

**CRITIQUING ANTHROPOCENTRISM IN AMITAV GHOSH'S
THE HUNGRY TIDE AND J.M. COETZEE'S *DISGRACE***

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By

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CERTIFICATE

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ABSTRACT

Critiquing Anthropocentrism in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

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Rapid degradation of environment is an important concern facing all disciplines of knowledge and man centeredness known as anthropocentrism is believed to be one of the major causes behind this. In literary sphere, approach of ecocriticism focuses on environmental issues and dominance of man over non-human living and non-living objects. Both the novels selected for this study, disclose the effects of degradation of environment due to man's anthropocentric approach. Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Hungry Tide* deals with the themes of wildlife conservation and preservation of natural flora and fauna taking into consideration the lives of human beings. Focusing on ecologically fragile Sunderbans area, Ghosh raises questions about conflict between humans and animals and shows how anthropocentric model of development results in disappearance of tigers and other natural inhabitants of this region. Likewise, J.M.Coetzee in his novel *Disgrace* deals with the suffering of animals. Focusing on Post-Apartheid Africa, Coetzee presents the perspective of blacks who had to suffer like animals during colonialism. In this conflict, animals become the first casualty and reclamation of land and other natural resources becomes an important step towards fighting back.

Both these writers tries to decentre human beings, they are of the view that non-human other should acquire equal rights and protection as human beings themselves possess. Lucy in *Disgrace* is the voice of Coetzee as she is concerned towards the well being of the animals. Piyali Roy in *The Hungry Tide* is also concerned about the animals but she views nature from the perspective of First world nations.

(Name and signature of student)

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Chapter 1

Literature and Environment

Man is born in the lap of nature. From the very beginning of his life he is closely connected with nature and is deeply influenced by changes in nature. In recent times, environment degradation has become a major problem which is linked with Global warming, ozone layer depletion, air and water pollution, exhaustion of natural spaces etc. These changes affect day to day life and subsequently create dreadful conditions in the life of human beings. Environment plays an important role in the life of social beings and the impression of nature can be seen on individual's literary writings.

It is generally believed that environmental deterioration and its related after effects such as floods, famines, tsunami, and extinction of animals are the result of human beings' meddling with nature and supposed superiority of culture over nature or man over animals is the root cause behind it. This attitude of human superiority gains its power from the notion of anthropocentrism. So, trying to find a balance between the two interrelated but sometimes conflicting viewpoints, this study is an attempt to critique the notion of anthropocentrism by studying relations of humans and nature in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*.

1.1 Ecocriticism in literary paradigm

The inter-relatedness of nature, human life and literature cannot be ignored. Natural environment has always remained an important part of many literary texts and with the recent increase in environmental problems and issues, writers have specifically focused on environmental problems. In the field of literary criticism also, attempts have been made to keep focus on environment while analysing literature. There is a close relation between nature and culture. Ecocriticism looks at culture as an expression of ecology. Defining Ecocriticism, Richard Kerridge writes:

Ecocriticism is literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint . . . Ecocritics analyse the history of concepts such as 'nature' in an attempt to understand the cultural developments that have led to the present global ecological crisis. (530)

Ecocriticism is an approach to analyze the representation of nature in literary texts. It is concerned with creating awareness in the society about the

environmental degradation. The anthropocentric activities are considered as the major factor resulting in the devastation of ecology as well as animals. In A Handbook of Literary Terms, M.H. Abrams defines Ecocriticism as:

The critical writings which explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being brought on that environment by human activities. (81)

Human activities are responsible for the degradation brought to the environment. The Earth has been largely affected by the global warming. It is very much important for man to reconsider his relationship with the non-human aspects of the world. A socially and environmentally responsible life style is need of the hour and like feminism and Marxism, ecocriticism also shares the idea of social transformation through literature. Cheryll Glotfelty, in an anthology, The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology, defines the term:

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (19)

According to Roger Fowler ecocriticism involves two different strands. One addresses itself to the emergent canon of “ecoliterature” that has become known in reaction to the global environmental crisis. The second strand involves the re-reading of the texts with reference to the relation between human beings and the non-human world. So, man started focusing on the surrounding environment and its related issues when threat to whole mankind appeared real and fast approaching.

