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Extreme urbanization and industrialization have become a direct threat to the environment and the communities associated with it. By establishing historical parallels between the lives of residents of the Sundarbans and other cities across the world, Amitav Ghosh's novel *Gun Island* (2019) explores modern issues like climate change, migration, cultural and geographical shifts of migrants and employs myths, stories, symbolism, metaphors, and lavish narrative. This study examines *Gun Island* to show how humans and the environment have traditionally been linked in civilizations such as the Sundarbans, and how, when forced to migrate, this relationship and the people of the land, along with their cultures, dislocate to newer possibilities. The study also looks at how 'the past,' in the form of memories, myths, and traditions may keep a society and its residents intact even when they are in a foreign land. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the global reach of ecological crises to demonstrate how human and non-human lives are adversely impacted when a culture or a civilization collapses.

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The Cry of a Delta: A Postcolonial Eco-Critical Study of Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island

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ABSTRACT

Extreme urbanization and industrialization have become a direct threat to the environment and the communities associated with it. By establishing historical parallels between the lives of residents of the Sundarbans and other cities across the world, Amitav Ghosh's novel Gun Island (2019) explores modern issues like climate change, migration, cultural and geographical shifts of migrants and employs myths, stories, symbolism, metaphors, and lavish narrative. This study examines Gun Island to show how humans and the environment have traditionally been linked in civilizations such as the Sundarbans, and how, when forced to migrate, this relationship and the people of the land, along with their cultures, dislocate to newer possibilities. The study also looks at how 'the past,' in the form of memories, myths, and traditions may keep a society and its residents intact even when they are in a foreign land. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the global reach of ecological crises to demonstrate how human and non-human lives are adversely impacted when a culture or a civilization collapses.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nature critical in humanity's development has sync with the demands of time and age, fulfilled human desires. The unidirectional acquisition of resources from nature has resulted in the damped

economic, social and political conditions of postcolonial societies, thus putting forth an argument for immediate need of its conservation. Upamanyu Mukherjee in his *Postcolonial Environments* (2010) sees Postcolonial as:

Not the sign of a clean historical break between the era of modern Euro-north American colonial domination and that of Asian, African, Latin American and Oceanic national self-determination; but rather as a historical condition of intensified and sustained exploitation of the majority of humans and non-humans of the former colonies by a cartel composed of their own and 'core' metropolitan European/north American elites. (Mukherjee 2010).

While connecting Postcolonial with the Environment of today time, Graham Haggan and Helen Tiffin's essay "*Green Postcolonialism*" (2007) establishes the fundamentals of the two being interrelated, and their connection with cultures of the land in former colonies compared with their colonial masters. For they write, "Different cultures, with very different notions of time, all found themselves on the lower rungs of the ladder of progress, wrenched out of a time of land and ancestry and subjected to the exigencies of Greenwich Mean Time" (Haggan and Tiffin 2007). Left with scant natural resources and a massive population to feed and provide, the resourcefully depleted nations face crisis way harder to deal, "especially in the so-called third world one cannot talk about saving environment while ignoring the requirements of human lives and communities" (Shiva 1989).

Sundarbans, in the east of India, is a place where natural resources, human civilisation and continuous infrastructural advancements amalgamate. The confluence of the Ganga, the

Brahmaputra and the Meghna rivers, 4.5 million human population and more than 2000 species of flora and fauna, it is the world's largest delta plain spread across Bangladesh and India. Ecological imbalances led by modernisation and industrialization result in dying ecology, sinking island and migration. Shiva acknowledges that "...the growth of capitalism, and now the trans-national corporations, exacerbated the dynamic begun under colonialism which has destroyed sustainable local environment and cultures" (Shiva 1989). Stimulated by such ruthless speed of growth, the effects of climate change and global warming are visible across the globe. The places that Ghosh shapes his stories around in the novels are all under serious threat of biodiversity loss. Lakritz estimates that "by the year 2100, 11 cities including Dhaka and Venice could disappear forcing millions to displace because of rising sea level. Similarly, by the same time, the world's oceans will likely lose about one-sixth of its marine life" (Lakritz 2019). "Sundarbans too would experience severe storms, floods, diseases, food security and mass displacement with rising sea level and temperature gains" (Muller 2020).

