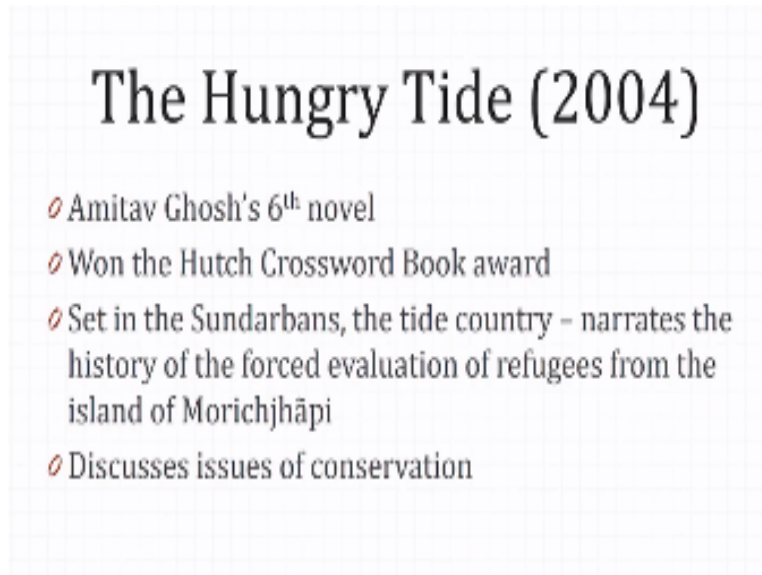


**Indian Fiction in English**  
**Dr. Merin Simi Raj**  
**Department of Humanities & Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology – Madras**

**Lecture – 33**  
**The Hungry Tide by Amitav Ghosh**

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Good morning and welcome to today's session where we talk about the novel by Amitav Ghosh, the hungry tide. In this course, this is the second novel that we are discussing by Amitav Ghosh, the hungry tide published in 2004 is course 6th novel, it also won the Hutch crossword book award in 2004 this is a novel which is set in the Sundarbans which is also referred to as the tide country in the novel.

It narrates the history of forced evaluation of refugees from the island of Morichjhapi, this also discusses certain issues related to environment and conservation, which is also made it hot favourite in terms of discussing this in the context of eco criticism. Ghosh postcolonial stance need to be briefly talked about before we enter this discussion, Ghosh is widely acclaimed as the one Indian English writer who shows no signs of anxiety while talking about India or while discussing anything related to Indianness.

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## Ghosh's postcolonial stance

- Withdrew his novel *The Glass Palace* from the list of contenders for Commonwealth Writers' Prize
- "So far as I can determine, the Glass Palace is eligible for the Commonwealth Prize partly because it was written in English and partly because I happen to belong to a region that was once conquered and ruled by Imperial Britain. Of the many reasons why a book's merit may be recognized these seem to me the least persuasive . . . I feel that I would be betraying the spirit of my book if I were to allow it to be incorporated within that particular memorialization of Empire that passes under the rubric of "the Commonwealth" (From Ghosh's letter to the Commonwealth Foundation, March 2001)

And it is a more than evident in some of the political stances and positions that he adopts, especially in relation to nation and the imperial power, he was in the news for; when he withdrew his novel, the glass palace from the list of contenders for the Commonwealth writer's prize. The letter he wrote to the Commonwealth foundation in 2001 is tellingly sharp about his postcolonial stance.

I read to you an excerpt from the letter, so far as I can determine the glass palace is eligible for the Commonwealth price partly because it was written in English and partly because I happen to belong to a region that was once conquered and ruled by Imperial Britain. Of the many reasons why a book's merit may be recognised these seem to me the least persuasive. I feel that I would be betraying the spirit of my book if I were to allow it to be incorporated within that particular memorialisation of Empire that passes under the rubric of the Commonwealth.

So, this is a very clear rejection of the idea of the Commonwealth and of the idea of a patronising approach towards what is now known as Commonwealth literature, towards the end of this course, we shall be also looking at an essay by Salman Rushdie, titled Commonwealth literature does not exist. These are certain important moments which would help elevating in writing in English to a different status altogether and not just as an extension of colonial writing not just as an extension of anticolonial nationalist sentiments.