It is a very significant theory from the point that it takes into consideration the non-human forms of living organisms. Ecocriticism helps in understanding a nature centered system rather than human centered values. The changing relationship of human beings with the environment can be understood through the yardsticks of ecocriticism theory. Greg Garrard attempts to define the term more broadly:

Ecocriticism is unique amongst contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology. Ecocritics may not be qualified to contribute to debates about problems in ecology, but they must nevertheless transgress disciplinary boundaries and develop their own 'ecological literacy' as far as possible. (5)

Man has been in contact with nature from ancient times. But gradually, over exploitation of resources by man has led to vast damage of the environment. The intellectuals become aware of the consequences and summits are held on a large scale. The problem has been raised to global level. As a consequence, the concept of Ecocriticism emerges in the mid twentieth century in the field of literary criticism. Lawrence Buell rightly says that "the term 'Ecocriticism' was coined in the late 1970s" (13). Earlier it was also referred to as "study of nature writing". This still emerging approach began in USA in 1980s and in the UK in 1990s. (Barry 250).

It is argued that the movement makes us aware about the environmental threats which people have to face in near future. Colonialism, industrialisation and other anthropocentric activities are the basic reasons of the degradation of the environment. Throughout the human history, many prominent thinkers and intellectuals have held the view that man holds the central position in this Universe. Peter Barry lists some of them for instance, a Greek philosopher Protagoras says, "Man is the measure of all things" (251). Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing 'The Vitruvian Man' also depicts that man is the only creature to have dominance over other creatures. In *The Song of the Earth*, Jonathan Bate argues that colonialism and deforestation have frequently gone together (Barry 251). This is the argument that Amitav Ghosh also builds in his novels. In *The Hungry Tide* too the effects of imperialism are visible. The government makes various strategies to conserve the wild life but ignores the real possession of nature and the evil effects that these strategies are meted out upon the lives of tribal people. When the Island named Lusibari is being civilized by the colonial powers the threat to environment was quite apparent. Therefore, these all are the instances which depict that the cultural modes or our attitudes towards nature are all anthropocentric rather than ecocentric.

Anthropocentrism, according to Eccy Jonge, is "man centeredness" as centeredness means to be "separateness" and "superiority" over others. The roots

of Anthropocentrism can be traced to sixteenth century onwards when reason, logic and intellect all these notions came into being and the human beings considered themselves as the sole heir of the Universe. Then the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century was one of the reasons of human domination. It was in this period when industries flourished throughout the world and led to wide spread exploitation of natural resources. In Enlightenment period thinkers like Francis Bacon, Immanuel Kant, Rene Descartes etc. focused on reason as a medium to solve all the crucial problems and stressed that this specific characteristic [reasoning ability] is inherent in human beings only. As Andre Krebber argued that:

The mechanistic Enlightenment of eighteenth-century Europe strove to establish human domination of nature. The obstacle nature presented for human self-preservation was to be overcome once and for all. Human bonds with nature were rejected. Nature was interpreted as a mere mechanism, put at humans' disposal. (qtd in Boddice 322)

Various philosophers like Kant, Heidegger, and Stoic placed humans on the higher level than the animals. They argued that human beings are linguistic beings as against animals who are non linguistic beings. The division of nature and culture has created a boundary between humans and animals. According to Sabrina Torutti, man is engaged in a struggle to construct his proper identity by uplifting himself from animality. On the other hand, with a large difference from nature, culture is defined as “a second genesis for mankind” (188) by Johann Gottfried Herder, who is a philosopher and anthropologist. He defined it as something which is basically human and lacking in animality. As per Torutti, another critic named Clifford Geertz defines culture as “a set of controlled mechanisms – plans, recipes, rules, instructions - for the governing of behavior” (192).

Thus, it is the culture which directly or indirectly affects the psyche of human beings and they tend to behave in a particular way. It is in the cultural norms that man always considers himself as superior which creates an indifferent attitude towards other creatures. Franz Boas is in favor of traditional hierarchical notion of the superiority of cultural beings over natural beings by creating boundary between nature and culture. Further he defines culture as “opposed to instinct” (189). He argues that human beings acquire culture by living in the society

as opposed to animals who live in the forests. Thus, it is clear that man tries to set up hierarchical levels and gives himself the top priority.

