

Chapter IV

Chapter IV

Environmental Anthropology: Interrelationship between Politics and Environment

Eco-criticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view to analyze and brainstorm possible solution for the contemporary environmental problems. Eco-criticism deals with the examination of concepts like class, gender and race in relation to ecological problems.

Literary texts deal with current environmental crisis which happens to be the subject for serious deliberation. “Teaching and studying literature without reference to the natural condition of the world and the basic ecological principles that underline all life seems increasingly short sighted, incongruous” (Love 16). However this insight has dawned only after losing considerable amount of natural resources.

Eco-critical study revisions the anthropocentric attitude and lifestyle. Preservation of our ecosystem is based on co-operation and co-existence. Ecocriticism examines the complex web of our ecosystem and believes in, “biophilic mutuality” (Sumathy 50) towards all living beings. Eco-criticism opens up new dimensions to redefine our interdependence and connectivity to nature by encompassing eco-critical study with other dimensions of philosophy such as cultural anthropology, marxism, feminism and various other ideologies.

Environmental anthropology is the branch of anthropology which focuses on the environmental issues, problems and solutions from anthropological perspectives. Early in the nineteenth century, scholars were concerned with the ways in which society could

utilize natural resources. In the recent past, the field of environmental anthropology has been emerging. Kay Milton has made significant contributions to this field. She has edited the book *Environmentalism: A View from Anthropology* in 1993 which focused upon anthropology within the study of environmentalism. Peter Brosius in his article, *Current Anthropology* gives an account of anthropologist involvement in environmentalism.

The crux of environmental anthropology is a progressing discourse about the relationship of human beings with nature. The various environmental issues like displacement, deforestation, climate change, ecological imbalance, bio-diversity conservation and globalization are explored and documented by anthropologists. Brosius considers environmentalism as a field of discursive constructions of nature and human agency. As an anthropologist, he urges the anthropologist to consider environmentalism as, “rich site of cultural production” (Brosius 277). “A whole new discursive regime is emerging and giving shape to the relationships between and among natures, nations, movements, individuals, and institutions” (Brosius 277).

Environmental anthropology amalgamates the theory and analysis of political awareness and policy concerns. Environmental anthropology is the blend of theoretical and applied research focusing on the ecological conservation. Environmental anthropology analyses the marginalization of people by the capitalist along with the environmental exploitation such as encroachment of livelihood and land; protest against environmental destructive projects and so on. The concept of associating environmentalism with the marginalization was initiated by Martinez-Alier. “Pitted rich against poor: logging companies against hill villagers, dam builders against forest tribals, multinational

corporations deploying trawlers against artisanal fisherfolk rowing country-boats” (Little 268). Environmental anthropology gains momentum by contributing to the conservation of ecology from local to global levels. Environmental anthropology branches into various sub-fields such as human ecology, political, environmental justice and eco-marxism.

In 1928, Marxist theorist Walter Benjamin in his book *One Way Street* speaks about the exploitation of nature and the relationship between nature and humanity. Classical Marxists such as Luxemburg, Lenin, Kautsky and Bukharin spoke about the ecological problems in their works. Barry Commoner, Rudolf Hilferding and Elmar Altwater critique capitalism as the reason for the exploitation of natural resources.

Marxism, which condemns capitalists for destroying the proletariat class, led ecomarxists to blame capitalists for the current ecological problem. According to Marx, by imposing laws on the labourers, the landowners were denying them any relationship with nature. This led human beings to be increasingly isolated from the lands that they had known well, and they were unable to cultivate what is required to sustain them. The alienation of human beings from the rest of nature is one of the primary causes of the earth’s environmental woes, leading to increased exploitation and abuse of the land. There is also the failure to recognize that environment can be seriously and irreparably harmed by human actions.

According to eco-marxists, another fundamental flaw of the capitalist system is the process of under-production, which means that capitalists treat nature as if it were a free commodity. Ecomarxism sharply criticizes western capitalism as it is anthropocentric in ideology; ecomarxists claim that a capitalist system negatively influences the relation of

human beings and nature. According to Marx, the only way to solve the problem of environmental degradation, and the dreadful conditions of the worker, is through liberation from the capitalist system; Marx's notion of human emancipation was linked through the development of a socialist society. For humanity to progress beyond alienation, it is necessary to govern human development on par with conservation of natural resources in a rational way, a goal only obtainable with the elimination of capitalism.

Women's resistance movements began in order to raise their voice against the issues of division of labour and property. This led to the emergence of new fields such as political ecology and eco-feminism. Ecofeminism embraces the idea that the oppression of women and the destruction of nature are closely connected. Activist, educator and author, Ynestra King went so far as to call ecofeminism as the third wave of the feminist movement. The term eco-feminism was coined in 1974 by the French feminist, Françoise d'Eaubonne's in the work, *Le féminisme ou la mort*.

The novels *The Glass Palace*, *The Hungry Tide* and the Ibis trilogy, discusses the ecological imbalance due to war, deforestation, human encroachment and the export of dolphin for commercial purpose, failure of agricultural crops and trade exploration related to plants leading to the depletion of natural resources.

The novel *The Glass Palace* speaks about the environmental degradation caused due to colonialism and wars. Throughout the novel, Ghosh pictures the effect of colonialism and war not only on human beings but also upon the environment. Anthropocentric attitude of human beings is the main reason for ecological destruction. The novel showcases the shrewdness of the Britishers and their act of plundering the Burmese

natural resources namely teak, ivory and petroleum. The reason for the British conquest of Burma is that Burmese government levied taxes on the British timber companies for lumbering.

... a few months ago there'd been a dispute with a British timber company- a technical matter concerning some logs of teak. It was clear that the company was in the wrong; they were side-stepping the kingdom's customs regulations, cutting up logs to avoid paying duties. The royal customs officer had slapped a fine on the company, demanding arrears of payment for some fifty thousand logs. The Englishmen had protested and refused to pay; they had carried their complaints to the British Governor in Rangoon. Humiliating ultimatums had followed. One of the King's senior ministers, the Kinwun Mingye, had suggested discreetly that it might be best to accept the terms; that the British might allow the Royal Family to remain in the palace in Mandalay, on terms similar to those of the Indian princes- like farmyard pigs, in other words, to be fed and fattened and eaten by their masters; swine, housed in sites that had been tricked out with a few little bits of finery. (TGP 21-22)

During colonization, the natives were humiliated and the greedy imperialists exploited the natural resources. "Resources were being exploited with an energy and efficiency hitherto undreamed of" (TGP 66). Laborers were employed in large numbers and they were involved in large scale lumbering which led to the loss of habitat and environmental degradation. The laborers were paid little and they were treated as bonded laborers. Capitalists were solely responsible for the destruction of forest resources.

Britishers considered Burma as the mine of wealth. The motives of the Britishers, are brought out through the words of Queen Supayalat, “They took our kingdom, promising roads and railways and ports, but mark my words, this is how it will end. In a few decades the wealth will be gone-all the gems, the timber and the oil- and they too will leave” (TGP 88).

Rubber plantations were created by destroying the forests. The expanding economy of teak and rubber benefited the Indian and Malaysian merchants. As there was a great demand for teak, Saya John became the agent for supplying teak. Rajkumar joins Saya John and transports timber by the Irrawady steamship crewed by Chittagong khalasis. Before arriving at Mandalay Rajkumar himself was a khalasis. They go shooting down the streams of Mandalay at great speed to put the itineraries to rout. After sunset, they anchor beside the tiny river bank which has few thatched huts.

Even though Saya John does not wish for luxurious life, at times he acts as a capitalist. In the ship he prefers lower deck for Rajkumar whereas he stays in the first class. Rajkumar sleeps along with the crew and he is tired while Saya John is fresh and happy. Rajkumar is eager to reach the camp and to unload the cargo. Their journey was usually by ox-cart. They pass through rivers of mud between mountains. When they reach the camp, the elephants would receive their cargo, relieving them to return back. But most often they do not find any elephants to relieve them, in such condition they have to hire their own men to carry their luggage on to the mountains. Rajkumar took off with the cargo led by Saya John. They climbed like mules, digging their feet into the saggy mud. Saya John believed the custom of wearing sola topee, leather boots, khakhi

trousers while Rajkumar and others were barefooted wearing longyi and farmer's wide-brimmed hat. While walking, leeches attacked their bodies and they burned them by lighting the cherrot.