Amitav Ghosh through *Gun Island* brings the dynamics and diversity of Sundarbans into the literary circle focusing on the human-animal interferences and confrontations. This novel extends Ghosh's call for environment protection and "the need of looking at this newer direction of discourse" (Ghosh 2016) which he had earlier propagated in *Glass Palace* (2000) and *Hungry Tides* (2004), the novels of his transitional years¹. He also examines his earlier established belief from *The Great Derangement* (2016), a non-fiction commentary on importance of global environmental studies and its universality with each human, in this novel.

To imagine other forms of human existence is exactly the challenge that is posed by the climate crisis: for if there is one thing that global warming has made perfectly clear it is that to think about the world only as it is amounts to a formula for collective suicide.

We need, rather, to envision what it might be. (Ghosh 2016)

He talks about "the inability of the present generation to grasp the scale and violence of climate change and posits that this is reflected in the literature of our time, in the recording of history and in the political ambience of our day," (Vincent 2018). After *Hungry Tide*, Amitav Ghosh has begun to address the role of the novel for the representation of climate change more systematically. His narrative in *Hungry Tides* provides:

A perfect imaginative and even mythic expression of the historical and empirical reality of the Sundarbans today, where decades of 'conservation' and 'development' work have produced a drastically impoverished environment where humans and non-humans must engage in deadly competition in order to survive. (Mukherjee 121)

Through *Gun Island*, the emphasis and necessity of the human-nature relationship combining with the histories, traditions and legends of the place are brought to forefront. All living things are connected in a close pact by the subtle yet distinctive comparison and reflection of migration experienced by creatures like snakes, dolphins, spiders, and others as a result of changes in their habitat. This change is one of the downsides of unethical treatment from institutions created by humans, such as dams, refineries, and other industries, and their unchecked and unchallenged supremacy. The change has also been supported by Baruah in Baysal's *Apocalyptic Visions in the Anthropocene and the Rise of Climate Fiction* (2021), where she argues that "humanity has become a decisive geological and climatological force... through the natural becoming, as it were, dangerously out of bounds, in extreme and unprecedented weather events, ecosystems being simplified, die-back, or collapse". (Baruah 113)

According to Rose Deller "Ghosh contends that the contemporary novel, using narrow scales of time and space that rarely exceed more than a

¹ Transitional Years: 2000-2004.

human lifespan, is neglectful of climate change” (“The Great” 2020). Therefore, in *Gun Island* he raises some important questions such as; how humans and environment have been historically connected in postcolonial societies? Why this connection, in the case of Sundarbans, has become an inevitable situation of confrontation while migrating? And, how do environmental issues aligning with native societies and cultures affect the modern discourse on (dis)location of Culture? Ghosh encounters, examines and conclusively tries to provide a solution-driven disposal to all such questions through *Gun Island*.

This paper examines all the major consequences of global ecological crisis as highlighted by Ghosh in the novel and their causing factors across the globe. In following three sections, it analyses the novel to study how humans and environment have an unparalleled bond in societies like Sundarbans and how, when forced to migrate, this connection and the people of the land, dislocate along with their cultures to newer possibilities. It looks at the different ways in which the past, in forms of memories, stories, and legends keeps a society and its inhabitants intact even in a foreign land. Furthermore, it highlights the universal outreach of environmental crisis, and resulting migration, and how when a society or a civilization falls, human as well as non-human lives are severely affected.

