behula. They had already decided on a wedding date and were officially engaged. Manasa kept fighting all those years, and he eventually emerged with the intention of bringing Chand under his control by killing Lakhindar.

Behula's unwavering affection and commitment made it possible for Lakhindar to return to life after being murdered by Manasa. Behula eventually succeeded in convincing her father-in-law Chand to worship the Manasa Devi; he agreed, on the condition that the ceremonies be performed with his left hand. Manasa consented, and from that point on Chand worshiped Manasa with undying zeal. As a result, Manasa Devi became well known and respected thanks to the Goddess Manasa tale.

Manasa Devi is an exceedingly enraged goddess toward people who refuse to worship Her, yet she is extraordinarily loving toward those who do so with dedication. She is revered in various forms and under a variety of titles throughout India, where she is regarded as a potent deity. During the wetter months, when snakes are more active, people tend to pay more attention to the Goddess. She can be worshipped as a deity or a nameless, faceless power.

The serpents and dolphins are just two of the many thematic motifs in Amitav Ghosh's novel the Gun Island. The thematic motifs of serpents and dolphins play significant roles in enriching the narrative and conveying deeper symbolic meanings. These motifs are woven into the fabric of the story, carrying both cultural and ecological significance that resonates throughout the novel. Serpents, often associated with transformation, wisdom, and duality in various cultural contexts, serve as a potent symbol in the novel. They reflect the multifaceted nature of the narrative, mirroring the interconnectedness of various plotlines and characters. The serpent motif is particularly tied to Deen's journey of discovery and exploration. As he probes into the mysteries of the legend behind the shrine in the Sundarbans, the serpent symbolizes the unfolding of hidden truths and the shedding of old paradigms. It is also worth noting that serpents are often linked to myth and folklore, and Ghosh employs this association to convey the blurred boundaries between reality and legend, knowledge and imagination.

Dolphins, creatures of the ocean and symbols of protection, guidance, and intuition, provide another layer of symbolism in the novel. Just as dolphins are known to guide sailors through treacherous waters, they symbolize Deen's intuitive and instinctive travel through the complexities of his quest. The presence of dolphins in the narrative aligns with Deen's ability to interpret signs and follow his instincts, whether through dreams, linguistic evidence, or personal experiences. Additionally, dolphins represent the delicate balance between humans and the natural world, a theme that resonates with the broader ecological concerns addressed in the novel. Both serpents and dolphins serve as conduits for thematic exploration in the Gun Island. They represent the interplay between the mythical and the real, the hidden and the revealed, and the intricate connections between human actions and the environment. Just as Deen's journey is one of uncovering hidden stories and weaving together seemingly disparate elements, these motifs remind the reader of the intricate threads that bind the characters, the legends, and the ecological landscape of the novel.

Ghosh sets out to discover the legend behind the shrine in the Sundarbans and how it is related to the chapel of Santa Maria Della Salute, also known as "the black Madonna of La salute" or "the Panaghia Mesopanditissa, Madonna the Mediator: she stands between us and the incarnate earth, with all its blessings and furies." Using his experience as a rare book merchant in Italy, his intuition, dreams, and linguistic evidence, he reimagines the story of the "Banduki Saudagar." (223) The story centres on the central myth of the serpent Goddess Manasha, beginning with Dinanath's meeting with Kanai Dutta. Manasha is still honoured in rural Bengal because of the widespread belief that praying to her can protect them from harm caused by snakes.

The traditions surrounding her rivalry with Chand Saudagar and her quest to gain the king's devotion are well-known. It is revealed that Dinanath/Deen completed research on the mythology of the Manasa. This goddess personifies the struggles that people face in their pursuit of happiness and fulfilment. Despite being mentioned in the Atharva Veda and the Mahabharata, Manasa's popularity as a saviour distinguishes her more as a 'popular' goddess, like a member of the family, than as one of the more potent Hindu goddesses who require more complicated rituals and temples for devotion. An entire 'Mangal Kavya' (a long devotional hymn worshiping gods and goddesses, typically sung in groups by

women) is dedicated to her, Manasa Mangal Kavya. They detail the power and magnificence of a god, as well as the advantages of worshiping that god and the disadvantages of rejecting him. The shifting social order is exemplified by the relocation of goddesses to less developed locales like the countryside and the suburbs. The legend or custom of Manasa is all but unknown in modern-day Bengal's major cities. Devotion to these marginalized goddesses, who exist outside of mainstream religion, has steadily declined alongside the advance of modernity.