Rajkumar and other labourers found it difficult to cross the stream. Every few minutes, log came rolling through the water and it was too dangerous for them to cross. The logs came rolling down in dozens, and it blocked the stream and caused flooding. "At times a log would snag, in rapids or on the shore, and within minutes a tangled dam would rise out of the water" (TGP 68). Timber merchants considered the streams as a mode of transportation of logs from mountains to the plains.

During summer season, forests wilt leaving only a handful of leaves. The timbermen consider this season as boon and they cleared the forest for teak. The trees were selected to be killed and were left to dry. The tree trunks are cut into thin slits with the carving of four feet and six inches off from the ground. Ghosh throws light upon the Britishers attitude that has swept away all the timber of Burma. The major flaw of man is his anthropocentric attitude as he wishes to exploit every natural resource.

The capitalists not only plunder the forest but also harm the elephants. The elephants are made to toil in the timber industry by carrying logs from streams to timber yards. Belts of wooden rollers were tied to their legs to be pulled to the timber yards of Rangoon. Britishers considered profit as their only motive and used a special team of elephants to carry the logs during the bad monsoon seasons. The elephants were trained in clearing these logs. Before colonization, elephants were used only in wars and in palaces but during the colonial regime the elephants were treated and exploited like labourers.

It was the Europeans who saw that the elephants could be made to work for human profit. It was they who invented everything we see around us in this logging camp. Their entire way of life is their creation. It was they who thought of these methods of gridling trees, these ways of moving logs with elephants, this system of floating them downriver. (TGP 74)

The elephants were always known by their bells that were tied to them. Even at distance, the sound of the bells created a magical strength among the labourers and it inspired them. The camps were different and they were shifted to different places in each season. The elephants are used in the initial felling of trees. After lumbering there is no trace of forest which was once richly covered with teak trees. Each camp contained a wooden house for the officers to stay. Even those camp site houses seemed to be elegant for Rajkumar. These houses were built on wooden platforms each consisting of several rooms with a wide veranda. The veranda enabled the officers to have full view of the teak camp. Saya John explains about the teak varieties to Rajkumar.

Teak is a relative mint, *tectona grandis*, born of the same genus of the flowering plant, but of a distaff branch, presided over by that most shooting of herbs, verbena. It counts among its close kin many other fragrant and familiar herbs- sage, savoury, thyme, lavender, rosemary, and most remarkably holy basil, with its many descendants, green and purple, smooth-leaved and coarse, pungent and fragrant, bitter and sweet. (TGP 70)

There is a famous teak tree in Pegu which measures around one hundred and six feet tall from ground. Saya John handed over a mint leaf and a fallen leaf from a teak tree. The mint leaf is small where as the teak leaves are of the size of an elephant's foot

prints. The mint is used in serving soups where as teak has caused great changes in the invasions and helped many capitalists in creating fortune.

Except Saya John, the other workers were not allowed into the forest assistants wooden houses. Though Saya John is a capitalist, he was subservient to the forest assistants. At times, the Englishman ill treated Saya John for no reason, “Take the grinning face out of here. . . , the Englishman shouted, I’ll see you in hell, Johnny Chinaman” (TGP 72). Rajkumar tries to confront the forest assistants but Saya stops him. Saya feels pity for the young British assistants and explains about the young British official’s plight.

Think the kind of life they lead here, these young Europeans. They have at best two or three years in the jungle before malaria or dengue fever weaken them to the point where they cannot afford to be far from doctors and hospitals. The company knows this very well; it knows that within a few years these men will be prematurely aged, old twenty-one; and that they will have to be posted off to city offices. It is only when they are freshly arrived, seventeen or eighteen, that they can lead this life, and during those few years the company must derive such profit from them as it can. So they send them from camp to camp for months on end with scarcely a break in between. (TGP 74)

The Europeans conduct lucrative trade by exploiting the rich natural resource of Burma. On the eastern bank of river Irrawady, there is a place called Yenangyaung where petroleum oozes out through the surface of the earth. There is a substance of thick ooze which ignites spontaneously. At times, there are small flames carpeting the slopes.

This ooze is known as earth-oil. It appears in dark-shimmering green colour which seeps from rocks like sweat, it joins together to form creeks along the shores.

Before the invention of internal combustion engine, there was great market for this earth-oil. This oil was used for making ointments for treating skin diseases. Even the merchants from China come in search of this product. The oil is collected by a group of people known as Twin-Zas. These Twin-Zas families have gathered oil in buckets and basins and sold it to their neighboring places. This process has been going on for our generation. The technical process involved in the preparation of the oil not only harms the environment but also human beings. Many of Yenangyaung's pools had been working for so long that the level of oil had sunk beneath the surface, forcing their owners to dig down. In this way, some of the pools had gradually become wells, a hundred feet deep or even more great oil-sodden pits, surrounded by excavated sand on earth. Some of these wells were so heavily worked that they looked like small volcanoes, with steep, conical slopes. At these depths the oil could no longer be collected simply by dipping a weighted bucket: twin zas were lowered in, on ropes, holding their breath like pearl divers. (TGP 123)

Rajkumar stays near Yenangyaung, so that he could have a watch over the Twin-zas at work. Standing on the tip of the wall, he sees a man rotating slowly on a sling where a rope is attached and the family members lower him and when they feel the tug, they pull him out by walking down. The tip of the walls is slippery, it is common for

the workers and children to tumble in and these falls go unnoticed. Human beings destroy nature causing threat to their own existence.

. . . we are in an environmental crisis because the means by which we use the ecosphere to produce wealth are destructive of the ecosystem itself. The present system of production is self destructive. The present course of human civilization is suicidal. In our unwitting march towards ecological suicide we have run out of options. Human beings have broken out of the circle of life, driven not by biological need, but by social organization which they have devised to conquer nature . . . (Rueckert 116)

After few years, Saya John moves to Rangoon from Mandalay. He becomes a wealthy man with the sale of his firm and he buys an apartment expecting the arrival of his son Mathew. Rajkumar turns into a capitalist by starting his own timber yard. He dreams about acquiring big railway contract for supplying timber. He says, "It is not just the big people who always know everything, Saya. If I could exactly find out how much the other companies are going to quote, then I will be able to put in a winning bid" (TGP 130). Finally, he succeeds in winning the contract of Chota Nagpur railway company by pushing away the other major companies. He gains about eight lakh rupees on that contract alone.

Human beings destroy forest to lead a sophisticated life. Saya John's son Mathew shows keen interest in rubber plantation. Plantation owners like Mathew in an urge to earn money destroy forest which is the home for many species of flora and fauna. When the clearing begins, the whole hillside looks like a disaster, the land turns into ashes and

the workers are hired mainly from South India and are forced to work as bonded labourers.

Labour is a process in which both man and nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material reaction between himself and Nature. He opposes himself to Nature as one of his own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces in his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. (Marx 197-98)

When Dolly was invited to the Morningside rubber estate, she was awestruck to observe the great changes in the landscape which is beyond imagination and the row of saplings are geometrically planted.

The slope ahead was scored with the shadows of thousands of trunks, all exactly parallel, like scratches scored by a machine. It was like being in wilderness, but yet not. Dolly had visited Huay Zedi several times and had come to love the electric stillness of the jungle. But this was like neither city nor farm nor forest: there was something eerie about its uniformity; about the fact that such sameness could be imposed upon a landscape of such natural exuberance. (TGP 199)

Once Uma accompanies Mathew to the plantation where she sees Indian workers mainly Tamilians. They watch a ceremony which resembles military parade. The estate manager Mr. Trimble presides over the function. He shouts at the labourers, "You dog of a coolie, keep your black face up and look at me when I'm talking to you..." (TGP 231). On seeing this Uma is disturbed. She says to Mathew, "I was watching something that no

longer existed: I was put in mind of the American South before the Civil War, of Uncle Tom's Cabin" (TGP 231). Mathew being a capitalist is not able to accept Uma's ideas and he is feeling proud for owning a plantation. Mathew says, "An enormous amount of human ingenuity has been invested in making these trees exactly similar. They're called clones, you know, and scientists have been working on them for years. Most of our trees are of a clonal variety called Avros-developed by the Dutch in Sumatra in the twenties. We pay a lot of money to make sure that we get reliable clonal seed" (TGP 232).

