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தாய்லாந்து

ஹோலி கிராஸ் ஹோம் சயின்ஸ் கல்லூரி

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Entangled Lives: A Posthuman Ecologies in Amitav Ghosh's Select Novels

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Abstract

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*This study examines Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021), and *Ghost-Eye* (2025) through the theoretical framework of posthuman ecologies. Moving beyond anthropocentric and species-centred modes of ecocritical inquiry, the article conceptualizes ecology as an entangled assemblage of humans, nonhuman agencies, landscapes, colonial histories, and material processes. While existing scholarship on Ghosh largely engages with ecocriticism, postcolonial environmentalism, and climate fiction, such approaches tend to privilege human agency and examine his fictional and non-fictional works in isolation. Addressing this critical gap, the present study offers an integrated posthuman ecological reading that foregrounds relationality, multispecies agency, and historical materiality across genres. By reading narrative fiction alongside ecological history and ethical reflection, the article reconceptualizes the Anthropocene as a shared, co-produced condition rather than a solely human-driven crisis. Ultimately, the study positions Ghosh's corpus as a significant intervention in posthuman ecological thought and contemporary environmental humanities.*

Keywords: *Posthuman Ecologies, Anthropocene, Ecological Entanglement, Nonhuman Agency, Environmental Humanities*

Introduction

Contemporary environmental crises manifesting as climate change, biodiversity loss, rising sea levels, and ecological precarity have profoundly unsettled anthropocentric frameworks that position humans as sovereign masters of nature. Such frameworks, rooted in Enlightenment humanism and reinforced by colonial and capitalist modes of extraction, have increasingly been criticized for their inability to account for the complex, interdependent relationships that constitute planetary life. In response, literary and cultural studies have witnessed a significant theoretical shift toward posthumanism, which challenges human exceptionalism and reconceptualizes agency, ethics, and ecology as distributed across human and nonhuman actors. Within this intellectual context, posthuman ecological thought has emerged as a critical framework for understanding environmental crises not as isolated human failures but as outcomes of deeply entangled historical, material, and multispecies processes.

Posthuman ecologies depart from conventional ecocritical approaches that foreground human stewardship or moral responsibility alone. Instead, they emphasize relationality, material agency, and multispecies coexistence, recognizing landscapes, animals, climates, and objects as active participants in ecological worlds. This framework is particularly significant in the era of the Anthropocene, a term that has been widely used to describe the geological epoch shaped by human activity. However, recent scholarship has questioned the Anthropocene's tendency to homogenize responsibility under the category of "the human," thereby obscuring the uneven impacts of colonialism, capitalism, and imperial extraction. Posthuman ecological perspectives complicate this narrative by reframing the Anthropocene as a co-produced condition one shaped by interactions between human and nonhuman forces rather than solely by human intention or control.

Amitav Ghosh occupies a central position within this theoretical and literary shift. Across his fiction and non-fiction, Ghosh persistently interrogates dominant narratives of progress, modernity, and human mastery over nature. His works resist linear historical timelines and challenge the separation of culture from nature by foregrounding ecological forces such as tides, storms, forests, animals, and commodities that exceed human agency and rational planning. Whether set in the tidal landscapes of the Sundarbans, the colonial trade routes of nutmeg, or the planetary histories of climate and extinction, Ghosh's narratives expose the fragility of human-centered worldviews and reveal the entangled foundations of ecological life. While Ghosh's writings have attracted substantial critical attention, much of the existing scholarship situates his work within ecocriticism, postcolonial environmentalism, or climate fiction. These approaches have productively examined themes of environmental justice, colonial exploitation, and climate anxiety, yet they often retain an implicit anthropocentric bias by privileging human experience, perception, and agency. Moreover, critical studies frequently analyze Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional works separately, thereby overlooking the conceptual continuity that runs across his literary and essayistic corpus. Such divisions limit the scope of ecological interpretation and obscure the ways in which Ghosh's narratives collectively articulate a more expansive, posthuman ecological vision.

This paper addresses this critical gap by offering an integrated reading of *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021), and *Ghost-Eye* (2025) through the theoretical lens of posthuman ecologies. Rather than treating these texts as isolated literary or historical projects, the study reads them as interconnected engagements with multispecies life, material histories, and nonhuman agency. In *The Hungry Tide*, the volatile ecosystem of the Sundarbans foregrounds the agency of tides, rivers, and animals in shaping human survival and vulnerability. *The Nutmeg's Curse* extends this ecological imagination into a historical and ethical critique of colonial extraction, tracing how commodities, plants, and imperial violence have reshaped planetary ecologies. *Ghost-Eye*, meanwhile, deepens this perspective by exploring spectral ecologies and material memories that blur distinctions between life and nonlife, presence and absence.