This priority of humans over other species sometimes results in mismatch between nature and culture. The foremost attitude which exists in the minds of human beings is that the world only existed for the needs of mankind. Man considers himself as a hero who has elevated his needs and desires to the extent that he does not care about the biological survival of other species. He consciously ignores the environmental damage in his surroundings. This thought is not only damaging the present environment but is going to be disastrous for his forthcoming generations. Val Plumwood, a contemporary environmental philosopher argues that the ecological crisis is the result of western attitude to nature and man's tendency to conceive nature as an immense resource to be utilised. She remarks in her book *Environmental Culture*, that the ecological crisis is "Both a crisis of dominant culture and a crisis of reason, or rather, a crisis of the culture of reason or of what the dominant global culture has made of reason" (5). Thus, there is a dire need to protect the deteriorating environment and to reframe the existing modes of development.

For many thinkers, anthropocentrism is the root cause of environmental degradation. It is the vision of human domination over other forms of life which has led to ecological devastation. It is obvious that change in the culture of human beings lead to change in environment. Earlier, man used to live in harmony with nature but now his attitude has changed considerably. The agricultural practices have become mechanised, urbanization and rising living standards as well as the policies of development are the reasons for the destruction and depletion of natural resources. In these days, it has become a challenge to critique anthropocentric point of view adopted by the human beings for their survival. Rob Boddice in an Introduction of his book *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments* rightly substantiates that, "Anthropocentrism is expressed either as a charge of human chauvinism or as an acknowledgement of human ontological boundaries. It is in tension with nature, the environment and non-human animals" (1).

In the field of Ecocriticism also, it is argued that "the reigning religions and philosophies of Western civilization are deeply anthropocentric" (Abrams 81). It means that these are basically concerned with the interests of human beings who

consider themselves superior to the animal species and they use them for their self-interests. This concept of man being the centre of the universe can be better understood from the perspective of anthropocentrism. Humans are dependent on the animals as well as nature for their survival even then they put forth their own interests against theirs. In the words of Boria Sax, “Anthropocentrism is the tendency to vastly exaggerate human dominance, understanding, power, autonomy, unity, guilt, virtue, wickedness and morality” (36).

Anthropocentrism becomes an important part of other philosophies. The human being positions himself as one of the significant form above other non human forms of life. Now days, it is very difficult to displace the notion of anthropocentrism from the centre. As a result, humans are on the core ground and every rule and law is framed according to his priorities. The value of other forms of life is determined by man himself. As J. Baird Callicott remarks:

An anthropocentric value theory (or axiology) by common consensus, centers intrinsic value on human beings and regards all other things, including other forms of life, as being only instrumentally valuable, i.e.; valuable only to the extent that they are means or instruments which may serve human beings. (299)

Richard Kerridge opines, “Anthropocentrism is the placing of humanity at the centre of everything, so that other forms of life will be regarded only as resources to be consumed by human beings” (532). Anthropocentricity is considered as the root cause of the problems created in the environment by human beings. According to M.H.Abrams, anthropocentrism can be defined as, “Considering man to be the most significant entity in the universe; interpreting or regarding the world in terms of human values” (82).

Animals are regarded as mere objects as they do not have any soul. Man treats them as they do not have capability to realize the pain. Kant, a well known philosopher considers that human beings possess trait of rational thinking whereas animals lack this rational mentality. This is the major cause that they are perceived as a commodity to be used in whichever way the man desires.

Various authors like Greg Garrard, Cheryll Glotfelty and Lynn White express their view that roots of anthropocentrism lay in Christianity, for example, in the Book of Genesis, it is mentioned:

. . . and God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon earth. (Kerridge 537)

One of the main reasons of the destruction of natural resources and dominion over the animals is the belief that the humans are in the centre of the universe and they can use nature and animals for their own benefit. Lynn White argues that “What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them” (9). Consequently, the relation between humans and nature has become the relation of power and powerlessness respectively. Man always looks for his selfish motives which is one of the reason people keep pets either for their economic benefits or to show off their living standard. These ways of treating animals are too cruel. Jeremy Bentham, an English author and a social reformer, has also focused his ideas on animal rights. He was one of the first persons to argue that cruelty to animals is wholly unacceptable.