Uma has a conversation with Rajkumar about the conditions of Indian labourers in Burma; Rajkumar interrupts and speaks in favour of the Britishers. On hearing this, Uma bursts out,

Its people like you who're responsible for this tragedy. Did you ever think of the consequences when you were transporting people here? What you and your kind have done is worse than Europeans... You- an animal, with your greed, your determination to take whatever you can – at whatever cost. Do you think nobody knows about the things you've done to people in your power- women and children who couldn't defend themselves? You're no better than a slaver and a rapist, Rajkumar. You may think that you will never have to answer for the things you've done, but you're wrong. (TGP 248)

Ghosh throws light on the events of Second World War which had caused great ecological imbalance. The American bombing of Japan had caused great damage to the ecosystem. The war between England, Germany and Japan leads to destruction of the British Empire. When Burma was bombed, "Columns of smoke were climbing into the

sky from all around him... On the Merchant Street a market place had been hit. Fruit and vegetables lay scattered along the sides of the road... A blast had driven a set of skewers through the clay walls of the oven, breaking it in half, like an eggshell. He heard a man's voice calling for help. He hurried on" (TGP 462).

Eco-marxists believe that the cause for poverty, war and ecological degradation is the expansion of capitalism. Ghosh states that the characters like Rajkumar, Mathew and Saya John join hands with Europeans and they cause great destruction to nature for the sake of increasing their profit. Thus Ghosh explains that capitalism is the major cause for the ecological instability.

The Hungry Tide narrates a very contemporary story of environmental degradation. The story is set in the most fascinating regions on the earth, off the easternmost coast of India, in the Bay of Bengal, lays the tiny island known as Sundarbans. For settlers here, life is extremely dangerous because of deadly tiger attacks. Unrest and eviction are constant threats for the settlers in the Sundarbans. Tidal floods rise and surge over the land and occur without any warning leaving it devastated. In this vengeful beautiful island, the lives of three different people collide. Piyali Roy is a young marine biologist who comes in search of a rare endangered river dolphin, endemic to Irrawaddy. Her journey begins with a disaster when she falls into crocodile infested water. Rescue comes in the form of young illiterate fisherman Fokir. Although they have no language in common, both are drawn towards each other. Piya engages Fokir to help with her research and finds a translator Kanai Dutt, a businessman from Delhi whose aunt and uncle was long time settlers in Sundarbans. All the three launch into the isolated backwaters to explore the nature of river dolphins and they experience a powerful ravaging tidal surge.

From the Himalayan Mountains arises the holy river of India, The Ganges. The Ganges creates a vast archipelago of islands named the Sundarbans, where mangrove jungle grows quickly on land not reclaimed by the tide. The tidal surge from the sea covers huge area of land, which wash over an entire island and create another. The Sundarbans are an archipelago of island in the Bay of Bengal known as the tide country. They are made up of islands, sandbars, mangrove forests, rivers creeks and channels. Lusibari is one of the islands in the Sundarbans. It is the habitat of various animals such as the Bengal tiger, huge crocodiles, sharks, snakes, and people as well. The life of people in the Sundarbans is associated with deaths caused by crocodiles and tigers. Government laid rules to preserve the wild life. It happens sometime by exclusion of the people who live there. The government is not concerned about the life of people who are dead by tiger or by cyclone. The lives of the tigers are valued more than the lives of the people.

Ecosystem of the Sundarbans has its own variety and magnificence. The name 'the Sundarbans' which means the 'beautiful forest' is derived from the common mangrove species- the Sundari tree. Unlike other jungles, mangrove forest is unique; there are no giant trees, wild flowers nor chattering monkeys or cockatoos. The leaves of the mangroves are tough, leathery, with gnarled branches and the foliage is very thick. The mangroves act as a defence of Bengal against the ocean. They act as a barrier against nature's fury, absorbing cyclonic winds, waves and tidal surges: "If not for the tide country the plains would have been drowned long before; it was the mangroves that kept the hinterland alive" (THT 286). There is also garjon tree, another species of mangrove that acts like ventilators joined by subterranean root system. The fauna has wide variety

of species from the Royal Bengal tiger to small microscopic fish. The richness of the Sundarbans fauna is recounted by the cetologist, Piyali Roy. Compared to the whole European continent, there are more species of fish in the Sundarbans. “This proliferation of environments was responsible for creating and sustaining a dazzling variety of aquatic forms from gargantuan crocodiles to microscopic fish” (THT 125).

Sundarbans Tiger Reserve is located in South Paragons in West Bengal. Tiger attack is the extreme case of man-animal conflict and has killed many human beings. The death due to tiger attack estimates that at least 373000 people might have died during 1800-2009 and it occurs mainly in the South and Southeast Asia. It has decreased in Southeast Asia but it still prevails in Sundarbans. Tigers have changed their natural diet and become man-eaters. Between 1876 and 1912, tiger killed 33247 people in British India. Taste of human flesh may be acquired by the consumption of corpse. Tigers will stalk group of people, bending down or cutting grass, but will soon lose interest as the people stand upright. It's been hypothesized that some attacks are the simple case of mistaken identity. Kenneth Anderson once commented on man-eating tigers:

It is extraordinary how very cautious every man-eater becomes by practice, whether a tiger or panther, and cowardly too. Invariably it will only attack a society person, and that too, after prolonged and painstaking stalking, having assured itself that no other human being is in the immediate vicinity. These animals seem to possess an astute sixth sense and be able to differentiate between an unarmed human being and an armed man deliberately pursuing them for in most

cases only when concerned will they venture to attack the eater, while they go out of their way to stalk and attack the unarmed man. (qtd in Sumathy 98)

The Sundarbans tigers are very aggressive towards human beings and no one knows the reasons for it but scientists and biologists have spotted out number of reasons. The reason stated in the novel is:

Sundarbans is located in the coastal area and so the water is salty. In other place, tigers drink fresh water and it is the saltiness of the water that has put them in discomfort and which made them to be aggressive. The only way by which the tiger defends its territory is by physically attacking everything that enters because the high tides in the area destroys the tiger's urine which served as the territorial markers. (THT 267)

In 1980's German naturalist said that tiger preferred human flesh because of the shortage of fresh water. Department of forest made pools of fresh water for tigers but it made no difference. Clay models of human beings were made surrounded by wires on it. The tigers were shocked when they attacked on the models. The method worked for a short while but then it started again. People wore tiger mask so that the tigers would run away on seeing the painted eyes. Everyone believed that this experiment would work because tigers always attacked from behind but unfortunately tigers could not be bewitched. These experiments raise an obvious question, whether the tigers are able to "think these things through?" (THT 242).

Everyday survival is a struggle and survival of the fittest is the norm. Man killing the tiger and tiger killing the man are the everyday happenings in the Sundarbans. Nilima exactly says “I know that in this day and age in the 21st century, it is difficult for us to imagine yourself being attacked by a tiger. The trouble is that over here its not in the least bit out of the ordinary. It happens several times each week” (THT 240). Such thoughts are often expressed by many characters in the novel.

Ghosh has done a thorough research to bring forth the authentic details regarding man-animal conflict. Throughout the novel, the story is sprinkled with scenes of man- animal conflict. The facts regarding man-animal conflict recorded in the novel are: “Every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles” (THT 8). “Not a day has passed without the news of someone being killed by a tiger, snake or crocodile” (THT 79). “The hazards of the life in the tide country were so great. So many people perished in their youth...” (THT 81). Unofficial record says that over a hundred people are killed each year in India. “...it means that a human being are killed every other day in the Sundarbans at the very least” (THT 240). The fact is that deaths are more than the authorities admit. These tiger attacks are going on for centuries. The English naturalist J.Frayerer coined the term ‘The Royal Bengal Tiger’ and he pointed out that 4218 people were killed in lower Bengal in 6 years. “That’s almost two people every day, for six years” (THT 241).

