

THE HUNGRY TIDE: CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY EN ROUTE FROM ANCIENT TEXTS TO MODERN FICTION TO HUMANITY

YADAV SUMATI*

ABSTRACT. In the wake of religion's influence in the climate discourses gaining momentum globally, this paper highlights how environmental/climate fiction can effectively be a powerful mediating tool to disseminate the ecological wisdom and relevance of our mythologies. Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* termed as a "canonical text for environment critics" by Greg Garrard, is a Hindu mythology informed novel. A close eco-critical examination of this novel reveals Hindu myths at the base of an embedded ecology of the native inhabitants of the Sunderbans islands. Applying Magpie like sorting method in identifying traces of myth oriented attitudes and practices in the novel, the study establishes that if extended this eco-mythological influence can be exerted beyond particular ecosystems, and towards encompassing the larger canvas of human existence. Having observed the visible signs concurrent to Joseph Campbell's vision of a new, living contemporary mythology, the study seeks to set parallels between these integrative concepts with the Protagonist of the novel, Piya's model of a Conservation project. The paper caveats the discussion with an acknowledgement to the extremities our religious-mythological beliefs can draw the vulnerable minds to. However, along these lines, the qualifications of our religious/legendary mythologies and the discerning capabilities of human mind are relied upon to let art provide a gateway to our ancient wisdom for identifying and address the pressing issues of concern to our planet's well-being.

KEYWORDS: fiction, climate, well-being, contemporary mythology

O Mother Earth. Sacred are thy hills, snowy mountains and deep forests. Be kind to us and bestow upon us happiness. May you be fertile, arable and nourished of all. May you continue supporting all people and nations. May you protect us from your anger. And may no one exploit and subjugate your children (Prithvi Sukta, *Atharveda* 12.1.11).

Guys, the ice caps are melting now. Where are those stories? (Chris Ross, review to Mark Martin, ed., *I am with the bears*)

Although India has frequently been prone to some or other kind of natural disaster (landslide, cyclone, cloud burst, drought, earthquake, forest fire,

* YADAV SUMATI (PhD) is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at PG Govt. College for Girls, Chandigarh, India. Her area of interest include Mythology, Theatre, and Cinema Studies, with an accent on their therapeutic impact on human life. Email: sumati05@gmail.com.

flood, hailstorm, landslides, epidemic, frost, cold wave and heat wave, etc.) due to its diverse geological circumstances, the increased frequency, volatile pattern and cataclysmic impact have put many factors under scanner. While amid the alarming din of Whys, Hows, Wheres and Whens of the Environment/Climate/Meteorological/geological scientists globally, people are still struggling to rehabilitate mentally to the unpredictability of catastrophes under/upon/above the ground, and the Indian think tanks of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) are busy assessing and addressing the hazards, the *Karma* theory in common public discourse hints at a strange phenomenon: *Kaliyug aa gaya* (Kaliyug has arrived). In Hindu mythological record of the evolution of earth, 'Kaliyug' is the last of the four Hindu mythological era (*yug*) culminating in *Pralaya* (End of the World). It is the age of a gradual process of physical, behavioural, moral and spiritual decrepitude. And this contextualisation of this Hindu cosmological age goes for any kind of anomaly witnessed in personal, social, environmental, religious or political behaviour. This contextualises youth disorientation, exceeding materialism, unethical and criminal bull-doing of natural habitats, societal deterioration, religion fanaticism/skepticism, suffocating corruption, and the destructive weapons of the revengeful nature.

That man has overestimated his potential and has now to be set right through such wrath of Gods is the laymen perception in India about the natural phenomenon of Global Warming resulting in Climate Change leading to unstable seasonal cycle which further sets a process of ecological imbalance rendering this already exhausted earth a scapegoat in the Man versus Nature battle of supremacy. Interestingly, it is this apparent irrationality of our mythical and mystical perception which has gained a real momentum in the wake of growing concern for the fast deepening environmental crisis. Fluctuating atmospheric pressure, erratic seasonal patterns and dwarfing powerlessness before portentous recurrence of natural blows has compelled even scientists to align their enquiries into these phenomena with the corresponding discourses of other streams of knowledge as well. Moreover, by all accounts, the enormity of it forbids us to assign the reason to the natural process of generation—degeneration-regeneration like the glacial-interglacial periods to the natural process of geological temperature reduction and increase. "eminent scientists are suggesting that science alone is not enough to solve the planetary environmental crisis and that we must recreate for ourselves a sense of place within the biosphere that is steeped in humility and reverence for all life" (David Suzuki, in Fowler-Smith, http://louisefowlersmith.com.au/-tree_veneration.pdf).

A holistically integrated and interdisciplinary perception on cosmological, evolutionary, anthropological, sociological, psychological queries is sought now. Significantly, mythological field happen to be the only common junction

for everyone to board the train of cultural/psychological/conceptual/factual clues to their destination. The relevant wealth of literature available in physical/virtual libraries prove that mythological concepts/archetypes/patterns have become the yardstick to pit for or against a culture specific world-view. Even Darwin's Evolutionary Theory could not escape their influence and "implied a new [creation] myth of the past" (Berry, in Gowan Dawson, 2007: 43). Lynn Townsend White, Jr., stated one basic truth in his contentious essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis": "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion" (Lynn, 1967: 1203-1207).

The recent developments in the ecological field have necessitated a recourse to mythologies. Ecological crisis is a universal concern which encompasses every human being and dissemination of knowledge, awareness and accountability for all is required. Pure/applied/social scientists have tapped the right spot, the sensitivity of people towards their respective religions/mythologies; to re-read them from ecological perspective to revisit and revive their respective world-views. And that has proven effective as well: the kind of religious involvement we see today in re-orienting people towards restricting excessive consumption of things directly/indirectly responsible for aggravating the greenhouse effect, and thus help in mitigating the catastrophic impacts of global warming. The recognition of the potential of literature to influence and shape ideologies has naturally necessitated its role in generating mass ecological conscience by wearing in ecological facts. Consequently, they have a new yardstick to be measured: eco-criticism that grades them according to their portrayal of human-nature relationship. I extend the definition of 'literature' to include the ancient literature of various cultural mythologies also, being conscious of its fundamental role in forming civilizations.

According to Cheryll Glotfelty, "the ecocriticism taken on Earth-centered approach for the study of the literature [...] Ecocriticism expands the notion of 'the world' to include the entire ecosphere. If we agree with Barry commoner's first law of ecology, 'everything is connected to everything else', we must conclude that literature does not float above the world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system, in which energy, matter, and ideas interact" (Glotfelty, 1996: xix). Seen from the critical lens of ecocriticism, Hindu mythology, with a traditional oral/written literature ranging from the Vedas (1500-1000 B.C.)/ Upanishads/Purnas/Manu-smiriti/epics to Arthshastra to Meghdootam/ Abhigyanashakuntalam to endemic indigenous records, are widely known to be effectively eco-centric. Vishnu Sharma's Panchtantra is a perfect example of animism. "Ether, air, fire, water, earth, planets, all creatures, directions, trees, plants,

rivers and seas, they are all organs of God's body; remembering this, a devotee respects all species" (*ŚrīmadBhagavata Mahāpurāna* 2.2.41).