We find in the post Rushdie generation, in the post Koch generation, an evident Indian way of writing emerging where it is no longer important to be until the patron edge of the imperial colonial powers.

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## The narrative

- ◊ An old notebook from the past – written by Nirmal, retired schoolmaster (island of Lusibari)
- ◊ Nirmal's notebook read by his his nephew Kanai Dutt
- ◊ Kanai remembers Nirmal's accounts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers who tried to follow the call of Daniel Hamilton, a Scotsman who envisioned an egalitarian society in the Sundarbans (p.53)
- ◊ Story within a story – interweaves the remembered past and the witnessed present

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Coming back to the novel, which is the focus of our discussion today the hungry tide, the narrative is nonlinear and also brings in certain relics from the past, one of the important objects in this narrative is an old notebook from the past written by Nirmal, a retired schoolmaster who written the Island of Lusibari; Lusibari is a fictional creation by Ghosh. Nirmal's notebook is read by his nephew, Kanai Dutt who is also the protagonist of this novel.

Kanai remembers Nirmal's account of a 19th century settlers who tried to follow the call of one Daniel Hamilton, he was a Scotsman who envisioned an egalitarian society in the Sundarbans. This is written in the form of a story within a story, so we find the interweaving and the coming together of 1; the remembered past and 2; the witnessed present, both are brought together and time plays an important role just like it did in the other novel that we discussed the Shadow lines as well.

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# Two major concepts

- ◊ Explores the plight of displaced people ✓
- ◊ How humans share a complex and dangerous ecosystem with animals (dolphins and tigers)

So, we find these different coordinates of time coming together to weave an interesting story from the past and present. There are 2 major concepts which are explored in detail, one; the plight of the displaced people and secondly it begins to address this question of how humans share a complex and dangerous ecosystem with animals. In the case of the novel's dolphins and tigers, these are the two major concepts around which the plot moves.

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## The state, history and individuals

- ◊ The state 'allowing' the deaths of the islanders?
- ◊ Critiques the official version of history
- ◊ Local mythologies that subvert the official and national versions of history

And the relationship between the major characters also based on their attitudes and their responses to these major issues, we find this novel very directly critiquing the state, the idea of history and the individuals which are coordinate, it has a very pertinent question whether the state is allowing the deaths of the islanders more than once we will find the discussion reference

to the official version of history to the official count of the number of deaths in case of anything that happens in this island of Sundarbans.

It also criticizes the official version of history by challenging and contesting this official version with the local mythologies, which have the power to subvert the official national versions of history, this novel, the narrative of this novel is pitched against this official national version of the writing of history especially, the writing of regional histories, in novel like Shadow lines, the canvas was very large.

Ghosh was looking at the idea of the nation, the idea of the boundaries which separate a nation from the other nation and he was trying to critique the idea of this boundary which is also arbitrary in nature. In a novel like the hungry tide, he is focusing the attention he is withdrawing into the nation and looking at the regional, the local to show that to showcase and illustrate that the local histories are also buried deep within, the local histories are also rendered invisible by the overarching importance and the overarching irrelevance accorded to the national official version of history.

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## Characters

- o Piyali Roy ✓ Researcher tracking rare dolphins - Indian parentage but American
- o Kanai Dutt - a Delhi businessman
- o Nirmal ✓ a political radical - died in the aftermath of an uprising
- o Fokir - an illiterate local man - guides them through the backwaters

There are a few main characters; Piyali Roy was a researcher from America who is tracking rare dolphins, she is of Indian parentage but she spent her entire life in America. Kanai Dutt is a Delhi businessman who is visiting his uncle's family, uncle is already dead, his uncle is Nirmal who

was a political radical and he died mysteriously in the aftermath of an uprising, so it is during this visit that Kanai Dutt also comes across this rare artefact the diary that his uncle maintains.

And Fokir, an important character, he is an illiterate local man, a fisherman who also guides them, Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy through the backwaters and there are certain interesting events that would happen which would define and redefine the relations, the relationship between them.

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## Two parts

- o The Ebb: Bhata ✓
- o The Flood: Jowar

The novel is divided into 2 major parts, the first one titled, the Ebb; Bhata and the flood; Jowar. The second part is slightly longer than the first part; there are also sub chapters within each part.