Thus, anthropocentrism fails to understand the nature of other living forms of life by going against them. Man imposes his own desires upon them and wants to behave them in a particular manner. From the advent of modernity, the society is heading towards more and more westernised form of culture and ideology. The western culture considers humans as a superior race. As a result, individualism emerged as a major phenomenon due to which the sole importance shifted to man himself. This view is also mentioned in the Bible that man is rational of all and he has the right to have dominion over others. From the last few decades the devastation which has been brought out is only because of man’s changed attitude towards nature. As it has been said that Christian view about nature is wholly anthropocentric but no other value system or ideology has been set up in this society so that those existing views of domination can be refuted. And this ecological crisis will continue if man’s attitude towards nature remains anthropocentric. Lynn White rightly points out that:

Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecological crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy

must also be essentially religious . . . we must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny. (14)

The basic tendency of man is of dominance, he tries to manipulate nature which has resulted in the imbalance of natural environment. To transcend above civilisation, it is mandatory for man to reconcile with nature and not to generate a dividing line between the two. And it is possible when human beings adopt an attitude of humility towards nature. It is the only way to overcome anthropocentric belief inherent in the psyche of human beings.

Literature makes the people aware about how they are damaging the natural surroundings. One can probably say that literature cannot exist solely in the vacuum and the activities that take place in this society are related to the human life that exists on this planet. Ecocriticism is one such theory which is trying to create an awareness regarding natural destruction. And through the analysis of literary works it is well presented. In Cambridge Introduction to Literature and Environment, Timothy Clark has argued that, ecocriticism finds its most striking ethical challenge in the question of animal suffering. As Sumathy, an ecocritic has rightly opines:

Literature plays a very important role in creating awareness about the environment. Just as post colonialism champions the cause of the “other”, ecocriticism upholds the voice of the “nonhuman other.”
(1)

In the colonial countries, the colonialists are considered as “superior” and victimizers as “other”. When countries became free from the clutches of the colonizers then within their territory men turn into masters and they treat women as “other”. In the same way humans tamed animals and treat them as “other”. In the words of Richie Nimmo:

Humans are subjects while non-humans are objects. This in turn enables humanity to be elevated and centralized, while its necessary other – its very conditions of existence – are suppressed and marginalised, relegated to the status of a ‘context’, a mere ground upon which human subject stands. (61)

As the theories of Post colonialism, Feminism and Race Studies play an important role in indulging people to think about a particular issue prevailing in the society so does the theory of ecocriticism. It chooses environment centered

approach to literary studies. Peter Barry mentions that the theory tries to focus upon the ecocentric values of “meticulous observation, collective ethical responsibility, and the claims of the world beyond ourselves” (255). It makes people conscious of the causes which pollute the natural resources. The texts related to ecocriticism have become a part of the environmental awareness which connects the human world to that of the non human world. As Cheryl Glotfelty also mentions in introduction that:

Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non-human. (19)

Now days, the modern man has become apathetic to nature. It has resulted in the environmental crisis on the global level. The ecological crisis has become a burning cultural issue as it does not affect a single discipline, but it affects the whole universe. Human beings think themselves as powerful and reasoned intellectuals, and neglect their liability towards their Mother earth. Literary figures elaborate the role of nature in the lives of human beings and they highlight man’s indifferent attitude towards the natural world. They try to remind the individuals that they have a duty towards the environment and human beings must be aware of the ecological issues and concerns, as they are a part of the nature. In this present era, the greatest predicament is the degradation of the environment. It is said that, “There is an urgent need to understand that, Environment is not the ‘other’ to us but part of our being” (Buell 55).

Ecocriticism emerges as a movement when threat to the planet became visible. It is influenced by various approaches like Feminism and Marxism, as these approaches act as a socio-political structure for reading the ecocritical texts. Ecocriticism represents nature and the behavior of people towards nature in a particular age. For instance, in the seventeenth century, nature was worshipped as a goddess but in the present era human being considers nature only as a commodity for his personal use. In this context, Guha writes, “This destruction owed itself to the fact that modern man had desacralized nature viewing it as a source of raw material to be exploited and thus emptying it of the mystery the wonder, indeed the divinity with which pre-modern man saw the natural world (13).