This ecocritical potential of allegorically represented human-nature relationship has been stated in the mythological archives; organised or unorganised religious/folkloric/legendary records. Keeping the time-specific way of representation in view, the eco-psyche of ancient Hindu seers and writers has been recognized and has continued to influence people since then. Literature on the versatile relevance and testimonials of Hindu mythology lies in abundance globally. The limited scope of this study allows citing only a few examples from writers of conservationist view: From the recognition of the astronomical and mathematical concepts of Bhaskara and Aryabhat, the well-known indulgence of C. G. Jung, a psychologist and Joseph Campbell, a mythologist is well known. Noted physicist Fritjof Capra in *Web of Life* asserts that "In Hinduism, Shiva the Cosmic Dancer, is perhaps the most perfect personification of the dynamic universe... The metaphor of the cosmic dance thus unifies ancient mythology, religious art and modern physics" (azquotes.com).

Kapila Vatsyayan, renowned Indian scholar of classical dance, theatre, architecture and art historian, writes on the embedded ecology of Hindu myths in her extensively informative article, *Ecology and Indian Myth* and seeks "to revive the collective psychical memory of this heritage, to draw attention to the myths, art and ritual, science, religion and philosophy in India, the strategies through which this holistic worldview of ecological balance was articulated." Armed with the metaphoric but logical proofs, she emphasises that, "The work of scientists, programmes of afforestation, rural and urban sewage systems have only to reach out for support and reinforcement in Indian art. Indeed, Indian architecture, sculpture and painting is the most effective, aesthetically pleasing, symbolically loaded message totally contemporary and valid statement of the ecology and concern—if only it could be utilised" (ignca.nic.in). Vandana Singh, an environmentalist, physicist, and the Hindu eco-theological author of numerous short stories like the climate change based *Indra's Web* sees the epic Mahabharata as climate change "huge saga with hundreds of smaller stories interspersed with the larger one... cosmic and local implications of great events, and small events ending up to be of enormous significance" (strangehorizons.com).

Sthaneshwar Timalsina in his essay "The Body of Goddess, Eco awareness and Embodiment in Hindu myth and Romance" analyses the "embodied cosmology and ecological vision" in Hinduism (in Deepak Shimkhada, and Phyllis K. Herman, eds, 2008: 273). Also, Klostermaier in his essay "Hinduism, Population and Environment" tells how Hindu traditions contain deep ecological wisdom and the seed of ideas that might be developed into a contem-

porary ecology... (in Harold Coward, ed., 1995: 150) and Indian tribes “constitute ecological isles of sustainability” (Coward, 1995: 151) living by their myths. In *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*, Pankaj Jain tells about the ecological activism born of *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu communities* (2011: 4). Meera Baindur also, in her book *Nature in Indian Philosophy and Cultural Traditions*, explores the environmental philosophy of Indians as a source of “ecological consciousness” (2015: 122).

Prasenjit Duara’s *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future* a work of “historical sociology considers alternative approaches and resources in Asian traditions—particular of China and India” (Duara, nus.edu.sg). He favours “the capacity of culture to create personal and collective commitment, a problem of hope and sacrality [...] the transcendent or utopian truths they propose with symbols and rituals of sacred authority... no movement of major social change has succeeded without compelling symbols and affective power (Duara, in Ghosh). Going by the Hindu eschatology, the current age phenomenon of climate change cannot be assigned only to the Universal law of cyclic process of Creation, Sustenance and Dissolution, but to a greater extent it is anthropogenic downward spiral of values. Moral degradation go hand in hand with geological and geographical erosion when majority of people are:

reservoirs of mental distress, disease, old age, destruction of religious principals, sorrow, lamentation and fear... misguided by the principal of time, very restless by nature, full of lusty desires, extremely sinful, very and violent... use religion as a means of livelihood... people in general will simply become hypocrites, liars, and cheaters... the earth will restrict the production of food grains, the currents of rivers will flow very rapidly... clouds will shower rains very irregularly and the land will not yield sufficient crops... in the third quarter of kaliyuga, there will be an upsurge of unwanted population... mother earth... (will) become emaciated due to great distress (Kalki Puran, 1:22-37).

The suffocating pursuits of possessions, predatory industrialism, diminishing world resources and reducing wildlife habitats are testimony to that. Despite the apocalyptic view of futurity, Hindu mythological hymns nowhere tend to fatalism; in fact there’s seen a vision of health, prosperity, harmony and peace through disciplined lifestyle: “Oh lords of bliss and vitality! Drive away the distress from our home in all the directions! Suppress the calamities at far itself! Let here be prosperity and glory!” (*Rig Veda*, 6.74.2)

Hindu cosmological view projects us still thousands years away from Dissolution but the rate at which rampant abuse and misuse of nature is going and are bypassing the visible consequences, we are accelerating the process. Still, although modern consumerist culture has had a debilitating effect on

the spiritual constitution of man and retrieving the natural loss it has incurred is impossible, the resultant impact can surely be moderated through conservation policies, campaigns and field activities. Christopher Manes aptly says that “to regard nature as alive and articulate has consequences in the realm of social practices. It conditions what passes for knowledge about nature how institutions put that knowledge to use” (quoted in Philippon, 2004: 340).

The environmentally concerned souls have attested it. Religious, legendary and folk tales have proved to be a great mechanism in modelling climate sustainability. Efforts in that direction are on internationally, nationally and locally. United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other conferences on environment and sustainable development, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Earth Charter Initiative, Forum on Religion and Ecology, worldwide NGOs, Alliance of Religions and Conservation, various Religious teachers/ preachers/ saints and their associations, movements, declarations are indicative of the urgency of addressing this ‘cultural issue’ from a comprehensive ethical perspective. In her enlightening essay titled “Water, Wood, and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Traditions”, Vasudha Narayanan digs “resources in the Hindu religious and cultural traditions that can inspire and motivate Hindus to take action” to find out if “the many Hindu philosophies and communities value nature and privilege the existence of plants, trees, and water?” She comes up with a positive answer and goes on enlisting various supporting examples from ancient Hindu texts, traditions, philosophies, and ideologies regarding the ways in which “the problem of ecology has been addressed” through sacralising the nature: Earth, Air, Mountains, Rivers, Forests, and their inhabitants. Taking Hindu concept of Dharma in its right context as “righteousness, set of duties”, not as “religion”, her analytical study introduces “Hindu Dharma and Artha text and practices as resources of ecology”, wherein eco aestheticism, laws have been set against environmental pollution (Manu Smriti) and provision of punishment against damaging the ecosystems are mentioned (Kautilya, amacad.org).

Although majority of Indian have been rendered intellectually bankrupt in this regard, conservation oriented tradition of India still underpin the belief system of the indigenous inhabitants of our diverse bio-spheres where they share a symbiotic relationship with their surroundings and maintain what we call “sustainable development” formula permeating their local rituals and myths. Their philosophy is: “Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong” (Sri Isopanisad, I).

The Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) is also losing base due to the depressive predicament the onslaughts of modern industries have pushed its possessors in. The official website of C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre (CPREEC), a Centre of Excellence of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India lists the ecologically critical Cultural heritage and sacred sites, with informative articles on sacred, animals, gardens, groves, mountains, rivers, water bodies, plants, sites, caves, and seeds. There are thousands of such ecosystems in India whose natives maintain the interdependence and interconnectedness of deep ecology of what Capra names “Web of Life”.