Manasa is still revered as a protector in snake-heavy areas like the Sundarbans. Another mythical narrative of natural disasters is the Banduki Saudagar tale. Deen learns that, like many myths passed down orally, this one has different iterations. According to Nilima Bose, who overheard it and remembered it, the "nonsense" riddle associated with it was actually the key to the merchant's ability to teleport between different locales. Nilima wanted Deen to go to the temple because she thought the monument should be included in historical records. According to this account, Saudagar fled his native region in terror of Manasa's wrath. Nilima Bose's telling of the story, in which Saudagar is the object of the goddess's wrath, is very similar to the Mangal Kavya version of the Manasa tale. But Horen Naskar was local, so his experiences with things like storms and the myth's tales of calamities were crucial. For example, he remembered in detail the disaster that had forced the gun trader to leave his hometown, a severe drought that had dried up the streams, rivers, and ponds and filled the air with the stench of decaying fish and dead animals. Children were being sold by their own parents, and people were resorting to eating their own dead. (55)

Horen's internal clock was based on his memories of past cyclones. This is a fairly rudimentary approach to keeping track of time; ancient cultures used similar methods based on the passage of the seasons and other natural occurrences. Cinta tells Deen this as they travel to the chapel of Madonna in the middle of the seventeenth century, right after the plague of 1630 had ended. The Little Ice Age was a period marked by environmental unpredictability. Madonna was worshiped during the epidemic as the goddess of salvation, and a shrine to her was built in the city. This coincidental similarity between the historical existence of two female deities in two different locations of the world is fascinating. The city of Heraklion in Crete is "famously associated with A-sa-sa-ra-me... the Minoan goddess of snakes," and Cinta mentions bringing back "the symbol of a dark-skinned Madonna and infant from there." (223)

The two religious tales intertwined, with the serpent serving as the motif. Ghosh uses the Indian philosophical concept of 'Bhuta,' "which simultaneously signifies 'being' and 'becoming,' and much more," to talk about presences. (156) As a result, the 'Bhuta' incorporates both the past and the present. The religious story comes to life in the here and now through Deen's hallucination of the snake on the plane and Cinta's seeing of spiders in her apartment. After hearing the boatman's story, Deen was agitated and unable to sleep. After returning to Brooklyn from his trip, he had the unusual sensation that "something life" had entered his body. He had the impression of bearing the memory of another individual.

> ...it was memory, but it wasn't my own. It was much older than me, some part of time that had been buried for a long time that suddenly came to life when I went into that shrine. It was something horrible, poisonous, and powerful that wouldn't let me get away from it. (103)

This idea of knowing as awakening or responding to the "presence" that is already present around oneself, but which one cannot fully comprehend, was addressed in his seminal work. To demonstrate that people tend to neglect nature, he uses the phenomenon of flood-causing water bodies as an example. We are witnessing the passage from innocence to insight. In Gun Island, he describes several categories of presences that can't be measured or understood logically or scientifically but can only be felt. Deen was able to perceive sounds and sights that did not originate in the same physical location or time period as himself. Invisible to the naked eye, he was experiencing the existence of beings that existed across time. This anxiety, Cinta says, is due to the "awakening" of his heightened sensitivity. She rejected modern notions of time and temporal confinement; therefore, history was always present in her mind. Myths, according to Cinta, have the potential to "reach into the future" (127). Cinta, using the belief system of

the Banduki Saudagar era in the seventeenth century as an example, discusses the significance of stories, myths, and legends as entry points to a belief system that is not constrained by institutionalized religious mechanisms.