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## The opening chapter

- o A sharp, modern opening - the two outsiders meet
- o Kanai and Piya part ways - brought together again

In the opening chapter sets, the stage, sets the tone for the narrative to follow, it is a sharp, modern opening where two outsiders, the outsiders to Sundarbans; Kanai and Piya, they meet on a railway station and the significance of the Railways is also needs to be talked about Railways being the important symbol of modernity, we find these two outsiders meeting and also parting ways soon after.

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## Personal relationships

- o Piya/Fokir - more than language, culture
- o Kanai/Piya - shared language, culture - but islands apart
- o Nirmal/Nilima - together for years but remain separate islands
- o Nirmal/Kusum
- o Fokir/Moyna - together but distanced
- o Horen/Kusum
- o Moyna-Nilima - similar outlook

But they are brought together midway through the narration because Sundarbans is a space; a real space and an emotional space which brings them together for various reasons. In this novel we find a Ghosh exploring in a rather fantastic way, the personal relationship between the characters, Piya and Fokir; Piya being an American who is visiting India as a researcher and Fokir a local illiterate fisherman, they do not have much in common.

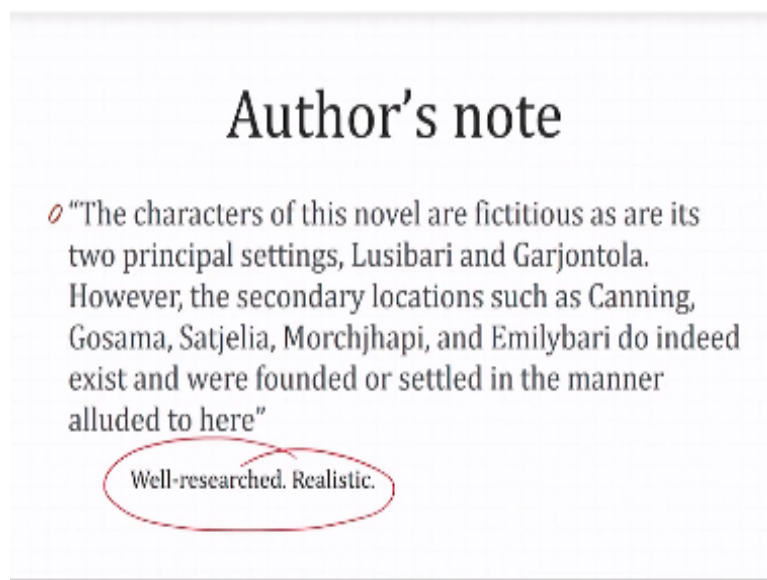
But we find that more than the language and the culture that they do not share, there is a certain kind of relationship which gets forged between them though they cannot understand a single word which they speak to each other. Kanai and Piya, they have a shared language, a shared culture but their islands apart because there is no emotional connect though there are certain instances where Kanai attempts to flirt with Piya.

He also seems to have an interest in Piya but we do not find any kind of relationship getting forged in the narrative space. Nirmal and Nilima were together for many years but they remain a

separate islands and Nirmal and Kusum on the other hand they seem to share an in-depth emotional relation. Fokir and Moyna, they are also together as a couple but they remain distance from each other.

Horen and Kusum on the other hand, they seem to share a certain chemistry, Moyna and Nilima they seem to have similar outlooks, there are these pairs, which we can find throughout this narrative space as of this had been very carefully designed in such a way that these dichotomies will bring out the contrast and the similarities of the various characters.

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The author's note which follows the first two parts is important, it is mostly an acknowledgement of the various people, the institutes and the kind of work with assisted the production of this novel, we find that he talks about this as a well-researched work and a realistic kind of a portrait but he also clarifies what part is fiction and what is not, I read to you an excerpt from the author's note.

The characters of this novel are fictitious as are its two principal settings, LusiBari and Garjontola however, the secondary locations such as canning, Gosama, Satjelia, Morchjhapi, and Emilybari do indeed exist and were founded or settled in the manner alluded to here, this idea of telling the audience how real certain things are and how fiction certain other things are, this something that we noticed in many other authors as well.



We find brief note like this in Shashi Tharoor's novel, the Riot as well, so this is also perhaps a new novelistic trend which is being explored by the Indian English authors to tell the audience directly about the kind of work that they had to undertake to verify certain historical or the scientific details and also tell the audience about the fictional elements which have been incorporated into this otherwise realistic setting and otherwise realistic telling.