For nature, as we know, is at once without and within us. Art is the mirror at the interface. So too is ritual; so also myth. These, too, “bring out the grand lines of nature,” and in doing so, re-establish us in our own deep truth, which is one with that of all being (Joseph Campbell, 2002: 101).

Interestingly, thanks to the spread of eco-prefixed inquiries like eco-criticism, the modern literature, especially fiction has also started to be seen as environmentally informed. Adam Trexler argues that the novel has become an essential tool to construct meaning in an age of climate change. “The novel expands the reach of climate science beyond the laboratory or model, turning abstract predictions into subjectively tangible experiences of place, identity, and culture” (Adam Trexler, 2015: introduction). Seen from subaltern lenses, myths in India, as elsewhere, have become the victim of cultural hegemony where those in power, the politician cum Industrialists cum cultural mediators appropriate the place of cultural property in our lives and thus render its intrinsic value as that of the “Other”. To re-navigate the ecological wisdom of mythology to the masses, the onus now is fiction, with its mass-appealing potential, act as a redemptive tool for our culture’s ancient histories to mine out the precious ore and process it to a shape fitting this goal. In fact the new genre, climate fiction, is solely centred upon the climatic concerns and their impact on the bio-spheres. “New challenges from globally spreading pollution, wildlife extinction, climate change and increasing environmental injustice to vulnerable communities in the global south has stimulated poets and fiction writers to increase their attention to environmental dangers” (Westling, 2013: 106). Ghosh is one of them.

Interestingly, Amitav Ghosh, himself an anthropologist, is very vocal about anthropogenic climatic crisis and advocates the power of myths to address this cause. Echoing Nathaniel Rich’s call for “a new type of novel to address a new type of reality” and Barbara Kingslover’s necessitation of “another way to bring information to people” to “understanding the scientific truths about the world” (climaterocks.com). Ghosh suggests “a different, non-programmatic response to climate change: a re-acquaintance with the ancient

and religious ideas of virtue and its renaissance in the field of virtue ethics... an apologetic for why the cultivation of virtue is an appropriate response to the challenges of climate change (Ghosh, historyofthepresent.org). Modern fiction, before the recent onset of Climate Fiction (cli-fi), excluding the future-based science fiction, contextualised mythology and nature both but for effecting some magic-realism, romanticism or aestheticism, not situating them in the narratives of the present milieu as a subtle means of commentary upon it. This essentially applies to the present global crisis which according to Ghosh is “The Great Derangement” (wordpress.com); the catastrophic result of the excessive pursuit of modernity, and calls for literature to be the bridge for the latent ecological archetypes in our “collective unconsciousness” (Jung) to pass into our Consciousness. Besides, the mirror of literature is like films, an effective media to navigate our thinking through their (re)-presentation. It is true “the challenge for the contemporary artist is to rediscover sacredness in the world and to initiate a new cultural coding for the ecological age that will aid in the development of an age of ecological awareness/ concern” (Fowler-Smith). Interestingly, the scope of imagination-powered narratives renders authors the liberty to venture into spaces where, “in order to mobilize people the strictly scientific and apocalyptic rhetoric are combined with appeals to religious sensitivities” (Nugteren, in Barbara Schuler, 2014: 34). Ghosh wonders: “If you are from my part of the world, climate change hits you in the face. What is of much interest to me is why the arts, which are meant to be in the avant garde, have been so slow to recognise this. It is a profound challenge to all our procedures” (theguardian.com). Ghosh “argues that despite a long history of human artistic engagement with the “earth as a protagonist” in social narratives, nonhuman actors are strikingly absent in the contemporary novel... that humanity needs a compelling alternative to this idea and that artists and other actors in the cultural sphere need to think creatively about what these alternatives might look like and how they might be enacted” (wordpress.com).

Having the first-hand experience of terrestrial life and aquatics in Sunderbans, Ghosh provides an answer to his own perplexing question “If there is anything distinctive about human beings, as a species, it consists, I believe, in our ability to experience the world through stories” and wonders “What then are the tales that animate the struggle over Nature that is now being waged all around the world?” (Wild-Fictions—WF, outlookindia.com) His novel, *The Hungry Tide*, is part of such refined climate fiction which weaves mythology, history and current planetary crisis together and validates myths as a shaping tool of an environmentally aware unconscious and a comfort-corner, especially for the indigenous communities stuck in an existential crisis. A close inquiry exhibits the multi-level workings of mythological concepts in the novel. Set in the ecologically and geographically dynamic and sensitive

archipelago, the tide country of Sunderbans, it is a unique narrative. It unfolds the circumstances following the arrival of an NRI cetologist, Piya in Sundarbans for her research on Gangetic & Irrawady Dolphins, coinciding with the visit of Kanai, a cosmopolitan translator, to his aunt Nilima who runs an NGO called Badabon at Lusibari, an island. Parallel to Piya's venture, the note-book of Nirmal, Nilima's idealist husband, keeps us informed with the mythological and historical moulds that have cast the islander's set of ethics and saturates their "lived experience" (Ghosh, WF). Ghosh does like the *Sutradhar Suta* (narrator) ancient stories, Nirmal re-counts both the mythological and historical Creation stories of the islands out of which, the former has taken over as a dominant discourse for the inhabitants. Found in the texts, "Bon Bibir Karamoti or that Bon Bibi Johuranama (The Miracles of Bonbibi or the The Narrative of Her Glory)", it is the tale of Bonbibi (the lady of the forest), the guardian spirit of the islanders, who, assisted by her brother Shah Jongoli, defeats the demon Dokhhi Rai (disguised as tiger) who ruled the wilderness and preyed on stray humans. She divides the islands between habitable and inhabitable for humans and the demon respectively with certain terms and conditions relating to their not encroaching each other's habitat. In fact, humans, under her assured guardianship, are more bound to keep the sanctity of pact, respect the demon's domain. Ghosh comments:

The most important of the beliefs that relate to Bon Bibi have to do with regulation of human need. Indeed, the Bon Bibi legend is, at bottom, a parable about the destructiveness of human greed: its fundamental teaching is that in the relationship between the forest and the sown there can be no balance, except by placing limits on human need. For Bon Bibi's devotees, the parables translate into a belief that the forest must never be entered except in circumstances of demonstrable need (Ghosh, WF).

However, greed takes over one of the dwellers, Dhona who takes a poor boy, Dukhey along on his expedition to the wild forest, and ends up in a bargain with the demon to barter the boy for cart-loads of honey and wax. He abandons the innocent boy in the forest, who calls Bonbibi for rescue from the predator. Bonbibi rescues her and again ousts the demon who, with the help of a mediator, is allowed to resettle in the wilds with an assurance of human fear and respect towards him in lieu of him not harming humans. Nirmal makes an insightful observance noticing the reference of "atlas": "this legend had perhaps taken shape in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, just as new waves of settlers were moving into the tide country. And was it possible that this accounted for the way it was formed, from elements of legend and scripture" (Nirmal, HT).