Nobody in the seventeenth century would have ever referred to something as "simply a narrative" as we do now. People back then understood that fiction might explore fantastical or even extraterrestrial realms. They knew that nothing so fundamental as love, loyalty, or the ability that makes us turn around when we feel the gaze of a stranger or an animal could be demonstrated to exist save through stories, and that only stories could provide access to these mysteries. Stories are the only way the past can reach us and the voiceless, the mute, and the speechless can be heard. (127)

Ghosh links this book to The Hungry Tide and uses it to counteract the novel's heavier themes. The Hungry Tide takes a ground-level approach. Fokir's death in a storm solidifies nature's dominance; the sea, the river, the Sundari trees, and the weather all work together to diminish humanity's significance. However, Gun Island is no stranger to nature's wrath in all its forms, including but not limited to forest fires, tornadoes, floods, and the appearance of poisonous spiders and snakes. In this story, change is the only constant. Gun Island is a storehouse of instability, housing not just displaced people and migrating dolphins, but also displaced stories and symbols. At the novel's climax, the protagonist's dissatisfaction boils over, and he or she realizes that in order to save humanity and the planet, rationalism must crumble and faith in the universality of human compassion and fellowship must emerge as the new mythical and religious underpinning.

Economic migrants Deen and Piya each have two people in their lives who act as guides through the twists and turns of their experiences. Deen has his long-time buddy Cinta as a spiritual guide, while Piya has Fokir's son Tipu, whom she has "parented" since Fokir sacrificed himself to save her in The Hungry Tide. The eco-political discussion of animal and human migration is set against the mystical backdrop of Cinta's dreams and Tipu's clairvoyance. When Deen pays Nilima Bose a visit, he and Piya hear the tale of the Manasa shrine in the Sundarbans. Like the "changing mud-flats of the Bengal delta" (5), the Sundarbans have long captivated Ghosh, and he never misses an opportunity to highlight the chaos of contemporary life. Nilima had stumbled into this Manasa shrine not long after a typhoon had swept away innumerable villages from the coasts of Bangladesh and India.

Nilima and her boatman Horen Naskar came upon a village whose residents had avoided serious harm during the cyclone during one of their aid missions. Manasa, the locals said Nilima, was a god who had saved them from certain death. In Indian culture, mythology and religious beliefs are linked. Religion and myths both change over time, and certain myths can even be shared between faiths. The Bonduki Saudagar mythology about the Manasa Devi temple is a bridge between Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism.

Nilima learned from the Muslim caretaker that both Hindus and Muslims visit the temple, with the latter group identifying it with a "Muslim pir or saint named Ilyas." (115)

Cinta and telepathy are introduced later in the novel. Ghosh's story seems to centre on alternative social networks and forms of community. Cinta, a historian friend of Deen's, calls him to inform him about a dream or memory she experienced:

> Whether it was a dream or a memory, I cannot be sure. It gets harder to tell dreams apart from memories as we get older. (125)

Cinta tells Deen about a performance of Bengali folk theatre she saw; the play, as Deen remembers it, was based on Manasa mythology. In a conversation between Deen and Cinta, Ghosh tries to show that, to a westernized academic like Deen, the folk theatre performance would be too mundane to hold his interest. Human capacities that cannot be defined by a cause-and-effect relationship are, according to Cinta, hidden in the voids that Deen dismisses as "supernatural" and "superstitious

nonsense." By focusing on the most marginalized aspects of religious practice, such tarantism, she undermines the very idea of religion. The author, drawing on the writings of De Martino Cinta, contends that modern religion has turned to rationality for sustenance since miraculous claims nowadays must be backed up by scientific evidence. In reminiscing about the old Aztecs, Cinta mentions how they seemed to have "precognition" or "foreknowledge" (137) of the arrival of the Spanish. She asserts her faith in the supplementary, illogical, intuitive realm of the mind, which is disregarded by organized religion, and she uses the church inquisitions of the seventeenth century to illustrate her point.