1.1 Rise and Fall of Sundarbans

Ghosh’s disposition, with some minor changes, has been constant throughout his writing career. With newer writings of *The Great Derangement* and *Gun Island*, “Ghosh puts together human sufferings, displacement, race-relations, and a strong craving for re-identifications” (Kundu 2014) as the primary driving factors in his stories. From the twenty-first century onwards, Ghosh found a wider spectrum for narrating his stories and at the same time drawing people’s attention towards the atrocities hurled at Nature and the communities associated with it. In an interview with Amitav Ghosh, “Between the Walls of Archives and Horizons of Imagination,” Mahmood Kooria reports that “the novelist’s

approach to the past through the eyes of characters is substantially different from the approach of historians” (“Between” 2013). This is due to the fact that Amitav Ghosh belongs to Bengal and has travelled through different cities and countries to be well acquainted with the cultures, practices and histories around those places. Kooria also notes that “Ghosh’s history is extremely personal but not isolated in itself. It takes other fields like political narrative, colonial imperialism, religion and sociology into account and then the final product comes out” (“Between” 2013).

A dynamic society, like Sundarbans, differs from its larger geographical recognition, India or Bangladesh, in many facets of human identity. Although some smaller communities do manage to get the language, religion and practices of their unified self, or the larger state, the composite Sundarbans on the other hand remained somewhat unattached to the monotonicity (one way flow) of it. Historically, it was a part of Indian subcontinent comprising present day Bangladesh and the Indian state of West Bengal. Mukherjee describes it as:

One of those areas of the world where the lie of the land mocks the absurdity of international treaties, because it is virtually impossible to enforce border laws on a territory that constantly shifts, submerges and resurfaces with the ebb and flow of the tide. (*Postcolonial Environment* 108)

“Evidences of human ingress, in the form of proto-urban settlements, dating back to the Mauryan period, have been highlighted in discussions of Sundarbans’ history” (Pandit 2013). The Mauryan period, which encompassed most of the Indian sub-continent in 321-326 BC, laid emphasis on management of forest classifying them based on their intended use. The Sundarbans was also part of the area managed by the empire. A few centuries afterwards during the time of Indo-Turkish rule (1204-1595), the region is known to be “inhabited by the Bengali Hindu caste of Pod in the west and Chandals in the east, which practiced fishing as livelihood” (Dey 2018). This timeline matches the origin of the legend

from *Gun Island* too, “with a merchant Chand Sadagar, building a city in the Baghmara Forest Block” (Chowdhury 1991). This character interestingly becomes the centre of *Gun Island*, inspired by whose travels Ghosh shapes his narrative and subsequent arguments.

The Sundarbans has traditionally been a hub of the Silk Route where tradition and culture flourished alongside economics. Even after the partition of, firstly, India and then East Pakistan into Bangladesh, Sundarbans maintained an identity of its own. In Ghosh’s *The Glass Palace* (2000), the Irrawaddy River serves as a witness to the materialistic exploitation of colonial times when timber, ivory and precious stones were transported through the river ways to the British Empire. In the *Ibis Trilogy—The Sea of Poppies* (2008), *The River of Smoke* (2011) and *Flood of Fire* (2012) – the ocean is the lieu of maritime trade affecting politics on land, agricultural production and environmental policy making. Ghosh lays bare the colonial intent of the British in the nineteenth century monopolizing the waterways like the rivers and seas to transport Opium from the East to the West (Vincent 2021). *Gun Island* continues to be a contentious border territory where trafficking in people, animals, and goods is frequent while also providing the necessary food, shelter, and raw materials for its enormous population.

While placing the Sundarbans at the centre, Ghosh’s propagation and understanding is two-fold. Primarily, it’s not just Sundarbans being affected because of climate change and its dramatic yet drastic consequences. Secondly, and the most important one, the idea of environment and society being coinciding and co-existing is not a new one as the “understanding of ‘environment’ as an integrated network of human and non-human agents acting historically is derived from a dialogue with a variety of critical traditions across the globe” (Mukherjee 2010).

During the course of the novel as we dwell deeper into the story, the route of continuous oppression and exploitation of Sundarbans lays bare open. Once a glorious centre of trade and commerce as Ghosh recounts, “the Sundarbans are the

frontiers where commerce and the wilderness look each other directly in the eye; that’s exactly where the war between profit and Nature is fought” (*Gun Island* 8), it has become an epicentre of human exodus in the last decade. The delta region, presently, has changed into a barren ruin “where opportunities are minuscule and people are forced with no other option but move (60). The tussle, from the outside, looks insignificant and incomprehensible as to why would anyone want to stay? But to the people who have lived there for generations, have learned through time to know each and every way around the place and are connected with the land in socio-political and emotional manners, it is “an identity they cannot get unattached to” (8). Moyna, Neelima and many others like them have made the Sundarbans and neighbouring areas as their permanent home and just as a parent or a child cannot leave the other one at their worst, The Sundarbans has grown with people to be their family they cannot leave.