Besides, Nirmal sets direct parallels between the mythological and scientific truths about the existence of Ganges which makes the myths more profoundly real for the child Fokir. Nirmal brings home the relevance of certain beliefs of the islander towards maintaining an ecological balance. On their way to Garjontola island, when Kusum, her son Fokir, and Horen make “genuflections” before crossing “the chimerical line” in the mohona, that “Bonbibi had drawn to divide the tide country” to separate the “realm of human being from the domain Dokkhin Rai and his of demons” and expect Nirmal to “feel the fear... Because it’s the fear that protects you”, he finds that looking “more closely” the “ordinary face” of Horen has now acquired “an alertness, a gravity, a sharpening of the eye... the tension”: all human practically requires to be armed with on a tiger’s territory. Their myth makes them consider the human friendly dolphins as “Bonbibi’s messengers” and thus, in the absence of a scientific explanation of their behavioural pattern, their belief keeps them from harming this mammal. Jessica Schmonsky accords with this hidden sense of equilibrium: “Belief systems have a considerable effect on environmental attitudes and can therefore play a major role in ecological conservation practices [...] seemingly, one of the most popular forms of conservation through folklore is by taboos or trepidation. When humans regard plants and animals, stars and planets, rocks and soil as integral parts of their world, then they take certain actions to protect or manage them, either indirectly by tradition, ritual or taboo” (Schmonskz, ecology.com). Although Nirmal died with guilt of not acting upon his philosophy of interconnectedness: of “the trees, the sky, the weather, people, poetry, science, nature” But in a way, he has left behind his own myth, contained in the notebook, for the young to live by.

On the other hand, Piya seems to take over where Nirmal leaves; she acts on what he only believed in. If Nirmal could not bring himself, bound by his position as an educationist to believe in the Bonbibi myth and went to her shrine in Garjontola only after retirement from job, Piya observed no such limitations. Nirmal could not live up to his ideals even if he has an apocalyptic vision for the island due to “a minuscule change in the level of the sea” and sees “the signs of death... everywhere: the vanishing birds, the dwindling fish, the land, being reclaimed by the sea”; whereas Piya braves everything once the clarity of her conservative goal dawns on him. Her pure devotion to her profession recalls the *Karma yoga* propounded by Sri Krishna: “Whosoever, controlling the senses by the mind, O Arjuna, engages himself in karma yoga with the organs of action, without attachment, he excels. Do thou perform your bounden duty, for action is superior to inaction (*Bhagvad Gita*, yogamag.net). Her “bounden duty” is that of studying the behavioural patterns of dolphin’s “endangered species” and mapping their “specific movement corridors” for their conservation (Ghosh, 2005: 105). Out in the field

for her assignment, “it was the exclusion of intimate involvements that made a place into a field and the line between the two was marked by a taboo she could not cross except at the risk of betraying her vocation” and this makes her brush off the idea of a “personal entanglement” with Fokir (Ghosh, 2005: 94). It seems she has seen through the “optical illusion” of this myriad shaped world. The concept of *nishkam karma* (motiveless action/duty) translates into her guiding principle as she tells Kanai, “if I thought giving up my life might make the rivers safe again for the Irrawady dolphins, the answer is yes, I would” (Ghosh, 2005: 253). In fact she remains indifferent with compliments regarding her tough job and says, “I am just doing my job” (Ghosh, 2005: 250). Like Lord Vishnu, the saviour, caretaker, and preserver of the world through incarnation, Piya believes “it has fallen to her to be the first to carry the report on current situation and she knew that she could not turn back from the responsibility” (Ghosh, 2005: 247) and “if she was able to go through with it, it would be enough; as an alibi for a life, it would do; she would not need to apologize for how she had spent her time on this earth.” The rare anomaly witnessed in Fokir’s behaviour towards the encroaching tiger again exemplifies Krishana’s *Karma* theory; an action is good or bad in the context of the particular situation in which a normally good deed becomes a bad one and vice versa.

The extremely feared tiger, after several killings in human habitats, would have become a constantly present deadly threat if not killed. Fokir tells, “when a tiger comes into a human settlement, it’s because it wants to die” (Ghosh, 2005: 244). Fokir’s joining hands in the killing of the encroaching tiger seems to be an “ethical justification” also as the tiger is taken as disguised demon Dokkhin Roy and he could be punished if he crosses the boundary set by Bonbibbi: “but again, unchecked exploitation is not given a divine and therefore, societal sanction” (Guha). There is yet another interesting link between the ‘crab’ ruling her zodiac sign (cancer) and the crabs Fokir catches while leading her to the dolphin’s pool, occasioning Piya’s insight “that this was an errand that would detain you for the rest of your life” (Ghosh, 2005: 105). She believes “maybe the ancients had it right after all. Perhaps it was the crab that ruled the tide of her destiny” because “they were Fokir’s livelihood and without them (crabs) he would not have known to lead her to this pool where the Orcaella came.” She starts to believe connected to this “key stone species”, being part of the “bio-mass” (Ghosh, 2005: 119).

Her venture on the tidal rivers climaxes with Fokir’s death in a sudden and intense storm, but not without sowing the seed of her dream project for the cetacean protection. Fokir’s role is instrumental in that. Although the novel provides a Campbellian Hero Journey pattern after which Piya’s journey to the Sundarbans can be profiled but the focal inquiry here is myths

regulated conservational attitude of the islander limits that scope. Piya represents what “ecocritic Ursula Heise describes as an eco-cosmopolitan consciousness... In contrast to state dependency on global capital and disconnection from the local,... who evince it a deeper understanding of and connectedness with one other and with their natural environments” bordering on the Hindu world view (Weik von Mossner, 2006/2007: 120-144).

With Fokir, Piya’s association boils down to the elemental level. In fact her quick and natural affinity to Fokir, despite their “different worlds, different planets”, is in stark contrast with her guarded interaction with Kanai and an unfriendly encounter with the ‘weasel-looking” forest guard and his aide, Mejda. She reminds Kanai of a “textual scholar poring over a yet undeciphered manuscript: it was as though she were puzzling over a codex that had been authored by the earth itself” (Ghosh, 2005: 222). Her discovery of “so much in common” between Fokir and her, irrespective of their educational, social, cultural differences, resonates the Hindu concept of primordial oneness. This is also exemplified when on the tidal waters with Fokir, she inadvertently goes back to link her present experience with that of other waters in South East Asia and can fore see the fate of the Orcaella (Dolphin) here like that of the Mekong Orcaella.

The perfect generic synergy they mutually share makes them the epitome of the *Prakriti* ((Nature’s female creational force)—*Purusha* (Primitive Cosmic Male, masculine force of creation) symbiosis for Creation. These “two different aspects of the manifest Brahma” are described extensively in *Purushsukta* and *Bhagvad Gita*. It is only in unison with *Prakriti*, the dynamic energy with a potential to produce that *Purusha* the “non-attributive static, inactive consciousness” takes form and “set in process the entire creative process” (Jayaram V, hinduwebsite.com). *Prakriti* cannot create independent of *Purusha* who is “The Ancient, The Omniscient... The Witness, The Guide, The Bearer, The Enjoyer” (Jayaram V). Although Piya is conceptually informed and experienced about ventures on waters, the “indifferent”, “unconcerned”, “utterly unformed”, “clean”, “silent” and “negligent” extraordinary “observer” and of “fugitive sullenness” Fokir is in contrast to Piya’s “spirit and heart... true extraordinariness.” Like the *Adi Purusha*, he is like a magnet “who could inspire and hold such constancy” so as to make Moyna, his wife crave him “in the same way a potter’s hands might crave the resistance of unshaped clay” (Ghosh, 2005: 263).