Ghosh introduces his major concept and sets the stage for the rest of the work in the second chapter, named "Cinta," which is an internet of myth, history, foresight, and environmental consciousness. As a defining feature of literature written in the Anthropocene, the work is imbued with an air of prophesy through the interaction and conferring of mythology and religion. Contrast the presence of Bangladeshi migrants in Venice with the migration of dolphins, their suicides (beaching), the appearance of a spider in Cinta's flat, and the appearance of yellow- bellied snakes on New York's beaches. The migrants of the Sundarbans, who braved the oceans to escape unemployment, and the Banduki Saudagar, who desired to escape Manasha's rage, are both examples of the story's central theme: flight. To promote the idea of a "dharma" that honours the life of things, Ghosh also opposes traditional religious and mythological understandings.

Nature as One of the Important Aspects of Ghosh's Novel

The subgenre of speculative fiction known as "biological weird fiction" is known for its unusual and unexpected plot twists and turns in works such as Melquades, the itinerant trader from Gabriel Garcá Márquez's classic One Hundred Years of Solitude, chewing the dust and reawakening on multiple occasions, or the Aurochs, the prehistoric animals that cause widespread destruction in the film animals of the Southern Wild. While Ghosh admires honesty that defies explanation, he worries how effective it is at combating climate change. When the petroleum derivatives sector invests a lot of money propagating misinformation about climate change, Ghosh worries about the ramifications of telling stories about environmental change from a point of view that is not true.

Ghosh argues that the best way to describe environmental change is to draw influence from more established narrative traditions like the Gun Merchant of Gun Island mythology. The question of whether or not classic literature still has much to teach us in the twenty-first century is one of the book's primary debates between protagonists Deen and antagonist Cinta. In spite of the fact that Deen is a bookseller who deals in fascinating classics, you should know that he sees them more as commodities, as symbols of power, than as stories with a pulse. Deen learns that the folks who told him the Gun Merchant's tale were smarter than he gave them credit for after witnessing it unfold before his eyes.

In the second half of The Great Derangement, Ghosh looks back to the seventeenth century, when the British government authorized the East India Company to open a trading post in what was then the Mughal Empire. Over the course of several hundred years, the East India Company came to govern the Indian subcontinent despite confrontations with other European frontier powers like the French and the Dutch. Despite resistance from many Indian regions, the Mughal Empire eventually fell. Before the British government was compelled to mediate and assume control in India in the nineteenth century, the East India Company amassed a private military army to plunder the country. In 1947, just two years after the end of World War II, the British partitioned the settlement into the modern-day countries of India and Pakistan.

Many people in India perished from violence and starvation during this more than 300-year era brought on by the East India Company's private soldiers. Although the Europeans were initially driven to India to set up a tea trade, the popularity of another product from the East, oil, began to rise shortly after the Industrial Revolution in the late 1800s. After the Second Anglo-Buddhist War, Ghosh discovered Burma's (Myanmar) rich oil reserves. Gun Island, above all else, is a story that deals with a wide range of contemporary concerns. One might make an argument, though, that the story is really

about environmental refugees, people from colonized countries who have fled their homes because of an ecological crisis brought on by imperialism. Characters like Rafi and Tipu, as well as the tiny blue boat that crosses the Mediterranean at the end of the novel, are prime examples of this.

The Gun Merchant's story might also be seen as the saga of an out-of-place individual in their natural habitat. The tale tells of a merchant who refuses to be the goddess of snakes' lover and is forced to flee from her. The goddess, however, is relentless in her pursuit of him, and she brings about calamitous circumstances that ultimately lead to his repentance.

People in developed nations enjoy an unprecedented level of material comfort. There are, however, tremendous gaps, and the United States is no exception. However, many of us are able to rest easy because of innovations like automobiles, washing machines, refrigerators, and air conditioners. Of course, it is more satisfying to tell ourselves that we earned these privileges by staying the course and never giving up on our goals. But the fact remains that we were only able to amass such great financial prosperity by employing colonial practices to plunder the natural resources of nations like India, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.