Therefore, “the downfall of The Sundarbans from a prosperous trade centre to a damped wasteland is a process which is soon going to be of irreversible nature, if not worked upon, and will lead to greater speed of displacement” (92). Through *Gun Island*, Ghosh has shown how this downfall is also significant with respect to the thousand of species the delta region is home too. A whole community could lose their generational homes, their revered identity, centuries old customs and practices and their place on the maps and memories of the world.

1.2 (Dis) Location of Culture

Ghosh in *Gun Island* propagates the idea of Tiffin where she “[a]rgues the need to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together as a means of challenging continuing imperialistic modes of social and environmental dominance” (Tiffin 8). The local histories and traditions in India vary from places to places but their importance remains ever unmatched. Ghosh uses a legend, particular to Sundarbans, and through it, addresses the modern problems the world face. “Bonduki Saudagar, bangla for gun merchant, is a legendary character whose travels, forced because

of Mansa Devi” (*Gun Island* 5) and motivated by his survival against austerity, shapes the geography and histories of the places he travelled to and from. The story, as the narrator states,

[I]s not unlike that of *Odyssey*, with a resourceful human protagonist being pitted against vastly more powerful forces, earthly and divine. But it differs in that it does not end with the hero being restored to his family but continues till the struggle between the Merchant and Manasa Devi comes to a fragile resolution. (6)

“The climate crisis is a crisis of culture and of the imagination” (Concilio 2017). Ghosh states that the connection between societies, their cultures and the surrounding environment is like a close-knit family, particularly in Indian context. Bhabha, while referring the displaced communities, calls it as a “Gathering” (*Location of Culture* 199). With the ecology of Sundarbans under threat, the lives of whole living population are turned upside down. Ghosh presents this terrible state of affairs identified as “fingerprints of climate change” (Ghosh 2016) and puts forward different consequences their little world is headed towards. Cole reiterates that, “Ghosh connects the issues regarding climate justice and climate refugees to longer-running patterns of inequity in human history”. (Cole 2022)

While deriving the effects of environmental degradation and resulting migration in case of Sundarbans, there is a need to understand how culture is transmitted along with its followers. The fact that all the characters in the novel are travelling and connecting with each other in different parts of the world and yet are able to maintain, amidst all this, a small community and the identity of the place they came from, argues for the need to look at the underlying connection between people and places, “where it concerns human beings, it is almost always true that the more anxiously we look for purity the more likely we are to come upon admixture and interbreeding.” (Ghosh 2016) In theory, culture and its fluidness, sometimes, serve as a problematic idea as their understanding and interpretation change with situations and

conditions they are being looked with. The fluidity of Culture remains ever so vivid only till the time the communities carrying it are travelling from one place to another. The moment these groups reach their destination or takes a halt during the course (new location), Culture invariably becomes centred round the people it came with and in the due course of time, a factor of diversification or division. This means that the culture that came along, invariably and barring exceptions of a miniscule percentage of exchange, does not remain fluid once it stops travelling. So more often than not, it is the population that travels and not culture alone. In the long run, this phenomenon makes the gravity of culture preserved and confined, even in a foreign land. As Bhabha puts in *The Location of Culture* (2004):

The theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity. It is the in-between space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture, and by exploring this Third Space; we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves. (56).