Although unmindful of her purpose, is rendered expressive while ‘traversing’ the water with her. With a ‘masculine innocence’, the initial “puzzled frown” gives way to the “enthused” “impatient” “quite pleased” “more explicit” Fokir. In fact the easy and apathetic way he takes the prospect of his own death, make him exist on some metaphysical level. He is at home on

waters and starts shedding his ‘barriers’ when he is actively but unintentionally involved in Piya’s pursuit, as she observes “he’s very different when he’s out on the water... that she had been able to offer him something that mattered, whatever it was... It’s like he’s always watching the water—even without being aware of it... with such an incredible instinct. It’s as if he can see right into the river’s heart.” Even the dolphins who are Fokir’s long time “friends” “recognised” Piya, too. His “sure” wisdom, stamina, and sharp senses guide in the tricky waterways and slippery mud shores, lead her to her destination, save her from the crocodile and from drowning and protect her in the violent storm at the cost of his own life. Piya, who has been travelling for years while on the sea ultimately intuitively reaches out to him and identifies their shared love for waters, though on different planes, resulting in a spiritual union:

The idea that to “see” was also to “speak” to others of your kind, where simply to exist was to communicate... What greater happiness could there be than this: to be on the water with someone you trusted at this magical hour, listening to the serene sound of these animals? [...] In any other circumstances she would not even have considered heading into forest cover of that kind but with Fokir it was different. Somehow she knew she would be safe [...] At the sight of him, her heart lifted and she was assailed by both hope and a sense of relief: she was certain he would know what to do, that he would find a way [...] that it had proved possible for two such different people to pursue their own ends simultaneously—people who could not exchange a word with each other and had no idea of what was going on in one another’s heads—was far more than surprising: [...] she saw something in his expression that told her that he too was amazed by *the seamless intertwining of their pleasures and their purposes* [...]. I think *we could achieve a lot, working as a team* [...] It was beautiful while it lasted (Ghosh, 2005: 221).

Their perfect chemistry is in resonance with the concept of *Prakriti* and *Puruṣa* co-producing after Dissolution, and Piya ‘the material cause’ recognises it, from smaller acts of co-ordination in putting the dead carcass of young dolphin back in water and steering the boat in the stormy waves to a greater cause. And when the “spell” of a primordial like connection between them renders the mediation of Kanai vanish during Fokir’s tale of his inborn affinity with the tide country: but that’s how it is in nature, you know : for a long time nothing happens, and then there’s a burst of explosive activity and it’s over in seconds. Very few people can adapt themselves to that kind of rhythm—one in a million, I’d say. That’s why it was so amazing to come across someone like Fokir.” Working with anybody else “wouldn’t be the same” (Ghosh, 2005: 221). She confesses to Nilima, “I’d never have been able to find you on my own” and experiences an “icy feeling of abandonment” without Fokir.

Piya, as if the Mother Nature (Earth)-incarnate of Hindu mythology, “grimly” recounts with a “parched weariness” the apocalyptic symptoms of the environmental decay: “There seem s to have been som e sort of drastic change in the habitat, ... some kind of dramatic deterioration... When marine mammals begin to disappear from an established habitat it means something’s gone very, very wrong” (Ghosh, 2005: 220). She is very troubled at the human threat to the sea creatures’ lives due to illegal trading, killing and the paraphernalia in the name of guarding their natural habitats, which results in their unnatural deaths; “a harbinger of catastrophe for an entire population” (Ghosh, 2005: 252). Her following emphatic and empathetic words are a validation of the ecological design of Creation in Hinduism and wake-up call to save our planet:

It was what was *intended*—not by you or me, but by nature, by the earth, by the planet that keeps us all alive. Just suppose we crossed that imaginary line that prevents us from deciding that no other species matters except ourselves. What’ll be left then? Aren’t we alone enough in the universe? And do you think it’ll stop at that? Once we decide we can kill off other species, it’ll be people next... people who’re poor and unnoticed (Ghosh, 2005: 249).

Fokir is like the *Fakir* or *Bauley*, a ritual specialist of the Sunderban islands who accompanies the inhabitants “to ensure safety in the forest... provide protection to the workers in forest... has a verbal repertoire of divine origin... either learned the Arabic mantras from a Fakir or the mantras came to them in a dream directly from Bonbibi (Schmalz, 2012: 77). He accomplishes for Piya what the legal system-appointed guard failed miserably to do, and is the embodiment of the knowledge, experience and resourcefulness of indigenous people of the tide country. Like the traditional *Bauley*, Fokir’s role is “irreplaceable” for Piya as she has “faith in what he does” (Schmalz, 2012: 78). Even Horen is a *bauley* who is believed to “know the mantras that shut the m ouths of the big cats. He knows how to keep them from attacking us” (Ghosh, 2005: 203). David Abram’s words validate this participative observance, interaction, and reciprocity in our eco systems: “Nature itself articulates, it speaks... the human voice in an oral culture is always to some extent participant with the voices of the wolves, wind, and waves-participant, that is, with an encompassing discourse of an animate earth” (quoted in Philippon, 2005: 34).

Fokir’s mother, Kusum, demonstrates how somebody we revere and owe our life to, reaches mythical heights and sustains her/his beliefs through us. Kusum, “very spirited” like a storm, a *jhor*”, steeped in her beliefs, comes at par with Bonbibi when Fokir credits his world-view which we find to be purely ecologically sustainable from his harmless boat and fishing tools to restricted utility to compassionate attitude to nature, to her, sees her face

“Here, here, here, here. Everywhere”, and dies an unregretful death on the place of Bonbibi’s shrine, Garjontola island, validating his dream in which her mother had called him there to be one with her. On the other hand, in a kind of magic-realism instance, Kanai seems to have gone through a change from a modern, “egalitarian... , meritocratic” womaniser to a clean-hearted, rooted person with humility, at the intervention of Bonbibi: like Fokir said, his scary experience at the Garjontola island showed him what he needed to know; his true element, whereby he is more in touch with nature within/out instead glimpsing through “a rear-view mirror, a rapidly diminishing presence, a ghost from the perpetual past that was Lusibari” (Ghosh, 2005: 183).

What Ghosh tells of the myth of Bonbibi holds true for the various mythological elements permeating the whole narrative: “the Bon Bibi legend uses the power of fiction to create and define a relationship between human beings and the natural world. Nowhere does a term equivalent to ‘Nature’ figure in the legend of Bon Bibi, yet nowhere is its consciousness absent” (WF). There is no direct mentioning of climate change or global warming except some scattered discreet but loaded hints: besides Nirmal’s observance of the signs of death, he also notices: “What was happening here... was that the wheel of time was spinning too fast to be seen. In other places it took decades, even centuries [...] Could it be that the very rhythms of the earth were quickened here so that they unfolded at an accelerated pace?” (Ghosh, 2005: 186). Moyna’s reference to the impending extinction of fishes due to the use of “new nylon nets” which are “so fine that they catch the eggs of all the other fish as well”, Piya’s feeling of “a smell or rather a metallic savour” in the waters, and Horen’s experienced observance on the cyclone’s coming “quicker” than he expected, are some hints at the crisis disturbing the surroundings. However, studying the mythological strands infusing the personal, social, cultural, and natural set up, gear life at every level towards ecological balance, albeit some forewarnings which will be taken up later.