The third world countries are following the western ideologies of development that has resulted in the complete destruction of natural environment. A lot of raw material is used in industries and it is an over exploitation of the natural resources. Ramchandra Guha, a well known historian and Environmentalist rightly says in his book named, *Environmentalism: A Global History*, "Nature became a source of cheap raw material as well as a sink for dumping the unwanted residues of economic growth" (4). There is another reference from Arundhati Roy, an intellectual and an environment conscious writer who is concerned with two major ongoing issues prevalent in India; the Narmada Bachao Andolan and The Campaign against Nuclear Weapons in India. In her essay "The Greater Common Good" she reminds of the coming dangers in the future. She says:

. . . We have to fight our specific wars in specific ways. Who knows, perhaps that's what the twenty first century has in store for us. The dismantling of the Big. Big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes. Perhaps it will be the Century of the Small. (5)

The ecocritical term 'Deep Ecology' which has been propounded by Arne Naess in 1973, also puts some more light on the issue. Guha says, "The movement of Deep Ecology, the leading edge of the American environmental movement today, which fights for 'biocentric equality', that is, the placing of humans on par with and not above other species" (Guha 8). The major concern of deep ecologists is to make human beings adapt according to the environment and the integration of the human as well as non-human world. Ecocentrism, according to M.H. Abrams is the view that "all living things and their earthly environment, no less than the human species, possess importance, value and even moral and political rights" (81). They believe that anthropocentric thinking has made humans alienated from their natural environment and it can be disastrous. As Anil Prasad in his article named "Globalization, Modernity, and Literary Ecology: A Re-reading of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*", mentions that, "The modern human being stands in the egocentric position of looking at things and thus suffers from human centeredness" (17).

An Entomologist named Semenov-tian-shanskii combined his laboratory experience with the nature. He collected numerous species of insects to the Zoological Museum in Moscow. Semenov thinks:

Nature to be the great book of the existence of all things, a museum indispensable for our further enlightenment and mental development, a museum which, in the event of its destruction, cannot be reconstructed by the hand of man. Society had a great moral obligation towards Nature, yet industrial man was showing himself to be a 'geological parvenu . . . disrupting the harmony of nature', determined to destroy 'that grand tableau which serves as the inspiration of the arts. (qtd in Guha 128)

The era of 1980s is considered as the most destructive period for natural environment as industrial development was at its peak. As a consequence, man's relationship to nature totally changed. Earlier, he considered himself as a part of nature, but now he has become a tool in the hands of commercialization. Lynn White argues, "Formerly man had been a part of nature, now he was the exploiter of nature Man and nature are two things, and man is the master" (8).

There is a strong connection between the conservation and the poverty prevailing in the third world countries. These countries face an acute shortage of funds and land for conservation which is a primary need for saving environmental destruction. It is this concern which grabbed the attention of Guha as well as other environmentalists like Madhav Gadgil, Vandana Shiva, Medha Patkar, as well as Wangari Maathai. These activists have largely contributed to understand the sufferings and the hardships faced by the poor people who survive in the shelter of nature. Guha advocates that there is a strong link between ecological degradation and poverty prevailing in these third world countries. The notion of "Deep Ecology" is refuted here because there is a need of large unused tracts which is impossible in these densely populated countries. But the conservation policies which are adopted are in accordance with the Western outlook. The ideas of the west adopted for the conservation is not suitable for the local areas as it denies the social and cultural needs of native people. There is a censure on the foreign agencies, which for their own selfish interests look for conserving a particular species in the third world countries and it can be one method of indirect rule over the third world nations. It is a kind of neo-imperialism, which Ghosh critiques in

most of his novels. By providing grants and foreign currency to the poorer nations, the first world countries try to dominate and thus lead to impoverishment of the poor tribal people. A Peruvian activist, Hugo Blanco says that:

Environmentalists or conservationists are nice, slightly crazy guys whose main purpose in life is to prevent the disappearance of blue whales or pandas. The common people have more important things to think about, for instance how to get their daily bread. Sometimes they are taken to be . . . in the guise of protecting endangered species, have formed so-called NGOs to get juicy amounts of dollars from abroad. (qtd in Guha 104)