In the United States, there is a widespread belief that expansionism belongs in the nineteenth century and no longer exists. Many Westerners may not realize that the United Kingdom considered India its crown jewel until 1947, but they tend to view imperialism as a thing of the past. Not even in another hundred years will we have forgotten the horrors of training like expansionism. The current refugee crisis in Europe and North America can be directly traced back to imperialism. It is likely to get worse as more vulnerable countries experience the effects of climate change. This is exacerbated by the consumerist culture that the West has exported around the world. (Dixon 1996)

Ghosh adopts the method in Gun Island, though with less success than he has previously. Plot lines, coincidences, and conveniently serendipitous happenings all threaten to undermine the reader's belief. Cinta, an old acquaintance of Deen's whose story helps tie up numerous loose ends is possibly the guiltiest of this offense. She establishes credibility by her nearly otherworldly capacity to discover lost belongings and gain access to information through her penchant for "seeing" and "hearing" things. The novel concludes with each enroute to Venice, the island serving as a backdrop against which myth and reality collide in a frenzy of activity.

Ecological devastation

The human-caused climate catastrophe, manifested in various ways such as rising temperatures, weather extremes, rising sea levels, and tidal floods, has accelerated ecosystem damage and habitat loss while altering the distribution patterns of nonhuman worlds. Additionally, these cataclysmic upheavals have had a significant impact on humanity. It can be examined how these life-altering events have shaped human life on the fringes by exploring Ghosh's Gun Island. In the novel, he reveals the consequences that the Sundarbans' inhabitants face from the mangrove swamps' ecological degradation. The Sundarbans mangroves shield the hinterland from flooding and cyclones. Ghosh says that woods absorb the ferocity of hurricanes and provide a vital buffer zone between human populations and the Bay of Bengal cyclones called 'storm breeders.' He thinks the Sundarbans are critical for protecting Bengal from the cyclones' fury.

Much more moving is Ghosh's depiction of human movement, of Deen's surprise and happiness upon landing in Venice and hearing the Bengali language spoken everywhere from workers to street merchants, ensuring that every tourist has an authentic Venetian experience. Ghosh's portrayal of the cruelty and alienation endured by these men and women looks to be a reference to the present problem along the US-Mexico border. This is Ghosh at his most tenacious, exhausted marrying a mythical tale from his origin with the anguish of the human condition while simultaneously holding up a mirror to the country he has now adopted.

This tale, like a natural calamity or a miraculous event, is more than the sum of its parts. But it would be wrong to think that Gun Island is mainly about the people in it, how they feel inside, and what happens to them outside. Instead, it reminds us of another Aristotelian saying by showing that the plot is more important than the characters. So, even though it may look like luck or a miracle, what is happening here is the result of a chain of extraordinary events that have become the new norm on the earth we live on today. Deen, Rafi, and Tipu's paths cross on the grid of cross-border migration; Piya is there to save at least some of her beloved, beached Orcaella; trafficked migrants from one part of Bangladesh end up in the same part of Italy; poisonous spiders, hailstorms, and tornadoes show up on the Venetian lagoon; and runaways like Tipu re-enact the journey of the 17th- century Gun Merchant. And finally, an Italian admiral will save refugees in Italian waters thanks to a miracle involving supernatural and natural forces. Carola Racket, the German captain of the ship that saved 42 Libyans off the coast of Lampedusa, was recently arrested by Italian police and then released on a judge's order. This may seem like a new sign that unexpected thing will continue to happen, both in people and in nature. Gun Island never gives up its moral and epistemological duties in a world of unnatural disasters. instead, it offers the improbable but stirring belief that our salvation may lie in the past, in a mystery beyond the reach of our memories.

Human actions are primarily responsible for climate change. In Ghosh's Gun Island, ecological disasters in the Sundarbans and Venice signal a global environmental catastrophe. Human-centric cultural patterns see Nature as a resource to meet human needs. This view of Nature has been adopted in modern society, where the carbon-dependent economic model promotes continual expansion and development without regard for the environment. Due to the human-caused climate disaster, one must reevaluate our lifestyle and the underlying balance between the natural landscape and human culture. Adopting an ecocentric and Nature-inclusive growth paradigm will prevent the harmful effects of climate change. Rather than viewing nature as a resource produced solely for human use, a partnership ethic between nature and humanity is required.