Together, these works articulate a vision of posthuman ecologies in which life is constituted through entanglement rather than hierarchy. Human beings are not positioned as dominant actors but as participants within dynamic networks of ecological relations that include animals, plants, objects, climates, and historical forces. By bringing narrative fiction into dialogue with ecological history and ethical reflection, this study demonstrates how Ghosh reconceptualizes the Anthropocene as a multispecies and material condition that demands ethical humility, relational responsibility, and modes of coexistence beyond human-centered control. This paper argues that Ghosh's corpus constitutes a significant intervention in contemporary environmental humanities by advancing a posthuman ecological imagination attuned to historical violence, material agency, and planetary interdependence. In doing so, the study contributes to ongoing debates on posthumanism,

ecocriticism, and the Anthropocene, offering a framework for rethinking ecological futures through literary form and ethical engagement.

Review of Literature

Scholarly engagement with Amitav Ghosh's writings has been wide-ranging and interdisciplinary, reflecting the ecological urgency and historical depth of his work. Critical studies have predominantly approached Ghosh through the lenses of ecocriticism, postcolonial environmental studies, climate fiction, and, more recently, Anthropocene discourse. These frameworks have illuminated how Ghosh interrogates environmental degradation, colonial exploitation, and climate-induced vulnerability, particularly within the Global South. As a result, his oeuvre has been widely recognized for its contribution to environmentally conscious literature and ethical debates surrounding climate change.

Critical readings of *The Hungry Tide* have largely focused on themes of environmental precarity, conservation politics, and the conflict between human survival and wildlife protection. Scholars have examined the novel's representation of the Sundarbans as a fragile ecosystem shaped by state policies, scientific intervention, and socio-economic marginalization. Discussions of tiger-human conflict, displacement, and environmental justice have been central to these analyses, emphasizing how ecological crises disproportionately affect vulnerable human communities. While such studies offer valuable insights into environmental ethics and governance, they frequently frame nonhuman life such as animals, rivers, and tides as symbolic or contextual elements rather than as agents with their own ecological force.

Similarly, scholarship on *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* has primarily situated the text within postcolonial historiography and critiques of capitalism and imperial extraction. Critics have highlighted Ghosh's exploration of colonial violence, the global circulation of commodities, and the historical roots of climate change. The text has been read as a powerful indictment of Western modernity and extractive economic systems, linking past imperial practices to present ecological crises. While these readings effectively foreground historical injustice and economic exploitation, they often prioritize human-centered narratives of domination and resistance, leaving the material and nonhuman dimensions of colonial ecology under-theorized.

More recent criticism has begun to position Ghosh as a significant voice within Anthropocene studies, particularly in relation to climate change, planetary crisis, and the limits of human-centered storytelling. Scholars have noted Ghosh's challenge to realist narrative forms and his insistence on the agency of climate, geology, and nonhuman life. However, even within Anthropocene discourse, critical attention tends to emphasize human accountability and ethical responsibility, often retaining an implicit humanist orientation. As a result, the Anthropocene is frequently framed as a human-made epoch rather than as a condition emerging from complex interactions between human and nonhuman forces. Although some studies engage with human-animal relations in Ghosh's work, these analyses are often confined to ethical debates about coexistence, conservation, or species conflict. Such approaches, while valuable, tend to maintain a binary structure that separates human subjects from animal others, rather than interrogating the broader relational networks in which both are embedded. Consequently, the ecological worlds in Ghosh's texts are often read through a moral or representational lens rather than as dynamic assemblages shaped by material processes, histories, and multispecies interactions.

A significant limitation of existing scholarship lies in its tendency to treat Ghosh's fictional and non-fictional writings as distinct intellectual projects. Studies of his novels and his environmental essays rarely enter into sustained dialogue with one another, resulting in fragmented interpretations of his ecological vision. This genre-based separation obscures the conceptual continuities that link narrative imagination, historical critique, and ethical reflection across his corpus. There remains limited research that brings these diverse texts together within a posthuman ecological framework that foregrounds relationality, nonhuman agency, and material histories. Such a framework enables a reading of Ghosh's work that moves beyond human-centered ethics and symbolic representations toward an understanding of ecology as an entangled, co-produced process. Addressing this gap, the present study offers a unified posthuman ecological reading of *The Hungry Tide*, *The Nutmeg's Curse*, and *Ghost-Eye*, demonstrating how Ghosh's writings collectively articulate an ecological philosophy grounded in interdependence, material agency, and multispecies coexistence.