Theriophobia, fear of animal, affects the minds of the native people. Horen, the native fisherman wants Nirmal to feel the fear. Fokir also warns Kanai of the fear that lurks in the area. “Because it’s the fear that protects you; its what keeps

you alive. Without it the danger doubles” (THT 244). The silence of the night is broken by the tiger’s growl. “It bespoke a nakedness of assertion, a power and menace that had no relationship to its volume” (THT 154). The eerie atmosphere is enhanced by barking of the dogs.

A physical manifestation of fear is brought out evidently when Kanai is left alone for two minutes in Garjontola Island. “It was an artifact of pure intuition, so real that the thing itself could not have dreamed of existing so intensely” (THT 329). It is not clear whether Kanai really saw the tiger or it’s just a hallucination. “The upper part of its court were of a colour that shown like gold in the sunlight, but it really was dark and caked with mud” (THT 329). Terror stricken Kanai finds himself rescued by others. Horen says that if tiger had been here, Kanai would have not been alive; he also explains that fear has taken the physical form which left him with teeth chattering and suffocating. The physical and psychological impact of fear is brought out through this scene. The indiscriminate killing of animals had gone to a stage where human population and the tiger population decreased simultaneously. Thus the “islands were forcibly depopulated inorder to make room for wildlife conservation projects” (THT 59).

Ghosh captures the ecological instability in the novel through indiscriminate killing of the tiger. Ghosh heightens the horror scene with all vividness. In one of the island a buffalo had given birth, on hearing the sound the tiger ran across the river, swam and reached the island. It crashed into the shed were animals were there and their cry woke men around. They could understand what has happened and they trapped the tiger by covering the hole in the thatched roof with their nets and succeeded in capturing the tiger.

Habitat loss is the main reason for the predators to turn into man eaters. Tiger skin and its organs are smuggled from India to various countries. To prevent poaching, enlarging of habitat plays the major role in preserving the species. This scene leads to argument between Kanai and Piya. Ghosh raises this question, “Which life is more important man’s or beast’s?” (THT 298). There is horror in man killing the tiger, as there is horror in tiger killing the man.

The increased exploitation of forest is directly related to the decrease in the tiger population of the Sundarbans. Tigers are the best conservators as they prevent human beings from destroying the forest. If there are no tigers in Sundarbans, the forest would have been depleted in months and still poaching continues and the tiger population has reduced drastically. Owing to the habitat loss and dwindling of prey, the tigers prowl into the villages for food. “The Royal Bengal Tiger fetches huge amount of money for its skin, claws, tongue and bones. Over the past 6 years, seven fishermen were killed in Netidhopani village. The Hindu newspaper dated 20 January 2009 tells us the feline in the Netidhopani forest which has killed 3 men so far” (THT 81). Thus, man animal conflict continues till date.

Piya is an Indian born American cetologist. She has come to Sundarbans to research on the behavioral patterns of Irrawady dolphins. Piya first spotted orcaella dolphin before three years. She went along with a team for marine mammal survey in South China Sea. At the end of the survey, the ship stopped at Port Sinhanout, in Cambodia. The terrain was a patchwork of huts, rice-fields, irrigation ditches and the shallow reservoir. In the reservoir she spotted Oracella dolphins, “It was about a meter and a half in length, with a steel-grey body and a short dorsal fin. It looked the usual

bill-like dolphin snout, and its rounded head and large eyes gave it an oddly ruminative, bouive appearance” (THT 305).

Orcaella population is rapidly decreasing in the Mekong River and this would go below the sustainability level. This is mainly due to American bombing of Cambodia in 1970. Next, the dolphins were murdered by Khmer Rouge; he used dolphin oil as a supplement for petroleum. Once there was abundant population of Orcaella but now it has become almost extinct. “These dolphins were hunted with riffles and explosives and their carcasses were hung up in the sun so that their fat would drip into buckets. This oil was then used to run boats and motorcycles” (THT 306). The dolphins were melted down for their oil which led to the destruction of dolphin’s habitat.

The dolphin population in the Sundarbans is reducing because of the ‘magic oil’ they yield. A newspaper dated January 30, 2008 tells how rare river dolphins was beaten by Bangladeshi fisherman and these fishermen were caught while they tried to sell the dolphin. When they failed, the men gave up and dumped the carcass outside a museum. (THT 59)

Dolphins have become victims of the wildlife trade and they become new show pieces in the aquarium and their demand was growing faster in the Eastern Asia and the dolphin named Mr. Sloane was sold for hundred dollars in the market. Dolphins habitat and life is lost by the diesel boats. Piya examined a carcass of a dolphin and found that it was suddenly hit by a motor boat and its body reveals a huge gash behind its blowhole. This destruction leads to an ecological imbalance especially to the dolphins in the Sundarbans. “When marine mammals begin to disappear from an established habitat it means something’s gone very very wrong” (THT 267). Moyna echoes the same idea.

She is of the opinion that in fifteen years the fish will become extinct because of the use of nylon nets that traps the egg along with the catch. If this disconcert for marine ecology continues, the sea wealth would vanish leading to the loss of productivity and instability of the entire ecosystem.

Nirmal records the changes in the Sundarbans ecosystem. The sky was once darkened by migratory birds but now it looks clear. The mud banks filled with swarming crabs has now faded over the years: “That colour began to fade long ago and now it is never seen any more. Where had they gone I wondered, those millions of swarming crabs those birds?” (THT 215). Nirmal finds these as the sign of death that would lead to global warming and alterations in the sea levels. Another thing that is very troubling is the prawn culture.

Prawns do not breed inside ponds. They need the open water. What the fisherman do is go out with microscopically fine mesh nets and sieve the water. They take out everything they get and then go through all the debris and pick out the prawns spawn. They pick out only the lucrative little bits of prawns spawn for which they get paid a fair amount. However in the process they completely clear the water of the spawn of the other fish species as well and this creates a complete ecological disaster where by the entire fish life of the Sundarbans will soon be decimated. There is an incredible urgency about what is happening here and around people lives. (qtd in Kaiti 205)

This incident stands as an example to the callous treatment meted out by man towards other living organisms.

In the Sundarbans Island the lives of the human being are always under threat. Sundarbans is a tide country where water submerges the island everyday and disappear later, with crocodiles, snakes and man eating tigers. Ghosh finds the terrifying beauty of river and forest as:

Beauty is nothing

But the start of terror we can hardly bear

And we adore it because of the serene scorn

It could kill us with (THT 69)

The ecosystem of the Sundarbans is destructed mainly through human encroachment. The mangrove trees are destroyed which acts as a barrier against the cyclonic winds. The habitat of the marine mammals is lost. The ecosystem of the Sundarbans is like a web connected to each other. The Sundarbans is a bioregion but people have forgotten the importance of safeguarding the sensitive bioregion of the Sundarbans which is nature's bounty to humanity.

The novel contains four major women characters whose life revolves around a historical event leaving a deep impact in their own lives. Nilima, the oldest of the women characters is the most ambitious in the novel. Her decisions of not supporting the refugees spoil the intimacy between her and her husband who is more interested in the welfare of the refugees. Nirmal and Nilima try to maintain the cultural legacy of Daniel Hamilton's utopian society. Nilima, fondly called as Mashima by the people of Lusibari belongs to a family of good educational background. The reforms of Lord William Bentick and Raja Ram Mohan Rai for the cause of women helped them to be active

outside the family circle. The process of empowering elite group of women from traditional past to modernity creates a sense of awareness about women's duties and responsibilities. Nilima says, "I am not capable of dealing with the whole world's problems. For me the challenge of making a few little things a little better for in one small place is enough. That place for me is Lusibari" (THT 387). Eventhough she is strict and stern, she expresses her deep love for the local people. Ghosh strongly portrays Nilima as a ecofeminist. She educates the local people by forming a trust and works towards the welfare of the people. Such education creates awareness among people and prevents people from cutting trees and poaching animals.