Critics have found many things in the hungry tide to talk about were the critical interest in terms of the thematic interest, I find the transformation of different individuals in this specific setting extremely interesting and important, we find a certain way in which the characters are introduced at the beginning but the events which happen in Sundarbans, the events which are related to nature and the way in which it affects the individuals which are caught in that situation is perhaps an interesting thing to look at.

So, before we go on to talk about the other important things, we will quickly take a look at the transforming power that this space in Sundarbans has, Kanai Dutt comes across as an extremely educated well behaved young urban Indian male but we find that Fokir, his relation with Fokir, his instrumental in bringing out the worst in him. There is an instance where Kanai ventures into something that Fokir forbade him to do.

Because Fokir is the one who knows about Sundarbans, he knows the ecosystem well, he knows what is dangerous and what is safe. Kanai thinks he knows more than Fokir because Fokir is only an illiterate fool according to Kanai and when things go wrong and then Fokir response with a smile, Kanai response in an outrageous way, this excerpt is from that section.

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## Kanai Dutt and Fokir

o "Suddenly the blood rushed to Kanai's head and obscenities began to pour from his mouth: . . . His anger came welling up with an atavistic explosiveness, raising from sources whose very existence he would have denied: the master's suspicion of the menial; the pride of caste; the townsman's mistrust of the rustic; the city's antagonism to the village. He had thought that he had cleansed himself of these sediments of the past, but the violence with which they came spewing out of him now suggested that they had only been compacted into the explosive and highly volatile reserve"

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Suddenly, the blood rushed to a Kanai's head and obscenities began to pour from his mouth, he began to send out a number of expletives in Hindi. His anger came welling up with an atavistic explosiveness raising from sources whose very existence he would have denied, the master's suspicion of the menial, the pride of caste; the townsman's mistrust of the rustic; the city's antagonism into the village.

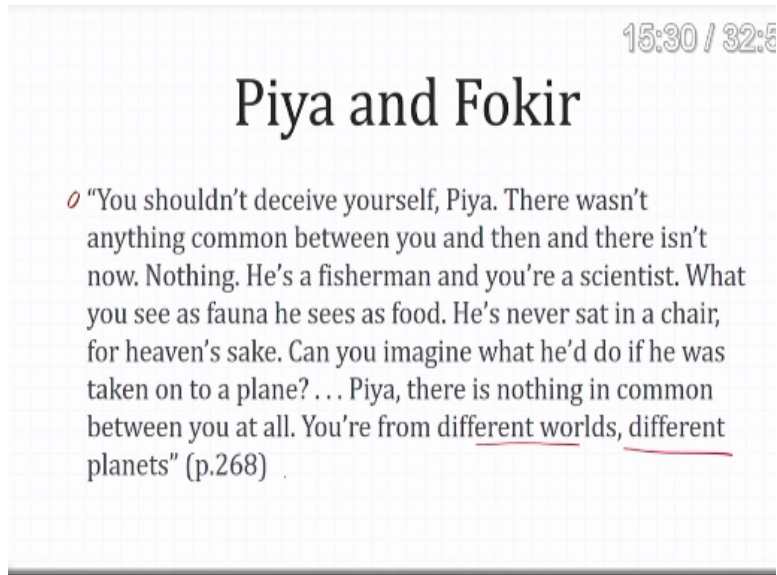
He had thought that he had cleansed himself of these sediments of the past but the violence with which they came spewing out of him, now suggested that they had only been compacting into the explosive and highly volatile reserve. We find that certain elements which the secular modern self of Kanai had managed to hide well especially the hierarchical relation in terms of occupation, in terms of caste, in terms of location, the urban versus the rural.

We find all of those things coming out from a reserve and this revelation is extremely important and I feel that Ghosh has quite skilfully in a very masterful way, he has incorporated this instance to show how sound like Fokir can bring out the worst in the otherwise polished secular self of the Kanai and Piya and Fokir also share an interesting relation. There is Kanai occasionally even feels a little jealous of this chemistry between Piya and Fokir.