Theoretical Framework: Posthuman Ecologies

Posthumanism emerges as a critical response to humanist traditions that privilege human rationality, autonomy, and mastery over the nonhuman world. By decentering the human subject, posthuman theory reconceptualizes agency as distributed across biological, material, and technological systems. Posthuman ecologies build on this intervention by foregrounding relationality and co-emergence, insisting that ecological life is produced through ongoing interactions among humans, nonhuman organisms, material environments, and historical forces. Within this framework, landscapes, climates, animals, and objects are not inert settings but dynamic agents that shape cultural meanings, social relations, and ethical possibilities. A key contribution of posthuman ecological thought lies in its reworking of ecological agency. Rather than attributing causality solely to human intention or decision-making, posthuman ecologies emphasize how material processes such as erosion, circulation, mutation, and climatic volatility actively participate in historical and ecological change. This perspective destabilizes linear narratives of progress and challenges moral frameworks that locate responsibility exclusively within human actors. Ecology, in this sense, is not a domain to be managed but a field of entangled forces that continuously exceed human control.

Within posthuman ecological discourse, the Anthropocene is increasingly understood not as a singular, human-authored geological epoch but as a condition produced through layered interactions among human practices, nonhuman agencies, and long histories of extraction, empire, and capitalism. Such a reframing complicates dominant narratives that homogenize humanity as a unified agent of planetary destruction. Instead, it draws attention to the uneven distribution of power, responsibility, and vulnerability across species, geographies, and historical contexts. Ghosh's work exemplifies this approach by representing ecological crises as relational outcomes shaped by tides, commodities, colonial infrastructures, and material memories rather than as the result of isolated human actions.

Fluid Ecologies and Posthuman Space in *The Hungry Tide*

The Hungry Tide constructs the Sundarbans not merely as a geographical location but as a fluid ecological assemblage in which land, water, and life remain in constant flux. The region's unstable terrain marked by shifting river channels, tidal surges, and cyclonic disruptions undermines human attempts to impose permanence, ownership, or control. In this landscape, human habitation is always provisional, shaped by ecological rhythms that operate independently of political boundaries or scientific management.

The novel's representation of tides and storms foregrounds their capacity to act upon human lives, reconfiguring space and redefining survival. These forces interrupt narrative expectations of mastery and progress, exposing the vulnerability of both marginalized communities and scientific rationality. By situating human characters within an environment governed by nonhuman processes, the text resists anthropocentric narratives of environmental stewardship and instead emphasizes adaptation, attentiveness, and relational existence.

The Sundarbans thus function as a posthuman space where ecological processes dictate the conditions of life. The mangrove forests, rivers, and animals are not symbolic backdrops but active participants in the narrative's unfolding. This ecological instability compels a reconsideration of ethical frameworks based on control or conservation alone. Instead, the novel gestures toward modes of coexistence grounded in humility and recognition of ecological limits, underscoring the impossibility of absolute human sovereignty within dynamic multispecies environments.

Posthuman Histories and Environmental Violence in *The Nutmeg's Curse*

In *The Nutmeg's Curse*, Ghosh extends posthuman ecological thinking into historical and global dimensions by tracing the violent entanglements of colonialism, capitalism, and environmental transformation. By centering the history of nutmeg as a commodity, the text reveals how plants and material objects participate in reshaping political power, economic systems, and ecological relations. Commodities emerge not as passive resources but as agents that mobilize imperial expansion, reorganize landscapes, and generate enduring ecological consequences.

The text challenges linear historical narratives that separate past colonial violence from present environmental crises. Instead, it demonstrates how contemporary climate instability is inseparable from earlier modes of domination that treated both land and life as exploitable assets. Through this lens, environmental destruction appears not as an unintended consequence of modernization but as a structural outcome of extractive worldviews grounded in human supremacy.

By situating ecological crisis within a *longue durée* of material and historical entanglements, Ghosh reframes the Anthropocene as a condition shaped by nonhuman forces acting in concert with imperial and capitalist systems. This perspective disrupts moral narratives that locate ecological harm solely in modern technological excess, revealing instead a deeper continuity between colonial exploitation and present planetary instability. The text thus foregrounds historical accountability while simultaneously decentering the human as the exclusive driver of ecological change.