Kusum is very close to nature and she cannot keep herself away from the tide country. She says, "Many months passed and we spoke of coming here: that place was not home; there was nothing for us there. Walking on the iron, we longed for the touch of the mud; in circled by rails, we dreamed of Raimangal in flood" (THT 164). This brings her again to Morichjhapi. She strongly believes in traditional ideas and considers dolphins as the messengers of God. "I call them Bon Bibi messengers". All the time, the boat was at the spot, the dolphins kept breaking the water. Kanai cannot imagine the reason for the presence of the dolphins. Kanai said, "There came a moment when one of them broke the surface with its head and looked right at me. Now I saw why Kusum found it so easy to believe that these animal were something other than they are. For where had seen a sign of Bob Bibi, I saw instead, the gaze of the poet" (THT 235). Kusum is strong with the view that Dokkin Roi is the manifestation of tiger and considers it to be evil. She asserts,

The animal was none other than Dokkhin Roi in disguise and the demon shook the earth with a roar as he started his charge. At the sight of that immense body and those vast jowls, flapping in the wind like snails, mortal terror seized Dukhey's soul. Even as he was losing consciousness, he recalled his mother's parting words, and called out: O mother of mercy, Bon Bibi, save me, come to my side. (THT 235)

Kusum feels alienated and the nostalgic past of the tide country calls her back and she flees to Morichjhapi along with Fokir and joins the Bangladeshi refugees. She feels connected with the place which acts as a hub of freedom for the oppressed. This self-realization makes her move to the tide country to help the refugees. She asks the favour of Nilima to safe guard her people but she refuses to go against the government. Kusum initiates the spirit of revolt in Nirmal and he joins the refugees as he finds an ideological intimacy with Kusum. Kusum becomes the forgotten past which is not mentioned in the history. Government took great efforts to hide the massacre that would cause them a dirty image. For Nilima, history affects her but Kusum becomes the part of history which kills her. Kusum believed that she has died for a cause.

Piya is a person who believes in facts and scientific ideas. She speaks about the datas and scientific description and conducts research on Irrawady dolphins. She is so much interested in dophins that she conducts research and is eager in exploring more about it. She hires Fokir as her boastsman for her research work. At the end of the novel, tide swap them off to the Garjontola Island accidently, it was a place where Kusum travelled last before the Morchjhapi massacre. In an attempt to save Piya, Fokir lost his

life. All these incidents made Piya responsible for Fokir's family and she builds a trust to save dolphins as well as the people of Lusibari.

As a scientist, Piya is aware of the hazardous conditions. The powerful storm avenges the life of her friend Fokir. Fokir, an illiterate fisherman saves her life through basic instincts. He narrates about the legend of BonBibi of the tide country and it is translated by Kanai to Piya. "Tilting back his head, began to chant and suddenly the language and the music were all around her, flowing like a river, and all of it made sense; she understood it all. Although the sound of the voice was Fokir's, the meaning was Kanai's, and in the depths of her heart she knew she would always be torn between the one and the other" (THT 360). She is torn between the attraction of Kanai's prosaic life and the poetry of Fokir's unspoilt life.

Moyna, who works as the nurse in Badabon trust is noted for her self-respect and dignity. She dedicates herself for the upliftment of people. Moyna and Piya lead a contrasting life. As a tribal woman, Moyna struggles as her basic needs are not fulfilled. The characters Kusum and Piya are directly responsible for betterment of ecology whereas Moyna and Nilima are indirectly responsible by educating people who are linked with nature for their existence.

Ghosh points out how the capitalist in the name of environmental consciousness havoc the lives of those who are perceived to be directly depended on the environment for their livelihood. The people in power constantly contended with the articulated notion of nature as if it lies above human life. In the name of tiger preservation human lives were threatened and destroyed. Ghosh argues that human lives are valued somewhat lower than those of tigers. Pitting the conservation of the tiger at the cost of

the extermination of its human settlers highlights several paradoxes that find no easy answers. Conservation is absolutely necessary but not at the cost of the poor and the underprivileged. As a Bengali newspaper observed, “The lives of the trees in Sundarbans are certainly of value but surely the lives of these shelter seekers are not without value” (qtd in Kaiti 267).

The novel *Sea of Poppies* is set prior to the opium war with the background of the nineteenth century opium trade and it deals with the aftermath of the lives of people living there. It deals with the production of opium for the Chinese market which procures huge profit for the Britishers. The cultivation of poppy plants affected the agricultural lands, thus causing imbalance in the ecosystem. The anthropocentric attitudes of the Britishers who exploit and reshape the ecosystem for their economic welfare are the root cause for all ecological imbalances.

Ghosh clearly speaks about the excessive exploitation of nature by the Britishers in the process of increasing the profit through illegal opium trade. During the British rule, there was transformation from feudal system to Zamindari system. This led to the suffering of the poor as both land and labour were exploited. The farmers were forced to produce opium instead of their staple food such as wheat, pulses and other vegetables. This led to the irreparable loss of both land use and life. The natives were forced by the Britishers to grow poppy. Opium became the strength of the imperial Europe. Ghosh refers opium as the most precious jewel of Queen Victoria’s crown. Carl Trocki, an economist states, “Without the drug, there probably would have been no British Empire since the economic foundation of the imperial economy lay on opium” (Trocki xiii).

In *Sea of Poppies*, Burnham the leading opium merchant says Zachary that the main motive of the Britishers stay is mainly for the flourished opium trade in India. Opium becomes the easy source of wealth which reveals the fact that the East India Company's monthly income of opium is equal to that of yearly revenue of America. Ramachandra Guha says that the colonizers in the name of civilization and development succeed in, "Pauperising millions of people in the agrarian sector and diminishing the stock of plant, water and soil resources at a terrifying rate" (qtd in Huggan1). The natives were helpless against the Britishers as they were forced to cultivate poppy.

The Gangetic plain which is very fertile appears deadly as the farmers are denied to grow their staple food. This shows the capitalist attitude of the colonizers towards the poor colonized people. Deeti laments over the lost greenery and she infers the change in the landscape as:

. . . it seemed to her that the Karamnasa's influence had spilled over its banks, spreading its plight far beyond the lands that drew upon its waters: the opium harvest having been recently completed, the plants have been left to wither in the fields, so that the countryside was blanketed with the parched remnants. Except for the foliage of the few mango and jackfruit trees, nowhere was there anything green to relieve the eye. (SOP 192)

After witnessing the fields filled with white-petalled poppies, she longs for the rich and seasonal crops that was once cultivated. She recollects the memories of her lost land. During harvest time, Deeti was forced to hire a half dozen hands, after paying the workers, she was happy about the silver coins that she would get by selling the produce. After the opium was weighed, Deeti was shown the account book of Hukham Singh.

Her plot of land was pledged for a debt taken from the company; now the meager produce were barely enough to cover the debt. She looked disbelievingly at the discoloured coins that were laid before her: “Aho se ka karwat? Just six dams for the whole harvest? It’s not enough to feed a child, let alone a family” (SOP 155).

The muharir behind the counter was a Bengali with heavy jowls and a cataract of a frown. He snapped her back, “Go to the money lender. Sell your sons. Send them off to Mareech. It’s not as if you don’t have any choices” (SOP 155). Deeti thinks about her childhood and reflects,

What her own fields looked like, and were she at home today, she would have been asking herself what she would eat in the months ahead: where were the vegetables, the grains? She had only to look around to know that here, as in the village she had left, everyone’s land was in hock to the agents of the opium factory: every farmer had been served with a contract, the fulfilling of which left them with no option but to stew their land with poppies. And now, with the harvest over and little grain at home, they would have to plunge still deeper into debt to feed their families. (SOP 193)

Ghosh clearly brings in the details of the land that was once fertile but now it is swamped because of poppies. The British government’s insistence to cultivate only poppy plants made the availability of the staple food rare. The British government procured the poppy seeds at a very low rate. The farmers had no other go but to borrow money from the Bruisers at high interest to feed their family. Thus the farmers suffered from hunger and poverty and they eventually they became debtors and indentured laboureres.

