

Myth, and Mainstreaming the Discourse on Climate Change: A Case of Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

Jindagi Kumari

Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology
New Delhi, India
E-mail id.: jindagi.kumari@msit.in

Abstract

Amitav Ghosh, in his seminal works, *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *The Great Derangement* (2015) and *Gun Island* (2019), addresses the urgency of climate change and sustainability both creatively and critically. His essay, "Wild Fiction" notes the value of stories that "animate the struggle over "Nature" (amitavghosh.com) and explore "fragility of nature" in the "age of machines". In *The Great Derangement* he questions the aesthetics of realist fiction for propagating a human centric style to fiction and distancing narratives from natural environment. Ghosh's own writings show a consistent attempt to forward the concerns of climate change by minimizing the disintegration between nature and fiction writing. For the purpose, the author has evolved a narrative style for "re-imaginings of Nature" through a personalized assortment of narrative techniques such as, myth, history, travelling, translation, and etymology. Ghosh does not couch his stories in the lap of nature superficially, rather entrenches concerns, and impact of climate crisis, in the plot and characters of his novels deeply. In *Gun Island* Ghosh facilitates discourse on climate crisis by using the story of Manasa Devi, the local snake goddess of Bengal, and the legend of Bonduki Sadagar, as whole-souled foundation, and pillar of discourse on climate crisis in the novel. The paper argues, and attempts to examine and illustrate, that the myth brings the discourse on climate crisis to the mainstream in *Gun Island* by "reinforce(ing), enliven(ing) and direct(ing) environmental concern..." (Buell).

Keywords: Climate Change; Amitav Ghosh; Indian Fiction; Gun Island; Myth of Manasa Devi

The flagbearer of fictional discourse on climate crisis

Amitav Ghosh has emerged as one of the flagbearers of literary discourse on climate crisis.

Most of his recent writings, non-fiction or fiction, have raised the issue of climate change. *The*

© Authors, 2021. This Open Access article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact editor-lapislazulijournal@gmail.com.

Great Derangement (2015), *Gun Island* (2019), *Junglenama*, *The Nutmeg's Curse* (2021) and *The Living Mountain* (2022) either highlight or address various aspects and urgency of climate crisis. Ghosh's first environmentally aware novel, *The Hungry Tide*, was written much earlier, in the year 2004. Even in his articles, essays, and interviews, Ghosh, vehemently, and consistently, advocates literature's role in dealing with climate issues. His essay "Wild Fiction", for example, notes the value of "tales that animate the struggle over "Nature" (amitavghosh.com) and explore "fragility of nature" in the "age of machines". His non-fictional book, *The Great Derangement*, surveys stories, politics, and history of modern times with a critical view on the representation and treatment of climate crisis. Here, Ghosh notes Modern fiction's failure to predict or plan for climate crisis as "crisis" of "imagination" (9)

Ghosh, further, explores the reasons for why the "fiction that deals with climate change" is "not the kind that is taken seriously by serious literary journals" (7). He finds that narrating climate crisis in fiction is challenging because "accustomed barques of narration" (8) are incompatible to the "currents of global warming". The discourse on climate issues becomes difficult to recreate in fiction due to complexities of technical language that serves as our primary window on climate change. Secondly, "practices and assumptions" (9) of modern fiction are based on "the relocation of the unheard-of" toward the background. Arts and humanities as creator of "contemporary culture" work toward "generate(ing) desire" and "evoke(ing) an image" of artefact and commodities (as both "expression and concealment" of desire). Novels, in particular modern fiction in Europe, thrived on the assumptions that nature and its components are best suited as props or background to glorify and highlight life and thoughts of human protagonists who were central to the plot. This practice relegated the representation of "improbable" environmental phenomenon towards the background. Even the modern Indian novelists, emulating the Western model of fiction writing, superseded the "old and very powerful forms of fiction" (*The Great Derangement* 18) such as Indian epics, Buddhist Jataka stories and Urdu *dastaans*, of which nature has been an integral part. Thus, the modern writers remained oblivious to climate crisis as the matter of our survival.