Nature has always been at the centre of man's life. In the ancient times, nature and humans have remained in harmony and a balance was maintained between the two. But few years back man has adopted an indifferent attitude towards nature which resulted in disruption of ecological balance. One cannot deny the environmental aspect because it is our surroundings that are extremely important for our well being. Nature remained an inexhaustible resource always but man began to consider nature as an exploitable resource. This change in attitude is one of the most important reasons for environmental problems occurring at fast pace these days. It was Mira Behn, daughter of an English admiral who joined Mahatma Gandhi in 1927. Expresses herself as a devotee of the great ancient Mother Earth, she said:

The tragedy today is that educated and moneyed classes are altogether out of touch with the vital fundamentals of existence – our Mother Earth, and the animal and vegetable population which she sustains. This world of Nature's planning is ruthlessly plundered ... We have got to study Nature's balance, and develop our lives within her laws, if we are to survive as a physically healthy and morally decent species. (qtd in Guha 67)

Environmental justice movement forms an important part of the ecocriticism theory. Environmental justice movement emerged in India just as the movements for the rights of people began, without taking into consideration their caste, creed or race. It includes the sacredness of the Mother Earth and everyone's right to remain free from the destruction of ecology. In the words of Richard Kerridge,

The environmental justice movement is a collective term for the efforts of poor communities to defend themselves against the dumping of toxic waste, the harmful contamination of their air, food and water, the loss of their lands and livelihoods, and the indifference of governments and corporations. (531)

Therefore, critics begin to respond to environmental justice, one of them is Amitav Ghosh, who is concerned with the questions of colonialism and gender, rather than only spotlighting the environmental issues. Jonathan Bate; a British scholar of Ecocriticism in his famous book entitled *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* opines that, "Environmental crisis is a new context, a new phase of the dialectic, in which the pleasures and desires involved in the love of nature have the potential to produce a radical critique of dominant values." (Kerridge 530)

Even Cheryll Glotfelty mentions in the introduction of his book entitled as *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, that

Ecocriticism is predominantly a white movement. It will become multi-ethnic movement when stronger connections are made between the environment and issues of social justice. It is expected that the ecocritical scholarship becoming even more interdisciplinary, multicultural and international. (25)

The contemporary fiction writers are very well aware of the ecological degradation which is taking place in the whole world. There are many authors like Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Margaret Atwood, Nadine Gordimer, who depicted the theme of natural devastation in their works. Sometimes, this ecological crisis has been consciously taken as a major theme of the novels to make people aware of the devastation taking place because of human activities.

The novel, *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy also focuses on the degradation of environment. She is an environmentalist who raises question about the preservation of environment not only in his fictional works but also in her non-fictional works. It discusses the destruction of rivers and the environment in the Ayemenem village. The village was once known for its freshness and greenery but now its greenery has been vanished. The people are involved in the profit making process by neglecting the future prospects.

In the novel, *Where Shall We Go This Summer*, Anita Desai condemns the culture which is based on degraded values. It results to ecological imbalance. Sita, the protagonist of the novel depicts the voice of the novelist. She is in favor of leading a natural way of life. She rejects her husband's view of urbanization and industrialization. So, Sunita goes to Small Island, where she feels as she is in the lap of nature. In her another novel, *Fire on the Mountain*, Desai depicts that nature is victimized in the hands of human beings. As in the novel, the protagonist Raka sets fire to the mountains in frustration.

In the novel, *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood, a Canadian novelist, the ecological destruction has been depicted as one of the major themes. It depicted that the Americans destroyed the native land of Canada due to their westernized living styles. She presents a deep concern about the degradation taking place in the colonized countries. In the opening of the novel, we see that the island in the country of northern Quebec, which was one of the idyllic spot, has now changed completely. She describes it as, "... the white birches are dying, the disease is spreading up from the South" (Atwood 3). The protagonist presents the damage of Canadian environment in the hands of Americans. For her, it's not the country but the people who are engaged in such activities which damage the scenic beauty. The dying of birches is thus shown here as a disease resulting from technological expressionism which Atwood equates with "Americanism."

Therefore, all these texts represent growing eco-consciousness in the contemporary fiction writers. They attempt to highlight the need to reconsider the relationship between man and nature through literary works. Modern man is becoming indifferent to nature which has resulted in socio-political conflict. Eco-centric texts can be helpful in reshaping the ideology of human beings.