The ecological and economical effects causing migration, in present time, has been put against the backdrop of similar causes taking place 400 years ago. This continuity of migration also resembles the fact that displacement of humans, and their cultures along with them is a phenomenon ever so alive and running today as it was centuries ago, and who knows for how many centuries before that. All the characters, however old or young they may be, are connected through the geographical and cultural shifts their stories go through. From an old and dying Nilima Bose, who was once a fierce adventurer and a social worker, to Deen, the narrator, and from an enthusiastic and interesting Piyali to the reckless Tipu and Rafi, their stories are the stories of the World; their suffering; the universal suffering. Rafi tells about his unpleasant agony through his migration journey, “then the whole journey began; long stretches on the road with occasional

halts at safe houses, in places whose names we never learnt” (*Gun Island* 23). Claire Chambers connects all Ghosh’s stories and points that, “Not only do Ghosh’s works transgress generic boundaries but they also effortlessly cross national frontiers” (Chambers 2005). They carry with them the often-encountered shallowness of humanity but also the resilience people tend to show during the hard time and exemplify the most important aspect of indefinite hope in every situation.

Gun Island legitimises the global conduct of immigration which has been continuously going on for centuries. These movements, effected by politics, economy, livelihood and many other related factors are part of several countries’ long and, many a times, un-noted history. The present-day America, Australia, Britain, and in this case even Italy along with other nations of Europe are formed because of these migrations which are being carried out for all of human history. Speaking for United Nations, Moon notes how, “Migration is an expression of the human aspiration for dignity, safety, and a better future. It is part of the social fabric and a part of our very make up as a human family” (Moon 2016). Moitra comments on Ghosh that, “...he has often explored the contours of the modern secular imagination in his writing and in recent times has turned to the ‘uncanny’ to speak of climate change and the limits of human reason” (Moitra 2022). For most characters in the novel, movement has been a generational as well as a situational event. While explaining the effects of cyclone Aila on the Sundarbans, Ghosh mentions the plight of such displaced people: “Having once uprooted from their villages many evacuees has decided not to return. Communities had been destroyed and families dispersed; the young had drifted to cities, swelling already-swollen slums” (*Gun Island* 49). The already burdened cities thus look for help to cater the needs of incoming habitants.

There is a need to look at these displacements, in relation to humans, from a holistic point of view, and to study the primary causes behind the frequency of their happening. As the narrator mentions in the novel regarding Kolkata, “the city was also a refuge, not only from the bitter cold of

a Brooklyn winter, but from the solitude of a personal life that had become increasingly desolate over time” (3) he mildly touches only the positive or the privileged side of the question. The scope, however, when finding out the reasons for the location or the dislocation of a person or a society and its corresponding culture, opens other related civilizational aspects too to look at. For example, what prompted the dislocation in the first place? Is it a temporary dislocation or rather a slow and continuous but a permanent one? And most importantly, what does this dislocation carries with it?

The answers to the first two questions are easy to provide and understand. It is the third part which has several dimensions to it. According to Piesse, “Dislocation on purely physical matters could be economical, social and political” (“Factors Influencing” 2014). Economically, people are forced to move when the financial conditions around them are damped, when they do not get security of life and jobs and when the resources they work with are depleting. This displacement is imminent in *Gun Island* too, “The Sundarbans had always attracted traffickers, because of its poverty, but never in such numbers after Aila; they had descended in swarms, spiriting women off to distant brothels and able-bodied men to work in faraway cities” (*Gun Island* 49). Tipu cries on such conditions; “what would anyone do? If you’re young you can’t just sit on your butt till you starve to death. Even the animals are moving.” (61)

The social dislocation on the other hand is caused when a society in large is effected at the same time, predominantly when there is lack of basic amenities and factors like social inequality and high crime rate. The situation in the delta is no different as Ghosh writes,

“The exodus of the young was accelerating every year: boys and girls were borrowing and stealing to pay agents to find them work elsewhere. Some would even pay traffickers to smuggle them to Malaysia or Indonesia, on boats” (49).

These factors are not only more important than economical factors but also have farther reach and significance in people's lives. The political issues and causes have clear connection with the local community and identity of a place. The continuous engagement in war activities resulting in immigration, violence, etc are some of the prominent causes for this kind of displacement. While describing the effects of a category 4 cyclone and the refugee problem from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) in 1970, Deen accounts in the novel,

Islands where every tree had been stripped of its leaves; corpses floating in the water, half eaten by animal; villages that had lost most of their inhabitants. The situation was aggravated by a steady flow of refugees from East Pakistan. For several months people had been coming into India in order to escape the political turmoil on the other side, more hungry mouths to the region that was already desperately short of food. (Ghosh 2019)

Political causes combining with Environmental catastrophe serves as a devastating blow in the lives of native communities. Be it the refugee problem or the continuous cyclones, through the life at Sundarbans, of all livings, Ghosh adds the element of surrendered-self against such forces.