In his own fictional works, Ghosh attempts earnestly to make up for this disconnect between narrative and nature, and draws on writing techniques that allow for their unification. His novels introduce, acknowledge, and revive, the use of the "improbable", "unheard of" and

“unlikely” (16) as the key to tell convincing stories regarding nature; environment; its degradation, and climate change.

Myth and Literature

Myths are “traditional stories” that deal with “gods and their activities” (Stith 482) “creation” and “with general nature of the universe and of the earth”. They often incorporate “hero” tales, “explanation of some existing forms in nature”. (484) Legends are traditional tales with historical basis. Sometimes distinction between myth and legend is made underlining episodes involving gods as mythical and those consisting of heroes (performing actions similar to those of ordinary humans) as legend. (*Britannica*) Categories such as “tales, myths, legends and traditions” however, often overlap and defy strict classification and are generally used interchangeably. (Gilbert 99, 105)

Myths have no known origin but owing to their enduring longevity (Gilbert 99) they percolate literature and daily conversations. Litterateurs have perennially exploited myth as a rich source for the plots and other creative elements in their works. Myths offer “themes which can be treated with strong simplicity”, “authority”, and suggestiveness to the content (Gilbert 105) and carry deep significance for person of every age. Owing to their “beauty”, “vitality” and “value” (99) myths are retold, revived and reinterpreted in various forms of literature. Their use might be based on various principles such as; for describing “single historical facts”; as symbol of “permanent philosophical truths” or, to hold that they are “reflections of natural processes, eternally recurring” (Gilbert). Sometimes, myths are introduced in a modern setting with a new twist to them while some writers prefer to retain the “ancient milieu and characters”.

Many of the contemporary Indian (origin) English novelists have been remarkably responsive to the artistic capacities and usage of myths. Salman Rushdie is well known for exploiting efficacy of the fantastical, folktales and legends to reflect upon the “essential human nature” and “larger issues of the day.” (Naz) Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, another notable Indian writer, relies greatly on reimagining mythical stories to carve her fictional protagonists and their worlds. Likewise, Amitav Ghosh sees mythical stories as facilitator for incorporating the improbable natural events in his novels. In *Gun Island*, Ghosh adroitly introduces the popular Bengali myth of the snake goddess, Manasa Devi, and legend of Bonduki Sadagar to

address the impact of climate change on the Sundarbans, in particular, and the world in general.

Manasa Devi is a goddess worshipped popularly in Bengal and neighbouring regions. Claimed to be a folk deity, originally worshipped by primitive people, Manasa Devi has been placed in pantheon of Hinduism and has strong association with mother goddess, Vishahari, prayed to get rid of snake bites. (Jash) Manasa *Mangala Kavya* eulogizes the power and magnificence of the goddess and delineates how a person prospers by worshipping the divinity and suffers by denying it. The novel, *Gun Island*, reimagines Bonduki Sadagar's legendary journey to a place called Gun Island or Bonduk dwip in response to Manasa Devi's fury as an instance of migration in the Little Ice Age of 17th century.

According to the legend, Gun Merchant or Bonduki Sadagar was a rich trader who had angered Manasa Devi by refusing to become her devotee. The goddess had consequently plagued him "by snakes and pursued him by draughts, famines, storms and other calamities". Gun Merchant "had fled overseas to escape the goddess's wrath, finally taking refuge in a land where there were no serpents,". (*Gun Island* 16) This place was Gun Island—Bonduk-dwip. But the merchant could not escape Manasa Devi for long. She warned him that she had eyes everywhere. In the form of poisonous creatures, she kept haunting him despite his hiding in iron walled room on Gun Island. Gun Merchant was, then, caught by pirates who sold him to a trader who sends him to 'the island of Chains'. Realising his endless travails are the doing of the furious goddess, Gun Merchant finally submits to her. When he swears to build a shrine for her in Bengal, she set him free, letting him miraculously escape his captors, seize their riches, and turn homeward. (17) Gun Merchant's shrine in the Sundarbans is believed to be a place with special protective powers since hundreds of people sheltered in it were, once, saved from a calamitous storm miraculously.