And when Fokir behaves in a way that we are never thought he would especially in those instances after the killing of the tiger, we find that Kanai also takes advantage of that situation

and tries to convince and tell Piya again that there is nothing that Piya and Fokir can or will ever share in common, this is Kanai's words.

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## Piya and Fokir

o "You shouldn't deceive yourself, Piya. There wasn't anything common between you and then and there isn't now. Nothing. He's a fisherman and you're a scientist. What you see as fauna he sees as food. He's never sat in a chair, for heaven's sake. Can you imagine what he'd do if he was taken on to a plane? . . . Piya, there is nothing in common between you at all. You're from different worlds, different planets" (p.268) .

You should not deceive yourself Piya, there was not anything common between you and then and there is not now. Nothing, he is a fisherman and you are a scientist, what you see as fauna, he sees as food. He is never sat in a chair for heaven's sake, can you imagine what he would do if he was taken onto a plane? Piya, there is nothing in common between you at all, you are from different worlds, different planets.

Here, you find that the different world that Piya and Fokir inhabit, those differences were not that visible not that important until something momentous, something significant happens in Sundarbans but the moment Fokir response in a way which the urban educated folks like Piya cannot acknowledge, cannot agree with we find that they again become was apart, so it is Ghosh is also trying to at some level tell us that it is maybe it is not really about the individuals alone.

It is also about the context which shape the individual, it is also about certain events which would affect people in different ways based on their social circumstances, based on their context to which they are rooted and about Fokir; Fokir remains silent almost throughout, Fokir's language is not understandable to Piya and he always get to know what Fokir spoke through the translations provided by Kanai.

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## Fokir

- o Almost tongue-tied - not English educated - almost reduced to degrees of silence (Alok Rai)
- o We never hear what Fokir is thinking - only through Kanai's translations

And Alok Rai talks about how Fokir remains all tongue-tied almost throughout, he is not English educated which is also one of the reasons why his voice is denied in this fictional space and he is almost reduced to degrees of silences, Alok Rai points out in the space of the novel, we never hear what Fokir is thinking, we only get to know Kanai's translation while some critics have argued that Amitav Ghosh did not give voice to the subaltern character to Fokir.

It is also possible to say that Ghosh did not attempt to pretend that he knows what Fokir is thinking, there is a certain distancing, there is a certain untranslatability in Fokir's thoughts which Ghosh perhaps understands and he does not attempt to do what he is not very sure of, this is perhaps what Meenakshi Mukherjee also meant, when she argued that the Shadow lines by Amitav Ghosh is one novel which does not betray an anxiety.

Here, there is no anxiety or burden that Ghosh depicts that he feels that the novel will be incomplete if he does not get into the head of Fokir that one thing which he finds difficult to do, he stays away from doing it and that perhaps brings out the beauty of the novel enough more nuance to way because making Fokir as the tongue-tied silent important character, it also brings in, it also accentuates the different ways in which the limitations of translation works.

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# Translation

- o The untranslatability of the local, the regional, the native
  - o "Fokir began to sing, or rather, chant, in a quick rhythm. Piya asks for the translation:
  - o Kanai, said, "But this is beyond my power: he's chanting a part of the Bob Bibi legend and the metre is too complicated. I can't do it"
- o The impossibility of perfect communication – also asserts the necessity to communicate

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Here, we are being introduced to, we are being made alert to the untranslatability of the local, the regional and the native. There is one specific instance where Kanai is unable to translate what Fokir is singing, until that point, Kanai thought that and Piya also thought that Kanai can translate almost everything from Fokir's language to English which is understandable to Piya. In this section, where in this instant, where Fokir begins to sing or rather chant in a quick rhythm.

Piya ask for the translation and Kanai says but this is beyond my power, he is chanting a part of the Bob Bibi legend and the metre is too complicated, I cannot do it, Bob Bibi is the local Goddess worshipped in Sundarbans by the native people. Here, when Kanai acknowledge that this is an impossible complicated difficult task which he cannot do, we are being introduced to this idea that there is an impossibility of perfect communication.

The novel succeeds by acknowledging that there is an impossibility of this perfect communication and at the same time simultaneously, it is successfully also asserts the necessity to communicate, Ghosh is communicating with the reader but he is also communicating the untranslatability of certain local native regional aspects which are also part of this nation and this novel at multiple level, it opens up, an India which is not otherwise accessible to us which is not otherwise translatable to us.