The town was thronged with hundreds of other impoverished transients, many of whom were willing to sweat themselves half to death for a few handfuls of rice. Many of these people had been driven from their villages by the flood of flowers that had washed over the countryside: lands that had once provided sustenance were now swamped by the rising tide of poppies; food was so hard to come by that people were glad to lick the leaves in which offerings were made at temples or sip the starchy water from a pot in which rice had been boiled. (SOP 202)

Ghosh speaks about the oppression of human beings and exploitation of nature by the capitalists. In the early days, it was the slaves who ploughed the land. The land owners imported the slaves from different regions and the work mainly depended on them. A landlord in Mauritius Mr. M. d' Epinay states, "My canes are rotting in the field, Mr. Reid, said the planter. Tell Mr. Burnham that I need men" (SOP 21). It clearly states that there are no longer slaves available in Mauritius and there is great demand growing in number for indentured labourers from India. Deeti is a victim of opium trade. She loses her land which is the only hope of her survival. Even after toiling hard, her harvest is not sufficient to meet the basic necessity which leaves them to face hunger and poverty.

The novel clearly focuses on the lives of the Indian peasants and how the opium has caused havoc in their lives. The novel clearly depicts the exploited lives of the farmers. Frantz Fanon comments, "For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity" (3). The control of British opium trade was entirely

governed by The East India Company. The farmers were denied right to sell their opium produce to private parties and they were compelled to sell it to The East India Company at a very low rate. “Colonizers have always imported and introduced cash crops in the annexed terrains by exterminating local ecosystems and marginalizing the down trodden” (Crosby 18).

Ghosh focuses on the historical consequences which lead to the migration and displacement from their native land. He opines that the cultivation of opium leads to the destruction of human lives and environment. “Grave environmental crisis, no doubt, posing a threat to human existence and the need for creating a sustainable and balanced relationship between man and the natural world is one of the urgent social and environmental issues being felt by men across the globe in this millennium” (Sivaramakrishnan 256).

The *Sea of Poppies* novel traverses Indian history by exposing the Britishers who scraped India off its riches leaving its people exploited. The awareness about human freedom is an important step in putting an end to the environmental crisis. Ghosh believes that elimination of hierarchy and capitalism in the society will end the environmental crisis. “Ecocriticism analysis the ways in which literature represents the human relation to nature at particular moments of history” (Heise 197).

In *River of Smoke*, the ships are caught in the ravaging storm in Canton coast, the ship Redruth is owned by Fitcher Penrose, a British naturalist and the ship Anahita is owned by Baharam Modi, a Parsi opium merchant. The novel traces the lives of people who are involved in drug trafficking. It also focuses upon the Britishers who are involved in trading Chinese flora.

The cultivation of poppy plants and the processing of poppy into opium is done in India and sold to China by the British, American and Indian merchants. Colonizers are the one who are greatly responsible for the destruction of flora and culture of those regions. “In 1830, the auditor-general of the East India Company declared that every year at least £4,000,000 had to be carried back from India to England” (Mishra.R 71).

Globalized capitalism with its anthropocentric ideal has led to the environmental degradation which is the major issue discussed in the novel. “The enormous growth of industry and the remarkably rapid process of concentration of production in ever-larger enterprises are one of the most characteristic features of capitalism” (qtd in Mishra.R 74).

British imported silk, tea and porcelain from China. Chinese consider their products to be superior to all and so there was less demand for British products. This led to unequal trade flow resulting in depletion of silver from Britain’s treasury. So in order to gain profit, British exported opium from India to China which resulted in great profit.

. . . this money was used to buy opium that was exported to China, to be sold in Canton and the sale yielded another £3,300,000. Thus West had finally found a way to address the huge deficit it was facing in its trade with China. By 1830’s it had finally found something that it could supply to China in return of many valuable things. (Mishra.R 71)

Ghosh clearly pictures the capitalistic greed of the Britishers is the main reason for the exploitation of the Indians and the Chinese. They exploit people by following the concept of Free Trade. Ghosh strongly points out that both the British parliament and the Queen are in favor of the merchants who are responsible for the revenue increase.

Ghosh in *Sea of Poppies*, through the words of Burnham, an English opium merchant confesses about the real intension behind the policy of Free Trade.

The war, when it comes, will not be for opium. It will be for the freedom of Chinese people. Free trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apply as much to opium as any other article of trade. More so perhaps, since in its absence many millions of natives would be denied the lasting advantage of British influence. (SOP 115)

The opium trade has become the monopoly of the British. The opium trade had made them so rich that they are not willing to stop it. Millions of people have become slaves to opium. The Chinese governor has summoned Commissioner Lin to stop the inflow of opium into China. He blames the foreign merchants for flooding opium into China. Initially, opium was used by upper class people and for preparing medicines. The increase inflow of opium has resulted in death and destruction of large number of people. Ghosh authentically documents the tactics of Britian through the words of Neel:

The drug may come from India, but the trade is almost entirely in British hands. In the Bengal presidency, the cultivation of opium is their monopoly: few Achhas play any part in it, apart from the peasants who are made to grow it – and they suffer just as much as the Chinese who buy the drug. In Bombay, the British were not able to set up a monopoly because they were not in control of the entire region. That is why local merchants like Seth Bahramji were able to enter the trade. Their earnings are the only part of this immense commerce that trickles back to Hindusthan- all the rest goes to England and Europe and America. (ROS 484)

Ghosh deliberately speaks that the exploitation of people and economy is mainly by the capitalist nations. They always wanted to commodify everything. Capitalism clashes between economy and environment. The exploitation of human beings, nature and the flora clearly exposes the greedy capitalistic attitude of the western colonizers. “Capitalism becomes the source for all conflict, oppression, and environmental abuse” (Howarth 79).

Chinese government strongly urges the Britishers to stop the inflow of opium trade. The Chinese government declares opium as “deadly poison” (ROS 432). “The flowing poison, the vile dirt, the dire calamity brought upon us by foreigners” (ROS 538). The novel also showcases the ill-effects of opium through the untimely death of the addicts. China sends a proclamation to the foreigners who have captured Fanqui-town in the city of Canton. China declares, “. . . you bring opium to our central land, causing people out of their substance and involving their very lives in destruction? I find that with this thing you have seduced and deluded the people of China for tens of years past; and countless are the unjust hoards that you have thus accumulated” (ROS 431).

Ghosh highlights the economic greed of the Britishers. He speaks about the importance of environmental ethics to deal with the global crisis. Donald Worster, a historian comments:

We are facing global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. (qtd in Glotfelty xxi)

The girmitiyas who were caught in the storm managed to escape and they landed in Great Nicobar Island. The island is known for its special kind of birds. There is a swift flying bird called hinlene. The nests of these birds are called as Yan Wo in Chinese and there is great demand for it in Canton. In China, this bird's nest is considered to be a royal food and they are eaten by royal people. These nests are of great economic value and they are exchanged for gold and silver. This led the species to be endangered. Through these incidents Ghosh clearly pictures the ruthless actions of human beings against nature. This clearly shows the present environmental condition and man's brutality on nature and other living beings. Most of our life's luxuries are streaked with the blood of many other lives. A recent survey states that, the sparrows are vanishing because of the usage of the cellphones; every call we make shoots down a sparrow to death. It has become so vulnerable that March 20th is celebrated as World Sparrow Day with Chrip for the Sparrow! Tweet for the Sparrow! Slogan to save the sparrow's through human help.

The novel *River of Smoke* opens up with Deeti's shrine. Deeti along with her shipmates worked as indentured labourer in the plantations. The labourers are environmentally displaced by the colonizers. They are sheltered at the remote corner of Mauritius, which is not accessible even by roads. In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, Huggan and Helen Tiffin comments thus:

Environmental racism is perhaps best understood as a sociological phenomenon, exemplified in the environmentally discriminatory treatment of socially marginalized or economically disadvantaged people, and in the transference of ecological problems from their home' source to a foreign'

outlet . . . Above all, though, environmental racism is an extreme form of what Plumwood calls hegemonic centrism. (4)

These indentured labourers are made to work in hazardous areas. “Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards” (Sujatha 122).