This anthropocentric tale very deftly links the two temporally far-flung kinds by and subtly insinuates the authenticity of the traditional ethos and wisdom in understanding the nuances of utility as well as sustainability of natural sentient/non-sentient resources. Ghosh does it by what Klaus says “wed(ing) local ancient traditions with modern science and technology,... align(ing) age-old sensibilities with the realities of the late twentieth century, so as to have continuity as well as sustainability, decency as well as prosperity,... to harmonize nature and humankind, economy and ethics, on the basis of wisdom as well as science” (Ghosh, 2005: 152) weaving the myth of Bon Bibi together with the current story and the integration is so fool proof that the reader is rendered indecisive in ascertaining which one is the main plot and which, the sub-plot. In fact, paralleled with the immediate story of Pia’s

research project and the ensuing adventurous exposure to the real predicament of the sea creatures and their human counterparts, the islanders, the Bon Bibi story with its ecological implications seems to be the ever imposing wall like presence that provides foot printing for Pia to decode, empathise and appreciate the islanders' simple but sound philosophy and ecological foundation of their life. She realizes how through the Bonbibibi story in their veins, their environment has become their religion unconsciously, guiding them in their thoughts and actions. Fokir's impeccable mapping of the waterways, keen insight and an unconsciously shared concern for the ecological balance helps Pia decipher the metaphysical streaks in a superficially bland tribal scene. Through him we are also able to learn "to trace the ethical basis of various resource utilization and conservation strategies" adopted by Indian indigenous communities and their *Weltanschauung* (*world view*) (Gupta & Guha).

According to Garrard, who calls *The Hungry Tide* a "canonical text for environmental critics" says, "ecocriticism traces this mediation... the interplay between local myth and scientific knowledge, and tensions between human place and climatology... an interesting field to explore the interconnection between science and literature... including ancient literature as well" (Garrard, 2014: 210). Filtered through this eco-critical observation intersected with mythological undercurrents, the novel, being thoroughly informed with mythology induced ecological suggestions fall in line with Middleton's idea of "the pervasive need for narratives that will make sense of the connections between past, present and future as part of some greater order"(in Levene et al, 2010: 228). In fact, the relevance of mythical tales and their contextualisation in this novel makes both encompass G. D. Wood's vision of "an interdisciplinary project between the climate change disciplines of climatology, geology, geography, and environmental science; political, eco-nomic, and cultural history; and qualitative cultural sources like 'poems, diaries, newspapers, paintings, folklore, etc.'" (qtd in Trexler and Johns-Putra).

One of the interesting quality of Mythical stories is that we find in them some character/situation which we can identify with, and it is immensely cathartic. The inhabitants of the Sunderbans islands collectively find their counterpart in Dukhey, the poor boy in the story of Bon Bibi, who is ditched by his master and is left for Dokkhin Rai to feed upon. He is saved by Bon Bibi and her brother Shah Jongoli after being invoked by him. It seems that before the devouring desires of the demonic outside world, the indigenous people have nothing but this support system to keep psychologically strong in surviving. What can be a better example of the system of ensuring ecological balance by forbidding encroachments upon each other's habitat (Man and Nature) than that which is devised in the Bon Bibi myth. Problem ensues when the boundaries get disturbed and with the continuous and fast paced

process of climatic volatility due to global warming, such problems translate into disasters. The perfect example of the maintenance of an ecologically sustainable lifestyle is witnessed when Fokir, along with other islanders joins to kill a tiger which ambushes the cattle shed; the same islanders revere the tiger with fear within its habitat as it is taken to be the disguised form of the mythological demon, Dokkhin Rai and but according to the myth of Bon Bibi, the boundaries must be respected.

The Hungry Tide, in a non-confrontational and empathetic manner, proves to be an informative and transformative education in ecology, magic/social realism. Echoing the prophetic accounts in Hindu ancient texts and folklores about perpetual moral/spiritual degradation, the microsomal apocalyptic vision seems to have realized when Moyna, the ambitious and understandably materialistic wife of Fokir loses him to Nature. It is like losing a part of a living heritage. Moyna, Nilima's protégé for me, represents the exclusivists, who are charmed by such ecosystems, want to control it, but never understand it truly. Recalling and reversing Ghosh's image of "the twin strands of the double helix that makes life possible", I feel mythology and history have been presented in the novel as "the paired strings of a helix" of ecological development (Ghosh, amitavghosh.com). Reflecting Markley's decoding of the complex interactions between "the dynamic processes of acculturation and acclimatization" (quoted in Adam Trexler and Adeline Johns-Putra, 2011: 185-200) of the islanders, the novel, if analysed with the "eco-cultural" approach, reaches the pedestal of a new mythology, a living one.

The novel seeks in the end to present a model for our planet's ecological management and possibly, reconstruction, in wake of the complexity cause and effect chain of climate change. In line with what Dan Bloom's, the founder of the term Cli-Fi, vision of "a world where humans cling to hope and optimism" and of a solution to "the climate problems using our brains and our technology" (greenschools fiction). Maitrayee Misra highlights how in this novel, "the myth transcends the boundaries of space and culture, carrying within the religio-social-economic equation along with the conservation of ecology" (academia.edu). Further, Richa in her paper, "Eco-theology and the Notion of Multiculturalism in *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies*", writes how "subaltern myth of Bonbibi provides an answer to the question of sustainable development of humans and non-humans." Such an ecotheology does not view the world of man as a colonizing agent (155). The novel represents "theology as an alternative to the contemporary corporate greed of ecological exploitation providing space to both the humans and non-humans" (in Prabhat K. Singh, 158). However, granted as the role of constructive mythology is in their lives, the novel draws our attention to the frictions and fractures in such a sustainable world view of the indigenous people, pressed from within or without. The natives like Dilip Choudhury who "trafficked in

women”, the greedy, ill-informed, and lecherous launch owner Mejda, and the tough, “ambitious and bright” Moyna, who has “had the forethought to figure out how to get by in today’s world... wants to make a success of her life” and who carelessly ignorant of Fokir’s precious traditional ecological wisdom, tauntingly wishes “if her husband had a little more gyan (*knowledge*) and a little less gaan (*song, the Bonbibi song*)... her life would be a lot easier” (Ghosh, 2005: 177, italics mine). Ghosh recently posted that “the forested islands of the Sundarbans are increasingly considered a trafficking hotspot as climate change impacts—such as worsening cyclones, sea level rise and loss of land to erosion and saltwater—mean worsening poverty and living conditions, and more desperation.” Such precarious circumstances suffice to dwindle anybody’s faith system.

On the other hand, the threatening intrusion of the Industries and the over-domination of the government agencies and officials cause the firm ground of belief slip away from under the feet of the natives. Ghosh comments that “the people who live in India’s forests have had to contend, since colonial times, with a pattern of governance that tends to criminalise their beliefs and practises” (WF). Piya’s encounter with the corrupt, rude and threatening guard in the novel and the diesel-run motorboats polluting the rivers and killing their creatures while frequenting the rivers to guard the forest reserves and in turn, doubly disturbing the centuries old ecological balance, with dangerous consequences not only for the environment but working deviously at every level. The scary abhorrence of the islanders for Forest department officials is best reflected in Kanai’s ironic statement: “if you’re caught between a pirate and a forester, you should always give yourself up to the pirate. You’ll be safer” (Ghosh, 2005: 245). The Morichjhapi massacre exposes the tilted and twisted perception of the authorities regarding forest and wildlife preservation in which the human loop, the most crucial one to maintain the ecological balance and conserve the extremely valuable bio-diverse heritage.