And he also does not make the mistake of claiming that this is also an India which he also knows, which Ghosh also knows and he also does not make the mistake of presenting all of these characters within a shared experience, within a shared culture or within a shared mind space keeping this in mind, I encourage you to understand the many facets of the novel which would also be discussed to you by Nitin, one of our students whose making today's presentation on the hungry tide.

Nitin will be sharing the critical insights that he gained from reading, from accessing the available contemporary scholarship on this novel, the hungry tide. Thank you and now we move on to Nitin's presentation.

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## About the Author

- Born in Calcutta and studied at the doon school
- Studied and St Stephen's college, Delhi University and Delhi School of Economics
- Awarded Padma Shri, Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and Ford Foundation of Art Fellow
- Contemporaries at doon included Vikram Seth and Ramachandra Guha

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Today, I will be talking about the novel, the hungry tide by Amitav Ghosh. About the author; Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta and he is studied at Doon school and for higher education, he went to St Stephen's and he is considered often as part of the Stephanian School of writing and he was awarded the Padma Shri and he is also a fellow of the Royal Society of literature and Ford foundation of Art fellow.

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## Other notable works

- Fiction
  - The Circle of Reason (1986) - Debut Novel
  - The Calcutta Chromosome (1995)
  - The Glass Palace (2000) ▪Hungry Tide (2004)
  - The Ibis Trilogy : Sea of Poppies (2008) River of Smoke (2011) Flood of Fire (2015)
- Non-Fiction
  - Antique Land
  - Dancing in Cambodia and at Large in Burma
  - Countdown
  - The Imam and the Indian (large collection of essays)

Had doon school is contemporaries included Vikram Seth and Ramachandra Guha, his other notable works include in fiction, the circle of reason which is debue novel in 1986, the Calcutta chromosome, the Glass palace, hungry tide, which are being talking about and the Ibis Trilogy, which is most recent work, which includes Sea of poppies, river of smoke and flood of fire. His non-fiction work includes Antique land, dancing in Cambodia.

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## The Hungry Tide

- Proponent of post modern fiction
- There is shifting of time periods within the novel creating intricate subplots
- Topics touched upon : Partition, Sundarban, Morichjhanpi massacre incident
- Receptient of the 2005 Crossword Book prize and one of the final noimnees for the 2006 Kiriyaama prize

And at large in Burma, countdown and the Imam and the Indian which is a large collection of essays, so, I will be talking about the hungry tide which is written in 2004, Amitav Ghosh is mostly considered a postmodern writer and this is a proponent of postmodern fiction in Indian

writing in English and so I just will be brief it almost the book right now, before going into the themes more elaborately.

The novel shifts between different time periods, the novel is mostly set in the Sundarban area and it revolves around the topics of partition in Morichjhapi incident and this incident is not widely recognised now, like there are not many articles or newspaper clippings that are left right now, so most of what he doubts about the incident is considered fictionalised and that is why I think that this novel is can be considered as a blend of fiction as well as fact.

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## Summary and Characters

- Kanai Dutt  
He is a wealthy translator and businessman, who comes to the Sundarbans to visit his Aunt and to read his deceased uncle's journal.
- Piyali Roy (Piya)  
She is an Indian-American scientist specializing in marine biology, who came to the Sundarbans to research the rare Irrawaddy Dolphins (*Orcaella brevirostris*). Piya is friends with Kanai, and Fokir who both help her with her research.
- Fokir  
A local illiterate fisherman who helps Piya research the dolphins. His family is friends of Kanai Dutt.
- Mashima  
Kanai's aunt, who lives in Lusibari and founded the local hospital.
- Saar  
Mashima's deceased husband, and Kanai's uncle who wrote the journal.
- Mej-da  
Owns the boat that the local government gives Piya to use, is also a friend of the local forest guard.
- Forest Guard  
Local man hired by the government to protect the mangrove forests, and to prevent people from illegally fishing.

So, the novels start with Piya and Kanai. Piyali Roy is an Indian American scientist who is specialising in marine biology and she is come here to study the rare species of dolphins; the *Orcaella brevirostris* and Kanai is a wealthy businessman in entrepreneurs come from Delhi to visit his deceased uncle and he just comes there to visit his aunt also who is still alive and in the process, he finds the uncle journal which he will left behind for him to read.