The lifespan and duration of dislocation is two-fold, particularly in the Sundarbans, and it depends on the types indicated above. Political and economic dislocations are almost always irreversible, which implies that the impact of these elements on people's lives do not improve over time. For example, the East Pakistani refugee crisis in the 1970s or the ongoing immigration crisis in European countries and ever more recently developed Afghanistan issue. Despite the fact that the loss is irreplaceable, it is the practical reason that persuades people to not return. With stable jobs and greater lifestyle options in the new location, the prospect of returning to the old location becomes less appealing. Social causes, on the other hand, appear to bring communities back to where they came from, as Neelima's Badoban Trust in the Sundarbans and Lubna Khala in Venice are

attempting in the novel through their NGO and entrepreneurship respectively.

Now to answer what exactly does a certain dislocation carries with it, there is a need to look at what does that location i.e., the society is composed of. A society is made up of its people, their spirits, the culture and religion of the place, language, art and architecture, practices, legends, stories, habits and many other big and small pieces. All these elements are passed on to the generations through oral and stories thereby making them the connecting bridge. The importance of stories and their continuous journey through generations is stated in the novel: "I don't remember when I first heard the story, or who told it to me, but constant repetition ensured that it sank so deep into my consciousness that I wasn't even aware that it was there." (6) When a society has to relocate, forcefully or by choice, irreversibly or for some time, all these aspects with a certain percentage of degree move along. Features like religion, language, human spirits and stories move out completely. Whereas art and architecture, habits and social constructs within a society have their dependence and acceptance on the corresponding features of the new place and thus move in less degree.

As a result, the components that shifted entirely and even those that did not, form a measure of differentiation and diversification between indigenous and newly arrived migrants. Deen monitors this division in Venice where working class is mostly immigrants, "there and there – and there, they are all Bengalis and many of them are from Madaripur". (*Gun Island* 163) The treatment and look one gets in a foreign land propagates the feeling of not belonging, as is the example of Lubna Khala and the help she provides to fellow Bengali migrants in Venice with job and immigration when she says, "I feel responsible for these boys. They have no one else to turn to." (158) The issue however is not about what's taken and what's left behind, but about the physical and emotional toil an individual, a family, and a whole community goes through during the process, be it Rafi and Tipu's journey or countless others who take that same path daily

knowing very well the price they have to pay. What gains did they gain and what losses they incurred cumulatively decide what the future of every individual is going to be.

1.3 Beyond Humans beyond Sundarbans

Ghosh follows up the issue of ecological imbalances and puts it in with respect to three different geographies around the world. As Ursula Kluwick comments, ‘In his engagement with the scale of climate change, Ghosh expands the scope of his novel to embrace an extraordinary, and sometimes preposterous, mass of settings, topics, events, and characters’ (Kluwick 2020). While placing the narratives in Sundarbans, Los Angeles and Venice in the novel, he “not only managed to surpass the complexity of location barrier but has also gone beyond the spectrum of seeing life and its sufferings only in Humans.” (Majumdar 2019) Ghosh foregrounds the issue of global warming to showcase the hardships of non-human lives too. Whether it’s the consequences of “increased salinity in the water around the Sundarbans, which causes mass migration of animals, particularly Irrawaddy dolphins,” (*Gun Island* 176) or the temperature-caused forest fires in various parts of the world, which kill millions of animals and plants and destroy indigenous communities on a regular basis, Ghosh argues that Sundarbans and its issues, with varying degrees, are found in other locations too and affects the most developed of the nations just as much as a third world country.