Nevertheless, despite these unfavourable circumstances and the dangers of beliefs turning into dogmas in the absence of the lived, hands-on experience of them by the natives, Amitav Ghosh ends the novel on an optimistic note. And that points to the need to have a story which is not anthropocentric. A myth which makes sense at “ecological, bio-physical, and psychological level” (Vatsyayan) like the Bonbibi’s in Sunderbans does, as illustrated in Ghosh’s declaration: “The one place where tigers have held their own is in the Sundarbans where, despite an inordinate number of animal-related fatalities, people still display a general willingness to coexist with the species—for which more is due, in all probability, to the Bon Bibi legend than to any governmental project” (Ghosh, WF). With Piya and Fokir’s association, their spiritual union, and the germination of a new paradigm of a living myth takes

place: a model which is not exclusivist but includes all, serving individual as well as a larger purpose.

Like Campbell predicted that “an active, effective mythology would need to be in harmony with the science of 2000 AD., rather than that of 2000 BC” (Practical Campbell), Piya, after the fatal cyclone, comes pregnant with an idea which, when it takes place, will in fact develop into such a myth. Strangely at home at Lusibari after Fokir’s death, Piya develops a unique affinity with Moyna to the effect that Nilima had mistaken “the one for the other”, as if they are the embodiments of two, the manifest and the Non-manifest aspects of Creator: Moyna’s grief was all too plainly visible in the redness of her eyes, while Piya’s face was stonily expressionless, as if to suggest that she had retreated deep within herself... Piya’s demeanour echoes the lull, the nihilism before creation, carrying “the guilt, the responsibility” on Fokir’s account, meditating on Krishna’s mandate on of ‘giving back’ in lieu of what is taken (Ghosh, 2005: 325). Echoing Ghosh that “what we’re facing here is a problem of the collective... climate change cannot be addressed as a sum total of individual decisions” (elle.in).

In the epilogue of the novel, Piya’s “impressionistic” report on dolphin sightings with Fokir, shared through internet, is to be invested in by agencies of intermingled interests. Piya gears up to initiate an integrated Conservation project, a kind of Cooperative society, named after Fokir, based at Badabon trust run by the “pragmatic” Nilima, in lieu of sharing the funds, assigning the managerial powers to Moyna, involving the fishing community, funds from various global sources; all contributing commensurately (Ghosh, 2005: 328). So properly networked, it seems to be a distant progeny/ successor of mythology only, by “articulating a new form of social configuration resulting from the endangered river Dolphins (Garrard, 2014: 217). Piya’s science and technology aided project pits their hero aspect with their villain aspect exposed in their exploitative and destructive use: “beautiful, harmonious, equitable, sustainable, egalitarian, non-destructive technology” and the “gigantic technology which is apocalyptic, destroying thousands of homes, hearts, habitats, ecology, geography, history, and finally, benefiting so few, and at such great cost” (Patkar).

Advances within the field of physics and biology, the development of depth and transpersonal psychologies, and the emergence of consciousness research (cognitive science and artificial intelligence) and information technologies—particularly the internet—provide a medium through which the collective imagination recasts the universe and our role in it. The same archetypal energies and forces of nature personified in gods, demons, and myth remain in play, but the dynamics are depicted in terms and imagery more befitting *Star Trek* than Homer’s *Odyssey* or the *Bhagavad-Gita* (Practical Campbell).

Piya's Hand-held "monitor"... connected to the satellites of the Global Positioning System" stands as such a "medium". Treasuring all the routes Fokir took to show her a dolphin, mapped "a sinuous zigzag line"... That one map represents decades of work and volumes of knowledge. It's going to be the foundation of my own project" (Ghosh, 2005: 328). The same goes for our collective unconscious as well; it is also "the only piece of equipment that survived" storing the archetypal patterns of ancient stories. We also just have to switch it on and tap the "key to access the memory", and since the provided "data" is "crucial to our project" of maintaining the ecological balance, credit has to be given to the source; our ancient myths.

What Nilima thinks about "the mystery of Fokir and his boat, writing a log of their journeys and locking it away in the stars... "It would be good to have a memorial for Fokir, on earth as well as in the heavens" is a very potent and loaded indication towards our responsibilities to acknowledge the dynamic role of our mythologies. Amitav Ghosh does exactly that through *The Hungry Tide*. He knows very well "how literature, legends and folklore have influenced our responses to nature and wildlife" and the Fokir project materialises that response. If, as Ghosh believes, the distinctive quality about "human beings, as a species", consists "in our ability to experience the world through stories" (Ghosh, 2005: 132), stories like that of Fokir, "the efficient cause" of the Project's creation, fills the vacuum. Our mythological lessons of sustenance are like a word which "vanish into (y)our memory, like an old toy in a chest, and lie hidden in the cobwebs and dust, waiting to be cleaned out or rediscovered?" (Ghosh, 2005: 78) It exhorts us to convey an all-inclusive cultural heritage instead of giving a distorted view partaking of only "history, family, duty, language" so that they keep drawing their own module of conservational management (Ghosh, 2005: 79).

Interestingly, Ghosh mostly blurs the line between fact, fiction and folklore which in turn leaves the novel open to interpretations from the perspective of eco-mythology/neo-archetypal, eco-historicism, eco-criticism, or eco psychology but the outcome of any type of ecological reading of the novel boils down to a single conclusion: the mythic imagination, historical records and the culmination of the current fictitious story offer a route to personal transformation of the novel's character as well as the reader. The answer to Louise Fowler-Smith's question as to if it possible for the artist to change how we perceive the environment to the extent that people change the way they respond to and inhabit is certainly affirmative.

Ironical as it may appear, my proposition regarding supposed measures to safe-guard the eco systems and mitigate the negative outcomes of climate change starts with an "if", as in if the danger is still distant. If we feel responsible enough to see through the rapid occurrence of the microcosmic apocalyptic disasters, the need to spearhead majority into contributing in the

maintenance of ecological balance through sustainable changes is urgent. That calls for a stimulus that works for them and what is better than the well-tried and witnessed; religion. If, as apprehensions go and experience exposes religion as Marxian “Opium” let this drug act according to the diagnosis, not as a tool to addiction.

Myths have always been subject to multiple and varying interpretations, like an elephant in a dark room is. Presently, they are required to be seen through the ecological perspective as to how environmentally sustainable approach underlines the chronicles of these religious allegories. Looking minutely, they are informed with therapeutic, preventive, spiritual and aesthetic powers of nature. They are potential conservative tools. The ancient seers did not know the rational/experimental way of revealing the exactitude of natural occurrences but has to be credited with conceptualising such phenomenon like the one regarding some underground shifting of the support system to keep the surface intact assigned as the trigger to earthquakes occurrence; the ancient people would probably not understand the phenomenon of tectonic plates and fault lines better than as some degraded demonic spirit or some other motifs. Climate change, in Naomi Klein’s words, “is a civilizational wake-up call, a powerful message delivered in the language of fires, floods, storms, and droughts” (thischangeseverything.org).