And through thorough read of this uncle journal, he begins to understand the culture of the players and is an uncle's experience in the place and the author uses this journal to explore all the themes of the historical nature of the Morichjhapi incident as well as partition between East Bengal and West Bengal. Fokir is a local fisherman who Piya meets there and Piya does not



experience very symbiotic relationship with the government of the area present which I will talking about later.

And so uses Fokir prominently to help her with the research of the dolphins and Fokir knows how to look at the dolphins because it is mythologically linked with the area where he believes that it is the symbols for the Goddess Bob Bibi and according to her, if he follows the dolphins, he will find the fish and this is how he makes his living. Mashima, is Kanai's aunt who lives in Lusibari and found at the local hospital.

The author is very playful with the concepts of time and space, he does not stick to one time or one space and he chooses to explore them diversely, so that he can show the representation of the people's feelings both in the past as well as in the present and in relation, how the past affected the present and how the incidents have formed a sort of consciousness or you could say, negative consciousness in the present.

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## Themes

- Environment and the issues surrounding it
- Corruption and Bureaucracy
- Responsibility
- Cultural and historical narratives as vital to identity formation
- Past vs present (time and space)
- Mixing of fact and fiction

And he does this through the journal and the present is explored through the people present in novel like Piya, Kanai and Fokir and there is also mixing of fact and fiction like I said which was the first theme I would like to address is the environment in the novel.

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## ENVIRONMENT

“There are no borders here to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea. The tides reach as far as three hundred kilometers inland and every day thousands of acres of forest disappear underwater only to reemerge hours late”

“At no moment can human beings have any doubt of the terrain's utter hostility to their presence, of its cunning and resourcefulness, of its determination to destroy or expel them”

There is a very detailed description of the tide and the area surrounding the tides throughout the novel and he shows this to show the environment is a certain character in the novel, in the beginning itself, he describes how the flora and the fauna intersect and the lives intersect in the novel like for example, the West Bengal Tiger is considered an endangered species in that area which is the Sundarbans which the novel is set in.

But it also keeps attacking the villagers and the tribals and it is not very, they do not have a very healthy relationship with the flora and fauna of the place and yet you have to understand that without the flora and fauna, they would not be able to have the livelihoods which is fishing or collecting things in the forest, so that they can survive. So, one of the main questions is that this theme of environment raises is can; the people of the Sundarbans especially, not exactly the people like Kanai who are quite well educated.

But rather the people like Fokir, can they have a very good relationship with the environment and still function alongside it or it does not mean that for one want to exist, the other should not exist. The social political turmoil also has a heavy effect on the environment that is to say that how the government views the environment in terms of whether to protect it or whether to have the; so the huge conflict in the novel is whether to give more rights to the tribals and let them live peacefully and do whatever they want.

Or is to give more rights to the flora and fauna existing in the area, there are 2 narratives, which clearly highlight the importance of the environment in this novel. One is Nirmal's journal of course and one is Piya's expedition and these 2 narratives implicitly highlight the issues of conservation in the novel, yeah, there is a lack of consciousness of the people because it is not been able to develop because it is a only the environment that is prominent in these kind of areas.

And whatever decisions a people make are based on the environment, so conservation is also the theme that he touches upon very explicitly in the novel, towards the end, when Fokir dies and Piya goes back to Calcutta to reflect on her entire expedition and the nature of her trip, she decides that she has to do something, so that she can justify her trip and she comes back and she forms an ecological foundation for the conservation of this dolphins as well as for the betterment of the society which exist in the Sundarbans.

And she names this very symbolically, the second theme I will be talking about is corruption and how bureaucracy and corruption intertwined in the novel and how they affect each of the characters.

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## Corruption

- Lack of education and illiteracy
- Piya faces several problems despite knowledge
- In the end only gains help from fokir

So, even though Piya comes there as a very educated person who was a purely academic endeavours in mind, she has to collide with the government to make certain decisions like for example, just to get permission to go out, she has to get a board and she has to talk with the

forest guard and these people are not very helpful because immediately, they do not want to help somebody who is like; in the novel, it is described how they look at a short hair, the way she dresses.