Re-imaginings of Nature in *Gun Island*

This story of Manasa Devi is integral to the plot of the novel, *Gun Island*. As the matter of key interest to the protagonist Deen Datta, it allows re-imagination of the present, the past and the inexplicability of nature. Deen Datta, a Brooklyn based dealer of the rare books, on a sojourn to his home city Calcutta, happens to take up a reluctant trip to the Gun Merchant's (Bonduki Sadagar's) shrine in the Sundarbans. The visit turns out to be a life changing experience for

him leading to a chain of improbable events; chance recalls, dreams, hallucinations. Historical research and traveling nudge him further into a thrilling exploration of the legendary journey of Gun Merchant.

Deen Datta's visit to Gun Merchant's shrine provides a sneak peek into the "matt brown and green" landscape of the Sundarbans; its riverbanks. Many passages are dedicated to the place, treating it as a living entity infused with a life of its own. On the steamer, a local ferryman Horen looks for "signs" to locate the right turn to the shrine; when the protagonist falls in the mud he could feel the "slimy, slithering mud brushing against his feet." (*Gun Island* 65-66)

The visit to the shrine also reveals the precariousness of the Sundarbans affecting humans and non-humans alike. The recurrence of storms every few years leads to loss of habitat and farmland of the inhabitants of this archipelago. Impoverishes, they feel forced to migrate to safer places—other cities and countries. Nothing seems safe anymore; water, earth or life: "Hundreds of miles of embankment had been swept away and sea had invaded places where it had never entered before; vast tracts of once fertile land had been swamped by salt water, rendering them uncultivable for a generation, if not forever." (48) It is the trip to the Sundarbans that facilitates Deen Datta's interactions with Pia; a marine biologist working in the Sundarbans. Through their conversations one understands that the composition of the river water has changed for worse due to chemical release by fertiliser factories and rising sea levels. Increasing arsenic content in the streams and salinization of its water pose double threat for marine life; either killing fishes in the river streams en masse or compelling certain species, such as dolphins, to migrate to a different habitat. Desperate to save themselves, dolphins move upstream in the river where they get killed by colliding with motorboats or by getting trapped in a fishing net.

The threat of recurrent cyclone is well recorded in the story of Manasa Devi and Gun Merchant where Manasa Devi represents wrath of nature while Gun merchant appears as an arrogant human who would not heed to the nature's ultimatum. Consequently, he is persecuted with a series of disasters. Through interpretation of the architecture of the Gun Merchant's shrine and study of the etymological roots of the words; and names of places in the legend, the novel pictures the sea route Gun Merchant would have taken to reach Venice in the 17th century. Like in the present time, 17 century too, was marked by unfavourable climatic conditions the world over: "During this time temperatures across the globe had dropped sharply" and several parts of the world "had been struck by famines, droughts and epidemics.." (122) A lot of

unusual events; appearance of comets, outbreak of earthquakes and volcanoes joined hands with conflicts of various sorts leading to mass killings and genocides in several continents as if a shared scheme of destruction between heaven and earth was being executed. In the legend, Gun Merchant is troubled incessantly with storms, snakes, fire, and spiders sent by Goddess Manasa, until he concedes and vouches to worship her. As a controller and representative of natural forces, Manasa must be placated. *Gun Island* records the events in the Sundarbans of the day as a re-enactment of the legend.