Ghosh highlights the cruel acts of the imperial powers and the suffering of the labourers who are unable to meet even their basic necessities. “Food ran so short that the coolies had to forage in the jungle in order to fill their bellies. Nowhere was the forest richer than on the Morne, but rarely, if ever, did any one venture to climb those slopes- for the mountain was a place of sinister reputation, where hundreds, perhaps thousands of people were known to have died” (ROS 10).

Joseph Dalton Hooker states about Calcutta’s Botanical garden, “Amongst its greatest triumphs may be considered the introduction of the tea-plant from China” (qtd in Lee 138). He also stated, “The establishment of tea trade in the Himalaya and Assam is almost entirely the work of the superintendents of the gardens of Calcutta” (qtd in Lee 138). China was defeated by the British and opium trade became legal and on the other hand, Assam became the largest tea exporter to Britain. All this happened because, “. . . it was free market capitalism at the barrel of a gun and through the hypnotic smoke of the opium pipe” (qtd in Lee 139).

Sir Joseph Banks highlights the rich botanical varieties in China. “A country singularly blessed in its botanical riches, being endowed not only with some of the most beautiful and medicinally useful plants in existence, but also with many that were of

commercial value” (ROS 101). Britain and other foreign countries were racing to plunder China’s most valuable trees and plants. “The city of Canton absorbed so much of the world’s evil, has given in return so much beauty” (ROS 536). All the wonders of nature have been sent out of China, starting from tea; which is one of the world’s best favorite drinks. A new cultural event named ‘tea time’ was created all over the world especially in Europe. Literature brings out the evidence of the favorite drink praised by writers like Henry Feilding as “. . . the panacea for everything from weariness to a cold to a murder!” (Hasan 191). Henry James finds the “ceremonious tea-hour to be one of the most agreeable times of life” (Hasan 192). Thomas de Quincy speaks about both opium and tea to be addictive and considers tea as “the intellectual flavoured beverage” (Hasan 192) in his autobiography. Ghosh speaks about the flowers that China has given to the world such as hydrangea, chrysanthemum, peonies, crested irises, gardenias, primroses, lilies asters, azaleas and few others. The Japanese ‘ikebana’ art of arranging flowers has its roots from China. Ghosh pays tribute to the rich floral wealth of China by stating, “The flowers of Canton are immortal and it will bloom forever” (ROS 537).

Ghosh pictures the city of Canton blooming with the flowers of fragrance. Fitcher Penrose considers Canton as a habitat of plants and flower. The flowers hang down in thick clusters, emanating a sweet, heady odour. Robin Chinnery beautifully paints the landscape of Canton thus:

Nowhere on earth- I suspect, is the importance of portals as well understood as in China. In this country, gateways are not merely entrances and exits- they are tunnels between different dimensions of existence.

Here, as at the threshold of Punhyqua’s garden, I was visited by the

feeling that I was stepping into a realm that existed on some plane other than the ordinary. Ahead lay a garden, not unlike Punhyqua's, an artfully made landscape of streams and bridges, lakes and hills, rocks and forests, with winding pathways and wave-like walls. (ROS 442-43)

Richard Drayton states, "The future of Kew in the age of Sir Joseph Banks rested on his faith that kings or empires might purchase their right to rule with plants and gardens" (44). This statement becomes real when opium which is priced high reverses the economic flow by the purchase of tea. Sir Joseph Banks encouraged stealing plants from China mainly after the opium wars. This happened so because of the opening of the ports and the transfer of plants was organized by British East India Company. Robert Fortune, a famous plant collector, brought 2000 tea plants and 17000 tea seeds from China to India. In the novel, Fitcher is in search of golden camellia flower and this is indirectly related to the search of tea plants in the later part of the century. Fitcher was not looking for tea; his main aim is to trade flowers for its beauty. He was in search of golden camelia which is of medicinal values. It was believed that camelia flower had the power to reverse the effect of ageing and fight against consumption. Later at the end it is revealed that, the flower golden camelia is imaginary and not real. It is said so because the Chinese did not want the flower to go into the hands of the foreigners and so by 1990, the Chinese government declared it to be extinct. China which is filled with exotic flowers and the population of six million people is called as both the green city as well as overly populated country.

Ghosh discusses the importance of flowers and its symbolic emotional meanings. No meeting is complete without flower, bouquet or a garland. Any love story is not

complete without a red rose. Ghosh brings out the simplicity of Touch-me-not which overpowered the coloured and fragrant blossoms. Touch-me-not becomes the “favorite of the French emperor” (ROS 78). Even the poor enthusiasts relish the charm of the royal gardens. “That’s why the plant hunters most passionately search for the Golden Camelia like the Holy Grail” (ROS 122). Ghosh states, “The value of China’s plants had not been lost on Britain’s rivals and enemies across the channel: the major physical gardens and herbariums of both Holland and France had also been endeavoring to assemble collections of China’s flora” (ROS 101).

The greed of Britishers results in disappearance of certain species completely. Ghosh speaks about the Camelia Sinesis noted for its rich variety which became extinct. This Camelia species is from which tea is extracted has caught the eyes of the foreigners which accounts to enormous world trade. This flower is believed to turn white hair into black and has the capacity to reduce the ageing effects and also helps in curing lung ailments. It is mesmerizingly described as:

The petals on their green tinged stem shine like the purest gold.

A purple eye looks up from the centre, setting the bloom aglow,

It remedies the pain of ageing bones and quickens the memory and mind,

It puts to flight the death that festers in the lungs. (ROS 124)

Amitav Ghosh unfolds the secret aspect of our environmental beauty and the nourishing power of herbs, fruits and plants. Bougainvilleas rushing on our balconies or the brilliant black pepper which are very much essential for our day to day delicacies were transported from other countries. If these botanist had not taken any pain in

transporting plant species across borders and continents we would have been deprived of the sight of smiling “chrysanthemums, cheering, azaleas and the swinging fuchsia to medical conifers” (ROS 77). Ghosh minutely brings out the details of moving delicate plants from one place to another on ships travelling thousands of miles bearing the scorching sun, lashing rain, storms and the vagaries of unending journey carrying Antirrhinums, Lobelias and Georgians.

Fitcher Penrose is a plant hunter who travels in the ship Redruth carrying variety of flora from China. Apart from plants, he also carries painted garden. He is a man of unusual accomplishment and considerable wealth. He earns great amount of money by marketing seeds, saplings and horticultural implements. He runs a nursery called Penrose & Sons which is known for its illegal Chinese importation. His main motif is to plunder the plant resources of China and sell it across the world. He handpicks the plants from American Northwest for Chinese connoisseurs in exchange, “*Gaultheria shallon*, a plant both ornamental and medicinal, and a magnificent new conifer (ROS 77) and from Mexico are “*Mexican orange*, —*antirrhinums*, *lobelias* and *georginas*” (ROS 77). His plan is to exchange plants for great deal of money. Ghosh terms him as an ecological imperialist. Penrose gains laurels and money through frequent visit to Canton and mainly transports plants to Britian. Ghosh infers:

His patented moss-scrapers, bark-scalers and garden-scarifiers had a large and devoted following in England. His principal enterprise, a nursery called Penrose & Sons, was based in Falmouth, in Cornwall: it was reputed especially for its Chinese importations, some of which--like

certain varieties of plumbago, flowering quince and wintersweet—had gained enormous popularity in the British Isles. (ROS 35)

Penrose acknowledges, “Canton’s placed many a foot on the ladder of fortune, said Fitcher, and I was fortunate that mine was among them” (ROS103). The imperial exploiters have numerous ways in exploiting the Chinese flora and fauna and the Chinese try to prevent the Westerners from invading their landscape. But the exploiters brought in new ideas to plunder the natural resources. In the eighteenth century, no foreigner was allowed to take live specimen instead they were allowed to take only dried seeds and painted gardens. This painted garden was taken for further exploitative excursions.