And they immediately form a dislike towards her and they do not want to help her but the only person who actually helps her for the sake of helping her throughout the novel is Fokir, who is a tribal, and who is a local, who has no responsibility or any obligation to help her, how he addresses is it a lack of education and illiteracy. Fokir's wife is constantly worried throughout the novel about how, she has a fear of how our own child is going to end up like Fokir and she does not want that.

He hints that the the corruption and bureaucracy in the place is what is the main reason for the lack of schools of the lack of hospitals which has led to this lack of education and literacy in the Sundarbans areas.

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## Cultural and historical narratives

"They called it a resettlement , ' said Nilima, `but people say it was more like a concentration camp, or a prison. They were surrounded by security forces and forbidden to leave. Those who tried to get away were hunted down"

"Thirty police launches circled the island, thereby depriving the settlers of food and water; they were also tear-gassed, their huts razed, their boats sunk, their fish and tube wells destroyed, those who tried to cross the river were shot at... several hundred men and women and children were believed to have died during that time and their bodies thrown into the river"

The next point I will be talking about is cultural and historical narratives and how they play an essential role in identity formation of the different people in the novel, they called it a resettlements said Nilima but people say it was more like a concentration camp on a prison, they were surrounded by security forces and forbidden to leave, those who tried to get away were hunted down.

So, this is a direct reference from Morichjhapi incident, so I will just briefly inform you about what the incident was, in East Pakistan or today's Bangladesh, there was a struggle between the higher class and lower class, Hindus and the government of East Pakistan chose to give resources and chose to highlight the needs of the higher class Hindus in that area and so the lower class Hindus felt that this is not a safe place for them to stay back in East Pakistan.

So, they choose to leave East Pakistan and migrate to Sundarbans and West Bengal, so that they can have a better life, played; they faced a worst played when they came here because the government of India would choose not to help them rather they set that they are not refugees rather they are trained to incorporate our rate of lands, millions of these, not millions, thousands of these people, in the novel it says around 15,000 to 30,000.

So, around 15000 to 30,000, the people who were left to starve because the government shows not to recognise their status even as refugees, so they were just left to starve and like it is described in the passages, they were tear gassed, their huts razed basically, the government did not want them, because they were low class Hindus and there is a religious undertones and also there is undertones that they feel that these people are infringing upon the rights of the tribals and the flora and fauna of the Sundarbans.

And so they did not give them the rights that they deserved and they asked them to leave and when they did not leave, they almost intermittently forced them to die, they would also like to argue that cultural and historical narratives form a very important part of the identities of the different people that the novel has made out of, whereas people like Fokir, their entire identity is shaped by this incident.

He has a sense of belonging to this Sundarbans which Kanai or Piya do not experienced, since they do not have any agricultural bearings, whereas Fokir he has to be there, he has already decided that he is a part of that place, the Government or Kanai look at him as a refugee but Fokir looks at himself as a citizen or a part of the Sundarbans and these are all because of the cultural and historical narratives that have been interwoven and shown in the novel.

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## Past vs Present

- Kanai vs piya and fokir
- Understanding of uncle's journal vs piya's modern day struggle

I would also like to talk about how the past versus the present and how these 2 spatial ethical contexts are interpolated in the novel, so the past is obviously portray through Kanai through his uncle's journal versus Piya and Fokir in the present and through the uncles journal, and Piya's modern day struggle, we can understand how the past is represented versus how the present is represented and how the present can be seen as a product of the past in the novel.

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## Mixing of fact and fiction

- Involving of myths and local tales to tackle real issues

"As with many of her peers, she had been drawn to field biology as much for the life it offered as for its intellectual content- because it allowed her to be on her own, to have no fixed address, to be far from the familiar, while still being a part of a loyal but loose-knit community"

So, the next point I will like to be make thing is the mixing of fact and fiction in the novel, so there are many local myths and tales that used to tackle real life issues although, it is not exactly the same. There is a Goddess indeed in the village, not the village, the delta of Sundarbans called

Bob Bibi who is very closely linked to all the animals like the dolphins or the tigers and so this leads to an imbibe sense of conservation with the tribals, which the government chose not to understand.

And the government can only see it in black or white, they either look at it as conserving the environment or helping the tribals, whereas the tribals already have a sense of nature due to the history and due to this mythological perspective. Thank you.