“Only in stories do animals speak”

In the context that the anger of nature is chasing humans, non-human is both the central concern and driving force of the narrative in *Gun Island*. The first major turn in the fictional narrative comes when Tipu, accompanying the protagonist, Deen Datta, is bitten by a king cobra near Gun Merchant’s shrine. In delirium, on the way to hospital, Tipu mutters threat to the dolphin, Rani. While Tipu survives, Rani is found beached on the island Gorjontola. Pia along with the narrator rushes to its location but they fail to protect her. “(P)rotection of habitats and species” is one of the chief issues in the novel symbolizing “protection of nature in general. At Gisa’s place in Los Angeles, a yellow-bellied sea snake bites Gisa’s pet dog when they are out for a stroll on the nearby beach. These snakes live in warmer waters but their frequent sightings in southern California owes to changing distribution and warming of oceans. Since his trip to Gun Merchant’s shrine Deen Datta has been haunted by the images of snakes. While flying to Los Angeles he has a vision of snakes and he cries “Snake! Snake!” much to the panic of his co passengers on the plane (118) He dreams of “a glowing snake” hurtled towards him through flames. (119) Strangely, Deen Datta’s visions are also invaded by spiders. While at Cinta’s place in Venice, he visualizes large sized spiders and starts worrying but when people inspect the area they see none. These appearances of the non-human elements are writer’s way to let both the mythical story and non-human voice in the narrative. Even when the characters in the novel travel from one place to another, the non-human presence remains dominant on their minds. Most events happen while they are travelling via or are exposed to water/ways; river, ocean, beaches etc.

“(f)igure(s) of animal” such as dolphins, snakes, spiders, shipworms are often woven with the “critical discussion of place(s)” (Buell 430) such as Sundarbans, Venice, Los Angeles. These sites serve as perfect frontiers between non-human and human often highlighting their

hostility and interdependency— a strange love hate relationship. While Pia cares for dolphins, rivers and aquatic life, and Tipu shares a special bond with Rani, the protagonist gets fearful on viewing snakes, spiders and shipworms. On one hand there is a trait of “biophilia or human connectedness to non-human beings” on the other hand there is a sense of a “basic boundary” between the two, underlining nature as “barely known” to humans. The unique bond between human and non-human is illustrated through several events of danger/rescue, death/survival. Cinta loses her daughter Lucia to road accident. Pia loses Rani to beaching. Gisa's Labrador dies of snake bite. However, in the end, the rescue of the illegal migrants' “Blue boat” and Tipu (in Venice) serves as a final instance of vindication for all the previous losses. This rescue coincides with unusual coming together of various forces of nature; birds and dolphins, through the event of bioluminescence, conveying a message of mutual accommodation and harmony.

In engaging with animals and non-human the writer not only projects them as strong forces, able to communicate through signs and warnings, but also tries to reverse the normative human-non human equation and places the non-human in the primary position in the tale. The role reversal implies a deliberate berating of the self-importance humans attach to themselves in their activities concerning nature. In this regard, the narrator's question whether he was being “dreamed by the creatures whose existence were fantastical to me -...” poses great significance. (*Gun Island* 208)

“The story is not dead”: The “legend could reach out into the future”

The myth of Manasa Devi is both the carrier and bearer of nature's story in the novel. Additionally, it functions as a leitmotif. The story appears to take various forms and lives. It manifests in the recollection of locals of the tide country; on the friezes of the Gun Merchant's shrine, in the protagonist's old research work on Manasa Devi; documents and notes. Moreover, it recurs in the contingency of the lives of people in the Sundarbans where flood, loss of homes, and farmlands are routine events forcing people to migrate, undertaking life threatening, if adventurous, journeys to distant lands.