India, superficially, known as a land divided into various religious/ethnic sects and communities, castes and sub-castes, is a land that provides equal variety of healthy alternatives to address an issue of personal, social and natural import. *The Hungry Tide* bears testimony to the truth that instilling eco-ethics in people through fact and reason is harder than linking religion with the ecological concerns and igniting reverence to any trace of advocacy towards respecting or safeguarding natural habitats. What Hindu religion/mythology contains in its vast and diverse form is garbed truths with a scientific bearing. These alternatives were based in their mythic world view which has greatly transformed into dogmatic beliefs or have taken a back seat in the wake of overall growth induced by scientific and technological development. This vast range of Hindu faith’s scientific articulations, resulting from a long process of observational, experimental, and calculative studies, pronounced in line with the corresponding times, generally live up to the hype they have been accorded. The choice of applying our discerning power rests with us to enable us to follow an orthopraxic guiding principle; to overlook or discard the unscientific, exploitative and unreasonable practices, un-layer the ritualistic verbosity to reveal a deeper meaning. As Makarand Paranjape concedes, “humanity’s very survival depends upon our capacity to make a major transition of consciousness, equal in significance to earlier transitions from no-

madic to agricultural, agricultural to industrial and industrial to technological... a new combination of technology and spirituality” in a way where concept of ecology is embedded in the time to follow (fore.yale.edu).

References

- Baindur, Meera. *Nature in Indian Philosophy and Cultural Traditions*. Manipal: Springer India, 2015.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and as Religion*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 2002.
- Dawson, Gowan. *Darwin, Literature, and Victorian Responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Duara, Prasenjit. *The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Garrard, Greg. *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide. A Novel*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2005.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl, and Harold Fromm, eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. New York, NY: Eco Books, 1996.
- Gupta, Abhik, and Kamalesh Guha. “Tradition and Conservation in North-eastern India: An Ethical Analysis Eubios.” *Journal of Asian and International Bioethics* 12 (2002): 15-18.
- Jain, Pankaj. *Dharma and Ecology of Hindu Communities: Sustenance and Sustainability*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2011.
- Klostermaier, Klaus. “Hinduism, Population, and Environment.” In Harold Coward, ed., *Population, Consumption, and the Environment: Religious and Secular Responses*. New York, NY: State University New York Press, 1995.
- Levene, Mark et al. *History at the End of the World?: History, Climate Change and the Possibility of Closure*. Penrith, CA: Humanities-Ebooks, 2010.
- Philippon, Daniel J. *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2004.
- Philippon, Daniel J. *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005.
- Rowland, Susan. *The Ecocritical Psyche: Literature, Evolutionary Complexity and Jung*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Schmalz, Mathew N. *Engaging South Asian Religions: Boundaries, Appropriations, and Resistances*. New York, NY: State University New York Press, 2012.
- Schuler, Barbara. *Environmental and Climate Change in South and Southeast Asia: How are Local Cultures Coping?* Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Singh, Prabhat K., ed. *The Indian English Novel of the New Millennium*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013.

- Timalsina, Sthaneshwar. "The Body of Goddess, Eco awareness and Embodiment in Hindu myth and Romance" In Deepak Shimkhada, and Phyllis K. Herman, eds., *The Constant and Changing Faces of the Goddess: Goddess Traditions of Asia*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008.
- Townsend White, Jr., Lynn. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." *Science* 10 (March, 1967: 1203-1207.
- Trexler, Adam, and Adeline Johns-Putra. "Climate Change in Literature and Literary Criticism." *Climate Change* 2 (2011): 185-200.
- Trexler, Adam. *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change*. Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press, 2015.
- Weik von Mossner, Alexa. "The Home, the Tide, and the World: Eco-Cosmopolitan Encounters in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* 13.2/14.1 (2006/2007): 120-144.
- Westling, Louise. *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Environment* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Internet sources

- An Interview with Amitav Ghosh. <http://historyofthepresent.org/2.1/interview.html>.
- Atharveda*. <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm>.
- Bhagvad Gita*, 3.7-8/ <http://www.yogamag.net/archives/2009/dapr09/teach-shtml>.
- Capra, Fritjof. <http://www.azquotes.com/quote/712121>.
- Cli-Fi: The Emerging Genre of Climate Change Literature. <http://climate-crocks.com/2013/10/15/cli-fi-the-emerging-genre-of-climate-change-literature>.
- Fowler-Smith, Louise. "Hindu Tree Veneration as a Mode of Environmental Encounter." http://louisefowersmith.com.au/tree_veneration.pdf.
- _____. <https://downloadfreenovels.wordpress.com/2014/01/15/downloadthe-hungry-tide-by-amitav-ghosh-for-free>.
- _____. <http://elle.in/culture/elle-book-club/in-conversation-with-amitav-ghosh>.
- _____. (<http://www.outlookindia.com/article/wild-fictions/239276>).
- _____. *Prasenjit Duara's The Crisis of Global Modernity: Asian Traditions and a Sustainable Future*. <http://amitavghosh.com/blog/?p=7102>.
- _____. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/may/23/amitav-ghosh-vibrant-literary-world-india-naipaul-interview>.
- _____. <https://transformationsoxford.wordpress.com/2015/03/21/amitav-ghoshs-message-to-oxford-give-up>.
- _____. <http://www.trust.org/item/20150308071149-vsv7r/?source=fiOtherNews2>.

- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything*. <http://thischangeseverything.org/-book>.
- Misra, Maitrayee. http://www.academia.edu/5461246/The_Myth_of_Bonbi-bi_in_Amitav_Ghoshs_The_Hungry_Tide_A_Structural_Study.
- Narayanan, Vasudha. "Water, Wood, and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Traditions." <https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/pubContent.aspx?d=1297>.
- Oliver, Rachel. <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/01/27/eco.about.religion>.
- Paranjpe, Makarand. "Hinduism and Climate Change." <http://fore.yale.edu/news/item/hinduism-and-climate-change>.
- Patkar, Medha. http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=908:from-eco-religion-to-political-ecology-in-india-feminist-interventions-in-development&catid=141&Itemid=452.
- Rig Veda. <http://www.shaivam.org/daily-prayers/prayer-veda-41.htm>.
- Ross, Chris. Review on "I am with the bears", edited by Mark Martin. <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/oct/11/im-with-the-bears-review>
- Schmonskey, Jessica. "The Ecological Importance of Folklore." <http://www.ecology.com/2012/10/24/ecological-importance-folklore>.
- Singh, Vandana. "Writing Climate Change: A Round Table Discussion." <http://www.strangehorizons.com/2012/20120227/harrison-a.shtml>.
- Sri Isopanisad, I. <http://vedabase.net/iso/1/en>.
- Srila Vyasadeva Kalki Puran. <http://www.harekrsna.com/sun/features/08-13/features2911.htm>
- Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana*. <http://hinduismbooks.blospot.in/2013/02/puranas-free-download.html>.
- V, Jayaram, <http://www.hinduwebsite.com/prakriti.asp>.
- Vatsyayan, Kapila. "Ecology and Indian Myth" http://ignca.nic.in/ps_03015.htm, <http://ecoheritage.cprecc.org>.