Through the story of a dolphin named Rani, Ghosh shows how animals suffer displacement because of the “changes in the composition of waters of the Sundarbans and increased salinity in the ocean” (92). Insignificant to a human eye, this change in the habitat of aquatic animals, results in the phenomenon of “Fish kill”, where large swamps of fishes are swept ashore to death. Piya globalizes this issue when she equates it with similar events, “it’s happening all around the world with more and more chemicals flowing into rivers” (96). Sadly in the case of Rani it resulted in ‘Beaching’, group suicide of her family. Nonetheless, dolphins of Sundarbans are merely

an example from one region depicting-one aspect of seriousness of environmental crisis.

Going beyond the Sundarbans, the wildfires around the world, due to Global warming, have also become a regular sighting. Just this summer “fires have raged in Turkey, Greece, Italy and Spain, with at multiple lives lost, thousands evacuated and untold damage to lives and livelihood” (Haddad 2021). Deen mentions this catastrophe on Los Angeles stating: “thousands of acres of land had been incinerated and tens of thousands of people has been moved” (*Gun Island* 115). With increasing temperatures, animals too are forced to move out of their natural habitat to the areas of vulnerability. Even in a city as advanced as Los Angeles, the sighting of rare animals like yellow-bellied sea snakes therefore has become a common practice. Cinta mentions their untimely occurrence as improbable or: “things didn’t used to be like this but we’ve had a bunch of such snakes washing up here in the last few months with no idea where they are coming from” (131). These fires and subsequent sightings add to the argument of globality of environmental exploitation and its after effects.

Across the end of the novel, another repercussion of environmental threat i.e., rising sea level and its consequences are evident in the city of Venice. The city has sunk around nine inches in the last century. With “no long-term solution in sight, ‘The Floating City’ is gradually becoming known as the Sinking City” (Isabella 2021) The change in scenery is experience by Deen first hand, while comparing his stay in Cinta’s apartment from twelve years ago to now, he exclaimed how: “of late the floods had become so frequent that the residents had more or less stopped using the entrance as they now went in and out through a walled gate at the back” (*Gun Island* 165) Not just externally though, the city is also being brought down internally by the shipworms, as Cinta mentions:

More and more of these are invading Venice, with the warming of lagoon’s water. They eat up the wood from the inside and have become a big problem because Venice is built on

wooden pilings and they are literally eating the foundations of the city. (230)

The implications of climate disruptions are depicted in Ghosh's work by fuzzy boundaries between water and land. Ghosh, in the novel, "travels from the wild and tangled Sundarbans (a mangrove area that spans between India and Bangladesh) to Los Angeles parched by wildfires to slowly sinking Venice." (Pancholi 2021) and takes into account the consequences on the human-non human lives of the three places due to such catastrophe. He foregrounds the causes behind their occurrence and leaves an open ended discussion for the solutions where growth can be supportive of nature and not the other way around.

II. CONCLUSION

Gun Island is Ghosh's most contemporarily set novel where he comes out from his usual historic narrative and presents the problems of modern times for he brings the global environmental crisis to the literary forefront. His anger and appeal in *The Great Derangement* with the modern writers about the inability to replicate and represent ecological issues finds voice in *Gun Island*. The novel shows how the crisis of migration resulted due to socio-political and economic causes gets worse with ecological issues of global warming, temperature rise and increasing sea level. The situation becomes even more unfortunate when societies like Sundarbans and Venice, for their historic significance, are hit by such catastrophes. Ghosh has presented the plight and journeys of people going through the changes these events bring. By representing different geographies (Sundarbans, Los Angeles & Venice) at one platform, he has made these crises universal. Not only the humans but the animal world is also affected by these crises as this paper has discussed in the case of Dolphins, snakes, spiders and worms. The section "Rise and Fall of Sundarbans" has shown how even a prosperous society cannot stand against the forces of nature. The fall resulting in displacement depicts the dislocation of culture and communities i.e., what exactly a community is made up of and what are the cultural, historical elements that it carries

when forced to dislocate. Finally, the implications of the reaction and reception of global catastrophes around the world shows the universality of events, not just in terms of human lives but with respect to non-human lives too who are as important in maintaining biodiversity as any other species.

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