Tipu obsesses over traveling to Venice after he survives the deadly cobra attack. He tries to escape to Venice from the Sundarbans on the pretext of going to Bangalore. Subsequently, he along with Rafi is trafficked to Turkey via Pakistan and Afghanistan. They get separated before reaching Venice; facing tribulation and humiliation at each step in their journeys. Their voyage and that of the migrating pod of dolphins are identical to the legendary journey of Bonduki Sadagar (*Gun Island* 23) as all three journeys are propelled by a desire to live and thrive. The

link between these journeys appears strongly towards the end of the novel when the narrator's (Deen Datta's) friend, Professor Giacinta interprets the key terms in the tale, and symbols inscribed on Gun Merchant's shrine. An authority on history of Venice she explains how the place described in the legend as an island within an island; "Dwiper bhetorey dwip" (136) is no other than ghetto of Venice. She testifies that Gun Merchant / Bonduki Sadagar lived in the ghetto, in Venice, and roamed its alleys as well as beaches of Venice and that's where lies the root of his name and the eponymous legend. Since Venice's Byzantine name is "Banadiq", Bonduk Dwip in the legend means Venice. This is corroborated further by interpretation of "fantastical place names such as "Taal-misirir-desh" as Misr or Egypt; "Rumaali-desh" as Rumeli-Hisari" in Turkey, and Shikol as Sicily. These landmarks give out the travel route of Gun Merchant implying that the legend was an "apocryphal record of the real journey to Venice."

Climate crisis and migration

The account of Gun Merchant in *Gun Islandis* essentially an account of migration, and risk-ridden travel to a distance land. The novel's adherence to the legend allows ample scope for warning and education about the changing climatic condition threatening survival of the "non-human", "animal" and humans. Whether it is land, river, or ocean, human population and human action has affected all. Pia tells Deen Datta how oceans are rife with "oceanic dead zones"; "...vast stretches of water that have very low oxygen content" (95). These zones have been growing at a phenomenal pace, mostly because of the residue from chemical fertilizer being releases in unrestrained manner. The dead zones have "spread over tens of thousands of square miles of ocean— some of them are as large as middle-sized countries." The destruction of aquatic habitat has forced the sea animals to mass migrate. Rise in sea water level and constantly changing course of rivers in the tide country push the inhabitants to migrate in search of job and survival. Tipu knows the ins and outs of human trafficking networks running in Bangladesh and India. Poverty and uncertainty in the face of threat to survival make him an easy prey to traffickers: "...it seemed as though both land and water were turning against those who lived in the Sundarbans. When people tried to dig wells, an arsenic-laced brew gushed out of the soil....Even fishermen could barely get by ...they counted themselves lucky if they netted a handful of fry." (49) The situation leaves limited options for young

people, boys and girls who were forced to borrow or steal to “pay agents to find them work elsewhere.”

Notably, such phenomenon is not unique to the Sundarbans, even in Venice there are signs of decay and erratic weather. When the narrator visits Fondamente Nove along with Cinta, they fall from the deck into the lagoon water as the piers of the deck are tattered from being infested by shipworms.

Soon, they are swept by shipworms. The moment conveys the extent of the impact of climate crisis and pettiness of humans in face of elemental forces; “How was it possible that in this most civilized of cities, we should be so utterly alone and helpless, so completely at the mercy of the earth?” (Ghosh, *Gun Island* 232) The novel cuts across continents and milieu of the Sundarbans and Venice alike, the two ecologically vulnerable regions, to underline the global impact of climate change.

A Continuing concern

Gun Island's assessment in terms of forwarding climate crisis cannot be complete without going back to Ghosh's first environmentally conscious novel, *The Hungry Tide*. In many ways *Gun Island* can be claimed to be a sequel to the latter book. Many characters from *The Hungry Tide* play important roles in *Gun Island*, where they appear after a certain time lapse. The background, trope and story of the Sundarbans as a precarious frontier between “animal” and “people” were introduced first in *The Hungry Tide* and are used and extended in *Gun Island*. Likewise, *Gun Island* highlights the interdependence of “life on land” and “life below water” in the “ecologically fragile” archipelago to the east India where settlers' struggling with poverty and hunger lack of clean water and sanitization, infrastructure, and preservation—they look up to fleeing the land. Piya, a cetologist from Seattle, first appeared in *The Hungry Tide* (9,11) as a researcher of Gangetic dolphins; their habitat sightings, abundance, behaviour and distribution. But in *Gun Island* Piya's study reaches an advanced stage focusing on the seasonal breeding and migratory pattern of a pod of Orcella dolphins, particularly Rani; a member of the pod. (*Gun Island* 91) Tutul of *The Hungry Tide* is teenaged Tipu, in *Gun Island*, whom Piya adopts after death of his father, Fokir.