Posthuman Ethics and Ecological Consciousness in *Ghost-Eye*

Ghost-Eye advances Amitav Ghosh's posthuman ecological thought by engaging directly with the ethical implications of living alongside forces both material and technological that resist human mastery. Rather than framing ecology as a system that can be fully understood, predicted, or controlled, the text foregrounds fear, belief, and uncertainty as meaningful responses to nonhuman presence. These affective states function as alternative modes of ecological awareness, challenging rationalist and technocratic approaches that seek to neutralize risk through calculation and control.

Central to *Ghost-Eye* is the recognition that landscapes, machines, and unseen forces operate beyond the limits of human perception. The text destabilizes the assumption that knowledge necessarily produces dominance, suggesting instead that increased awareness often exposes the fragility of human agency. Nonhuman entities whether environmental forces or technological systems emerge as actors that shape experience, memory, and ethical judgment without yielding to human intention. This refusal of transparency underscores a key posthuman insight: ecological relations are not fully accessible to human cognition and must be approached with humility rather than certainty. By integrating technology into its ecological imagination, *Ghost-Eye* complicates

conventional distinctions between the natural and the artificial. Machines are not positioned as neutral instruments of progress but as participants in ecological assemblages that influence human behavior, perception, and vulnerability. Their presence reveals how technological systems both extend and limit human capacities, reinforcing the idea that ethical responsibility cannot be grounded in human autonomy alone. Instead, ethics must account for the distributed agency of technological and nonhuman forces that co-produce contemporary ecological realities.

Fear and belief in Ghost-Eye thus operate as ethical correctives to modern assumptions of control. Rather than being dismissed as irrational, these responses acknowledge the unpredictability and power of nonhuman actors, encouraging modes of coexistence based on attentiveness and restraint. Ghosh's articulation of posthuman ethics resists narratives of technological salvation and environmental domination, advocating instead for a form of ecological consciousness that accepts uncertainty as a condition of shared existence. Through this ethical reorientation, Ghost-Eye reinforces the broader posthuman framework that runs across Ghosh's work: a vision of life constituted through relational vulnerability rather than human supremacy. The text ultimately suggests that ecological futures depend not on mastering the world whether through science, technology, or ideology but on learning to live responsibly within networks of human and nonhuman interdependence.

Conclusion

This study has shown that Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, *The Nutmeg's Curse*, and *Ghost-Eye* collectively articulate a posthuman vision of ecological life in which animals, climates, technologies, and humans function as interdependent co-creators of the world. Read together, these texts demonstrate that ecological reality is not shaped by human intention alone but emerges from continuous interactions among biological beings, material forces, and technological systems. Such an understanding directly challenges anthropocentric narratives that isolate humanity as the primary agent of history and environmental change.

In *The Hungry Tide*, the agency of animals and tidal landscapes destabilizes human claims to dominance and control, revealing a world in which survival is negotiated through multispecies entanglement. The presence of nonhuman life especially animals foregrounds ecological coexistence as a condition of vulnerability rather than mastery. *The Nutmeg's Curse* expands this perspective by situating climate crisis within a broader material and historical framework, where environmental transformations arise from long-standing entanglements between human economies, natural forces, and colonial infrastructures. Climate, here, is not a passive outcome of human action but an active force shaped by and reshaping planetary histories.

Ghost-Eye further complicates this posthuman ecology by introducing technology and machines as integral participants in ecological and ethical worlds. By blurring distinctions between organic life, mechanical systems, and human perception, the text underscores the extent to which contemporary existence is co-produced by technological and nonhuman agencies. Machines are not merely tools but actors that mediate memory, fear, and ecological awareness, reinforcing the posthuman insight that agency is distributed rather than centralized.

Taken together, these works map a continuum of posthuman ecological relations from animals and environments to climates and machines demonstrating how the human is always embedded within larger networks of material and nonhuman forces. Ghosh's corpus thus envisions the world as a collaborative process of becoming, where life is constituted through entanglement rather than hierarchy. By foregrounding this relational ontology, *Entangled Lives* positions Ghosh as a crucial voice in posthuman ecological thought and environmental humanities, offering a literary framework for reimagining coexistence, responsibility, and ecological futures in an increasingly interdependent planetary world.

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