1.2 Introduction to selected Authors

Both Amitav Ghosh and J.M. Coetzee are concerned with the same themes like revisiting history, problem of displacement and identity crisis. Ghosh is one of the prominent writers who belong to post-colonial era. He was born to an Indian middle class family on 11 July 1956, in Kolkata. In 1986, he published his first book *The Circle of Reason*. Amitav has written several books such as *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *In an Antique Land*, (1992), *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), *Dancing in Cambodia* (1998), *Countdown* (1999), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Imam and the Indian* (2002), *The Hungry Tide* (2005), *Sea Of Poppies*

(2008), and *River of Smoke* (2011). Amitav Ghosh won several literary awards, for the book *The Circle of Reason*. He has received the Sahitya Akademi Award and the Ananda Puraskar for *The Shadow Lines*, and Hutch Crossword Book Award for *The Hungry Tide*. He was awarded the Padma Shri by Indian government in 2007. He received Crossword Book Award for his book *Sea of Poppies* in 2009 and was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

Amitav Ghosh in his novel *The Hungry Tide* deals with the theme of displacement of the tribal people. He deals with the issue of environmental concerns, how the nature and animals have been marginalized by the humans by considering themselves as the superior beings. It is a novel which tries to depict the present scenario of our nation that how politics plays an important role in determining the lives of marginalized people.

Coetzee is one of the most significant authors of the world. He is a white writer born in South African continent. He was born on 9th of February at Cape Town in South Africa. He wrote several novels and non-fictional works. Coetzee won several prizes including literary awards like McConnell Prize, 1983, the Jerusalem Prize 1987. On December 10, 2003, he won the Nobel Prize in Literature, and the first author to get the Booker prize twice; one is for *Life and Times of Michael K* in 1983 and second is for *Disgrace* in 1999. He has been nominated for the Christian Stead Prize in 2004 for fiction. Presently, he is working as a Professor of General Literature at the University of Cape Town. His well known works are *Dusklands* (1974), *In the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), *Foe* (1986), *Age of Iron* (1990), *Disgrace* (1999), *The Lives of Animals* (1999), *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) etc.

His two memoirs are very significant as they depict the issues related to Africa as a colonial country and the hardships he has had to face. Most of his novels depict the condition of whites in an African country. But the most interesting thing is that being a white writer he writes from the perspective of blacks. He has very well depicted the sufferings of the section of the society which is considered as marginalised. Coetzee's novel *Disgrace* is a multi-layered story with its setting in South Africa. He tries to portray western European culture in the light of African context. He deals with the themes of racial discrimination, marginality and patriarchal issues in the society. Coetzee depicts that how Whites are now

considered to be as minorities with the change of time. The black Africans are coming into power as the novelist portrays the post colonial era.

Disgrace is concerned with issues which relate the lives of human beings to the environment or their surrounding ecosystems. It is a novel about the kind of attitude, people possess towards nature which includes animal treatment as well as that of nature. Man is at the centre of this universe and he exercises his power on other creatures of the world. The novel suggests that the environment has an important relation with the society. Rural-urban divide in perspectives towards the ecosystem/animals is another case in point. Coetzee depicts contrast between the characters in his novel; he constructs characters belonging to rural background as well as that of urban background. David Lurie as well as Lucy is structured in contrast to each other. Disgrace is a novel about “post-colonial” South Africa. It is concerned with “Apartheid” in South Africa which means separation or apartness. It is policy of discrimination that has led to the suppression of human rights of black and colored people of South Africa.

1.4 Review of Literature

The Hungry Tide has already been looked upon from different perspectives like mythical study, from feministic point of view, post colonial and environmental concerns. The article by S. Vasuki “The Epitome of Motherhood in Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide” in the book *Alternate Identities: Essays on Common Wealth Literature* focuses on the archetypal study of the novel. The article premises that myths are based on history. It is a post modern technique to employ myths to depict the complexity of understanding human relationships and values. Women power has been represented as an archetype of preservation.

In the article “Feminism Redefined – Amitav Ghosh’s The Hungry Tide” by Jaya Kapoor in the book *Feminine Psyche – A Post Modern Critique*, the novel has been studied from feministic point of view. The article suggests that there are four to five women characters in the novel, they all belong to different classes, regions and age groups, they are ambitious, and their goals are different. The common thing among all of them is their faith. They build their own identities. The author says that the novel is in itself remarkable because it is not written by a woman but by a man who rather than marginalizing women, portrays them as having better position in the society. It reflects the change that is seen in the condition of women after the struggle of feminists in the country.