Use of the legend as a story within story to show the delicate balance between nature and culture is a feature, too, was first tried by Ghosh in *The Hungry Tide* where he alludes to, and incorporates, poetic translation of the popular legend of Bon Bibi, “Mother of earth” (357) and Dokkhin Rai, the demon in the jungle. In the tale, Bon Bibi saves Dukhey, whose uncle takes

him to collect honey and wax from the jungle and leaves him behind to be eaten by tiger, an agent of the demon Dokkhin Rai. However, when Dukhey invokes Bob Bibi seeking her protection, she saves him. This story contains local wisdom and warning exhorting need to respect the boundaries between forest and humans.

Fictioneering Climate Talk

Likewise, the story of Gun Merchant and Manasa Devi is the central puzzle, and model, in the novel *Gun Island*. The puzzle could be resolved convincingly only with a specialized set of scholarly characters who have sufficient curiosity and knowledge of it. Ghosh creates a right combination of characters and motifs. The narrator is a rare book dealer who works in Brooklyn and belongs to Calcutta. He turns out to have necessary connections to verify, and seriously pursue, questions concerning the legend, history, and climate crisis. Deen Datta's acquaintances are ideally suited to elucidate various aspects of the problem. Cinta, for an instance, is a professor and an expert on the History of Venice, Nilima runs an NGO at the Sundarbans, Pia is a marine biologist studying the migration pattern of Gangetic dolphins, Moyna works under Nilima and is an inhabitant of the Sundarbans and Tipu, Nilima's son, is a Sundarbans dweller exposed to the world outside. These people form the right ecosystem for the fictional discourse on climate change to take centre stage. As an antiquarian, the protagonist records the local inhabitants' versions of the tales of Bonduki Sadagar/ Gun Merchant and Manasa Devi, then, he corroborates the same with his past studies and present observations. Together with a sequence of inexplicable events and interactions with learned friends his hypothesis that Bonduki Sadagar escaped the Sundarbans in the wake of climate change in 17th century unfolds. While this particular line of conclusion requires sufficient imagining and reinterpreting of myth it allows the reflection on climate question to acquire the forefront of the narrative.

Natural is supernatural

A potent effect the story of Gun Merchant creates in the novel *Gun Island* is, it dissolves the distinction between natural and supernatural. There are dozens of instances where natural appears to be supernatural. What begins with the narrator's falling into mud and Tipu's being bitten by cobra near Gun Merchant's shrine leaves a deep impact on them. While the incident motivates Tipu to escape to Venice, Deen Datta starts picking pieces of the story of Gun Merchant's journey to Gun Island as if "possessed". Deen Datta begins dreaming and

Myth, and Mainstreaming the Discourse on Climate Change: A Case of Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

11

hallucinating of poisonous creatures; snakes and spiders, taking these sightings of venomous being as signs and omen, connected, at one level, with Gun Merchant's travel in the past, and on a secondary level, anticipating erratic natural occurrences such as wildfires, (sudden) hailstorm, strange weather (254) in the present. Despite using his "reasoning as an academically trained person", (Dembowski) Deen Datta fails to ignore the nature's signs and increasingly "becomes aware of the relevance of premonition and scope of supernatural experience in human life."