Fitcher revolutionizes transportation of plants across sea by inventing miniature green houses on the ship. Fitcher exploits nature in the process of making profit. When Fitcher first visited Pamplémousses garden it had more of an artificial look with orderly planted trees. Penrose is not ready to accept nature’s plenty and he murmurs in disbelief, “In nature there existed no forest where African creepers were at war with Chinese trees, nor one where Indian shrubs and Brazilian vines were locked in a mortal embrace. This was a work of Man, a botanical Babel” (ROS 37). Fitcher mourns for the fallen state of Pamplémousses garden after the opium war and tries to grab every species of plant that can be transported.

Fitcher never hesitates to travel miles for his expedition of plant species. He discovers the plant species of pale rose bamboo orchids, *Arundina Chinensis*. Even though the slope of that garden is very steep he continues to go without any hinderance. Fitcher is so passionate about his plants that he neglects other forms of life. He even captures the birds, strip them off their fat and are made to decompose and

converted to manure. Fitcher offers a reward for capturing birds. He catches fish in large numbers and are used as compost for his plants.

The anthropocentric attitude of the members of the commerce and other foreign merchants goes against the Chinese wish to stop the inflow of opium trade. This is mainly because of the growing economy. One of the Chamber member states,

British trade with China is of vastly greater commercial importance to Britain than the Canadas. It reaps annual revenue of five million pounds and involves the most vital interests of the mercantile, manufacturing, shipping and maritime interests of the United Kingdom. It affects, in an eminent degree, the territorial revenue of our Indian empire. It must not be lost by any wavering imbecility in meeting the present difficulties.

(ROS 517)

Opium pollutes not only the human beings but also the physical environment. In Fanqui-town, Creek factory is the dwelling place for the foreign traders. The decomposed wastes from the factories are directly released into the river. Ghosh being an eco-critical writer brings in about the ill-effects that are caused by pollution for the local people. William Rueckert rightly quotes,

The basic postulate of ecology and tragedy is that humans precipitate tragic consequences by acting either in ignorance of or without properly understanding the true consequences of their actions, we are violating the laws of nature, and the retribution from the biosphere will be more terrible than any inflicted on humans by god. (113)

Anthropocentrism is one of the root causes for environmental degradation. It is directly connected to people, power, hierarchy and capitalism. The transportation of plant varieties paved the way to biodiversity. Even though China had lost against the Britishers, it had won the blessings for her gifts of plant species from the whole human race.

Flood of Fire begins few months before the outbreak of opium war between British India and China. The novel traces the lives of principle characters and also the ecological destruction caused due to war. The illegal opium trade by the foreign merchants had made the Chinese suffer great loss. This led to the ban of opium in the Chinese market. The foreign merchants with the support of the British Queen, plan to wage war against the Chinese. The war between two great nations results in destruction of both land and sea. The soldiers in the army when they fired the gunshots, the whole area became polluted causing a great instability to both nature and human beings. The huge vessels and streamers used during the war produced lot of smoke polluting both land and sea. The soldiers in order to seek protection from their enemies hide themselves in the villages, but they were chased by the villagers for destroying the agricultural lands. This shows how opium has caused great havoc to the lives of both human beings and nature.

The soldiers were campaigning at the first bar, Neel when he saw the surrounding area was stunned because he remembers it was once, “Flat and green, the river being flanked on both sides by rice-fields, orchards and scattered villages and the landscape was reminiscent of the Bengal countryside, lush, bucolic and sleepy” (FOF 493). After the arrival of the soldiers, the surrounding has changed completely. The soldiers tried

hard setting up a mud-walled fort extending from a gigantic rift. It was built by huge timbers extending from one shore to another and it almost resembled like a dam.

“Hundreds of acres of forest had been cut down near the construction of the raft, the coast had been borne by the merchants of the Co-Hong: they were rumoured to spend thousands of silver taels on the timber alone” (FOF 494).

After much war and bloodshed, the Britishers won the war and “Opium pours into the market like a monsoon flood” (FOF 270). This trilogy clearly states the anthropocentric attitude of the Britishers towards both India and China. It highlights how the Britishers in the name of free trade has caused great ecological imbalance. Ghosh in his trilogy does not directly speak about environmental crisis instead he juxtaposes the economy and environmental condition through opium trade and Fitcher’s commercial exploration in acquiring Chinese plants for European trade.

Anthropocentric attitude is not the only reason for environmental degradation but the system of domination or exploitation of human beings. Capitalistic form of production creates scarcity depending on the dynamic supply and demand. Eco Marxists believe that main reason for political issue is the class conflict. They oppose the power relation and hierarchy which trouble all kinds of societies.

In Ghosh Ibis trilogy, the only woman involved in preserving nature is Paulette Lambert, daughter of a French botanist. She is described as the child of nature. Pierre Lambert takes pride in educating his daughter in the tranquility of the botanical gardens. She worships Mother Nature and nature has been her scripture. Ghosh regards Paulette as an embodiment of nature. Being a naturalist, she accepts nature as God.

. . . the love of Nature had been a kind of religion, a form of spiritual striving: he had believed that in trying to comprehend the inner vitality of each species, human beings could transcend the mundane world and its artificial divisions. If botany was the scripture of this religion, then horticulture was its form of worship: tending a garden was, for Pierre Lambert, no mere matter of planting seeds and pruning branches-it was a spiritual discipline, a means of communicating with forms of life that were necessarily mute and could be understood only through a careful study of their own modes of expression- the language of efflorescence, growth and decay: only thus, he had taught Paulette, could human beings apprehend the vital energies that constitute the spirit of the Earth. (ROS 78-79)

Paulette turns out to be an enthusiastic naturalist. She travels from Mauritius to Pamplémousses botanical garden where once her father worked. She then joins Fitcher in preserving his plants. Her spirit in exploring the plants pulled her towards the ship *Redruth*. When the plants were being transported from *Redruth* to Canton she suffers great pain as she was emotionally connected to these plants:

Paulette had grown attached to each of these plants, especially to the Oregon grape which had proved exceptionally vigorous. It pained her to see them being removed to the *Redruth*'s gig, to be transferred to Baburao's junk; like a parent at a time of parting, she doubted that her children would be properly looked after. (ROS 471)

The truth of the golden camelia flower is revealed through Robin's letter where he states that there is no real flower called a golden camelia and the picture is just the creative imagination. The journey in search of the flower was real adventure to Paulette.

Paulette is very much attracted towards the island of Kowloon; it pulls her like a magnet. The destruction of island during the war makes her mourn for it. Ghosh pictures the destruction of the environment during the war.

The vegetation was sparse and lacking in interest: such trees as there may once have been had been hacked down by the people who lived in the impoverished little villages that were scattered around the island's rim. They had done a thorough job of it too, for almost nothing remained now but a few stunted trunks and wind twisted branches. Apart from that, the slopes seemed to offer nothing but scree and scrub-and the two were sometimes almost indistinguishable in colour, now that the greenery had turned a dull autumnal brown. (ROS 203-204)

This novel clearly pictures that the anthropocentric attitude is the reason for the environmental crisis. Exploitation of nature is linked to the exploitation of human beings. Due to anthropocentric creed, illegal occupation and trading rights, military violence is used against the land and its inhabitants causing environmental injustice. This ruthless plundering of resources led to the loss of bio-diversity.

“A vital aspect of postcolonial refuses the nostalgia of pure landscape even while it grapples with the best ways of addressing the representation of the nonhuman environment” (qtd in Batra 79). It is the duty of everyone to protect our land. Natural and man-made disasters occur only because of man's attitude towards nature. The land should

not face another tragic event like Tsunami, Hiroshima or Bhopal tragedy. The younger generation should be taught about the importance of protecting nature.

Formerly man considered himself as part of nature and lived akin to it but he has started exploiting nature thus causing havoc on himself. Literary study involves eco-consciousness, thus redirecting human-mind towards conservation of ecosystem. Human freedom and self-awareness acts as an important step to end the environmental crisis. Since, capitalism is the main reason for all the environmental degradation; it is necessary to create a just society where human beings and nature are treated equally. A necessary shift from anthropocentric attitude to ecocentric values and the awareness about environmental justice is emphasized through Ghosh's novels.