The fiction of Ghosh is distinguished by the presence of significant themes, which enable the author's work to be categorized as post-frontier and referred to be verified literature in certain contexts. His capacity to experience geographical and nonexclusive borders is indicative of his privileged standing as a professor at the most prominent foundation in the world. This problem is front and centre in his work. Ghosh is a traveller in both the physical and metaphysical realms and an essayist of great learning. He composes with complete control and a clear, not always stunning, creative imagination. Ghosh's subjects are based on a deep level that underpins and makes sense of existence. Amitav Ghosh brilliantly analyses current political circumstances and concerns, blending political with artistic reason. He could never adjust to the authoritarian and mass-promoting era's political biases, which were dominated by extortion and power techniques. He satirizes political difficulties in his works, but his accurate concentration is on individual harmony and prosperity. He has brought out numerous critical insights concerning the cutting-edge motorized world, which is brimming with silly interests, close-to-home impoverishment, unfortunate correspondence, industrialization, and the quest for mental security, through the subject of distance in Glass Palace and other books. To him, estrangement connotes forlornness, defenselessness, social disengagement, and rootlessness. He observes the human soul when subjected to terrible betrayals, disappointments, and challenges.

Ghosh's storytelling prowess lies in his ability to illuminate the human experience within the framework of larger historical narratives. His novels are not only captivating stories but also nuanced reflections on the forces that shape societies and individuals. Through the Gun Island, Ghosh reminds us that history is not a mere backdrop but an intricate mosaic of individual lives, cultural intersections, and the enduring echoes of past events. These novels stand as testaments to his skill in intertwining the personal and the historical, offering readers profound insights into the intricate connections that define our world. Ghosh calls for a shift in global mindset that concerns not just political and economic structures, but our personal behaviour. The book suggests that changing people's personal moral

responsibility to consumption, conservation, and pollution is necessary to arrest further ecological decline. Ghosh evokes a networked world by bringing myth, history and the present-day environmental crisis together, evidencing that the future of one element is linked to the future of the whole. This visionary perspective requires that humanity wakes up to the cataclysm of the environmental crisis & refocuses its priorities on a fairer, more sustainable and ecologically responsible planet.

The Gun Island, in Ghosh's hands, makes a powerful case for addressing climate change and environmental abuse. And Ghosh underscores the global scope of humanity's crises through Deen's sojourn, the ravaging of the Sundarbans and the fate of climate refugees. His ecological philosophy calls for a fundamental shift in consciousness, towards an emphasis on sustainability, international co-operation, and the profound reverence due to the natural world. The novel encourages readers to reflect on their own responsibility for the crisis and argues for a radical change in our relationship to nature.

References

1. Arora, Anupama. "The Sea is History: Opium, Colonialism, and Migration in Amitav Ghosh's Sea of Poppies." Ariel, vol. 42, no. 3-4, 2011, pp. 21-42.
2. Bose, Brinda, editor. Amitav Ghosh: Critical Perspectives. Pencraft, 2003.
3. Dickinson, Robert E. The Earth as a Whole. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
4. Dixon, Robert. "Travelling in the West: The Writing of Amitav Ghosh." The Journal of Commonwealth Literature, vol. 31, no. 1, 1996, pp. 3-24.
5. Ghosh, Amitav. Gun Island. First American edition, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.
6. Lewis, Simon L., and Mark A. Maslin. "Defining the Anthropocene." Nature, vol. 519, no. 7542, 2015, pp. 171-180.
7. Olson, Carl. Religious Studies. Routledge, 2011.
8. Pattanaik, Devdutt. Indian Mythology. Inner Traditions, 2003.
9. Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. The Meaning and End of Religion. Fortress Press, 1962.
10. Steffen, Will, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill. "The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature." Ambio, vol. 36, no. 8, 2007, pp. 614-621.
11. Williams, George M. Handbook of Hindu Mythology. ACLIO, 2003.