Cinta, while drowning in the water at Fondamente Nove, prays to Madonna and soon they find help. When covered by shipworms, the protagonist thinks earth has sent its creatures to warn humans. Cinta explains how the Black Madonna of La Salute is also known as Madonna the mediator, one "who stands between us and the incarnate Earth, with all its blessings and furies". Interestingly, Cinta hints an association between Madonna and Manasa Devi by highlighting that Madonna's icon (was brought from Heraklion in Crete which) was associated with "Minoan goddess of snakes"(223). Other instances of inexplicable and mystical events occur towards the end of the novel. In Venice, there are groups protesting entry of illegal migrants and the Venetian navy is summoned to stop them. However, the admiral, in-charge for stopping the Blue Boat carrying such migrants, suddenly, decides to withdraw the defence and protect the refugees. His behaviour seems inexplicable. Later, a reporter links his change of heart to his belief; "*an icon of the Black Madonna of La Salute...*" (285) in his "stateroom". Soon after, Rafi, Deen Datta and Cinta face a tornado and are scared for their lives but the tornado disappears magically without any harm to them. At this moment the narrator imagines the figures of the Gun Merchant. Thus, by interlocking natural with supernatural author exposes the "limits to human reason" that becomes apparent in "fleeting instants of catastrophe". The liberal use of the uncanny, probably, conveys Ghosh's conviction that "...religious worldview because of their idea of intergenerational responsibility, could be a better vehicle to mobilizing large number of people to counter climate change," (Chaudhuri)

Conclusions

Often, in literature, myths have become a tool for "reconciliation of indigenous and colonial heritage" (Hunt 185) through an understanding of "earth tie" and dependence on mother nature", "yearning of innocent time", "return to homeland", and "indigenous identity". Manasa Devi, a folk deity worshipped by primitive people, could have been used by Amitav Ghosh to

evoke all these motifs. However, he prefers to use her as a brilliant symbol of “uncontrollability” (Hunt) of nature “for better or worse”.

By constructing both his story and plot, character and background, around the myth, Ghosh creates a strong foundation for discussion on the non-human agent; waterbodies, flood, storms, erratic weather, forest fires, loss of habitat by various creatures embodied therein.

Through his consistent concern and effort to mainstream the narrative voice of the non-human, (Ghosh, *The Hindu*) Ghosh carves a definitive direction for the environmental fiction in India. Undeterred by critical biases, Ghosh asserts the need of, and to a great extent achieves, a corrective aesthetics to call out the ineffectiveness of the (international) climate meets. His novel, *Gun Island*, is a creative warning to alert policy makers and to educate people to work towards protection of the fragile geolocation of Bengal, and similar places elsewhere, by looking into the indigenous tradition; local ecology, and trusting wisdom and stories of common people since “only through stories can invisible or inarticulate or silent beings speak to us...” (*Gun Island* 127)

Works Cited

- Bhattacharyya, Asutosh. “The Serpent as a Folk-Deity in Bengal.” *Asian Folklore Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1965, pp. 1–10. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1177595>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.
- Chaudhuri, Rajat. “Can literature save the planet? Reading *Gun Island* during an impending Climate Crisis.” Reading Amitav Ghosh’s ‘*Gun Island*’ makes us ask if literature save the planet from a climate crisis (*scroll.in*) 18 Aug. 2019. Accessed 9 September 2022.
- Buell, Lawrence. “Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends.” *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 19 no. 2, 2011, p. 87–115. *Project MUSE* muse.jhu.edu/article/430997. September 30, 2020.
- Dembowski, Hans. “Kolkata, New York, Venice.” Summer Special. *D+C: Development and Cooperation*. 12/7/2020. <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/amitav-ghosh-novel-gun-island-deals-global-heating-and-global-migration>. Accessed 9 September 2022.
- Dimock, Edward C. “The Goddess of Snakes in Medieval Bengali Literature.” *History of Religions*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1962, pp. 307–21. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1062059>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.
- Dwyer, Jim. *Where the Wild Books Are: A Field Guide to Ecofiction*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010. (2014): <https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2616>.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2016.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *Gun Island*. Gurgaon: Penguin Random House. 2019.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. Noida: HarperCollins. 2004.

- Ghosh Amitav. "Wild Fiction".
<<https://www.amitavghosh.com/docs/Wild%20Fictions.pdf> 13december>
- Ghosh, Amitav. "The Tsunami of December 2004"
<<https://www.amitavghosh.com/essays/tsunami.html> 13 December 2019>
- He, Chengzhou. "The Wolf Myth and Chinese Environmental Sentimentalism in 'Wolf Totem.'" *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 21, no. 4, 2014, pp. 781–800, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26430507>. Accessed 13 May 2022.
- Highet, Gilbert. "The Reinterpretation of The Myths." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, vol. 25, no. 1, 1949, pp. 99–115, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26439508>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2022.
- Hunt, Alex. "In Search of Anaya's Carp: Mapping Ecological Consciousness and Chicano Myth." *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2005, pp. 179–206, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44086436>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2022.
- Jash, Pranabananda. "THE CULT OF MANASA IN BENGAL." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 47, 1986, pp. 169–77. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44141538>. Accessed 9 Sep. 2022.
- Kapoor, Mini. "For me Storytelling is very closely tied to Uncanniness." *The Hindu*. Posted June 4, 2019. Accessed 7 Sept. 2022.
- Louise Squire & Matthew Jarvis (2015) Literature and sustainability, *GreenLetters*, 19:1, 1-7, DOI: 10.1080/14688417.2014.991134
- The Unstoppable Indians with Amitava Ghosh (Aired: January 2008) - YouTube, "Interview" *NDTV*. Accessed 8 October 2022
- Martinez, Shanae Aurora. "Intervening in the Archive: Women-Water Alliances, Narrative Agency, and Reconstructing Indigenous Space in Deborah Miranda's Bad Indians: A Tribal Memoir." *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, vol. 30, no. 3-4, 2018, pp. 54–71, <https://doi.org/10.5250/studamerindilite.30.3-4.0054>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2022.
- Naz, Sophia. "Reflecting the Human Through Magic Realism, The Craft of Salman Rushdie" *Outlook*. Accessed 3 Aug. 2022
- Parashkevova, Vassilena. "When Dreams Travel: Mirrors, Frames, and Storyseekers in Githa Hariharan's Retelling of 'The Arabian Nights.'" *Marvels & Tales*, vol. 24, no. 1, 2010, pp. 86–98, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41389028>. Accessed 7 Apr. 2022.
- "Relation of myth to other narrative forms" *Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/myth/Relation-of-myths-to-other-narrative-forms>. Accessed 7 Sept. 2022
- *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future* <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/5987our-common-future.pdf>, 23 March 2020
- Rosteck, Thomas and Thomas S. Frenz. "Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of An Inconvenient Truth." 13 Feb. 2009
- Thompson, Smith. "Myths and Folktales." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 68, no. 270, 1955, pp. 482–88, <https://doi.org/10.2307/536773>. Accessed 19 Apr. 2022.

Author's bio-note

Dr. Jindagi Kumari works as an Assistant Professor at Maharaja Surajmal Institute of Technology, New Delhi, where she teaches English Language and Communication Skills to B. Tech 1st year and 3rd year students. She completed her PhD in the field of Indian English Poetry from Indian School of Mines (IIT-ISM) Dhanbad. The areas of her research interest and publication are Indian English Fiction, Indian English Poetry, and Post-colonial Studies among

others. Besides, she has published short stories and poems in Journals such as *Muse India*, *Setu*, *Kitaab*, *Teesta Review* and *The Bombay Review* etc. Dr. Jindagi Kumari has also authored a book on writing skills titled, *Communication Skills: Towards Better Writing*.