Another article “Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide: A Post Colonial Approach*” by Bhagabat Nayak in the book *Post colonial Indian English Fiction: Critical Understanding*, focuses on the post colonial aspect of the novel. It is said that Ghosh is nostalgic for history and neurotic for the political domination and economic exploitation. Here in this article, the refugee problem is considered as a serious concern, Ghosh sympathizes with refugees, and their marginal status has been realistically portrayed in the novel, and the colonial past is largely responsible for this problem.

There is an article entitled “Restoration of Human Spirit in *The Hungry Tide* of Amitav Ghosh” by Raja Ambethkar and K. Jaya Raj. It focuses on the environmental aspects in the novel from the depiction of the setting it discusses various other major issues like Myth of Bon Bibi and its importance for forest dwellers, colonialism affecting environment, sufferings of the native people etc. It is rightly said that,

The *Hungry Tide* is a powerful evolutionary story of this region and its people. The setting is geographically limited, yet vast in its implications of some wider global concerns, like preservation of endangered species, environmentalism versus survivalism, rights of the homeless and the dispossessed.(3)

An article titled “The Politics of Memory and Belonging in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” by Buddhabeab Roy Choudhury, it takes into consideration the historical aspects of the novel. It is argued that the novel associates discourses of memory and belonging with the idea of nationhood. The past is considered as one of the major ground on which the novel has been set. The notion of nation state, imagined communities, sense of belongingness, all these has been discussed in this article. Choudhury says,

Through the tales of atrocities in the name of nationalism Ghosh brings in the idea of a nation-state existing as a powerful force that negates the humane aspects and aims at the forceful implementation of a unified concept of nationhood by the potent erasure of diversities and variations. (214)

The novel *Disgrace* has been looked upon as a post colonial novel, a critique on history, and from the perspective of gender study and marginalisation. In the article, “Not Saying Sorry, Not Speaking Pain: Gender implications in

Disgrace” by Elleke Boehmer, she focuses on the gender issues. It is said that Lurie refuses to officially apologise for sexually abusing his student. His dominance over other women shows his patriarchal bent of mind, but later on when his daughter receives the same treatment from native Africans, when she is raped by three people, Lurie begins to realize his fault.

Erik Grayson’s article “A Moderated Bliss: J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace as Existential Maturation”, discusses David Lurie’s psychological condition. It is said that, Lurie’s acceptance of his own proximity to death enables him to form the sort of emotional concern for the dogs that he could not achieve in his relationship with Soraya or Melanie. Grayson mentions that “the concluding episode, while bleak, presents David Lurie as a motivated and even compassionate part of a social unit (168).

John Douthwaite, in his article entitled “Voice and its Suppression in J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace”, puts light on gender-related issues in the novel. He regards sex as a metonym for life. The position of colonial dominant male and the suppression of the weak is taken into consideration in this article. It is mentioned that, “the prostitute is, in Disgrace, the modern-day counterpart of the colonial slave, the prototypical colonial subject who has been totally dispossessed of identity, belongings and freedom" (136).

Although, much research has done from the perspective of Eco criticism, post colonial, marginalization and revisiting history. But comparison between both the novels has not been done yet. So, in this dissertation an attempt has been made to compare both these novels by critiquing the notion of anthropocentrism. In *The Hungry Tide* as well as *Disgrace*, the aspect of critiquing anthropocentrism is the common ground. In *Disgrace*, David Lurie considers himself at the centre, as his behavior towards other gender and later on with animals is that of dominance. In *The Hungry Tide* the refugees as well as animals are on the marginal side, whereas the government or its officials are in power. To study these novels profoundly from the perspective of anthropocentrism, the viewpoints of significant scholars as well as ecocritics like Ramchandra Guha, Lawrence Buell, Greg Garrard and Cheryll Glotfelty etc. are considered.

This dissertation is divided into four chapters written in the context of critiquing man centeredness. This first chapter is about the approach taken that is, Ecocriticism, which studies a relationship between literature and the nature. Then,

the second chapter is about the text written by Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, in which the relation of human beings with their environment has been discussed. Ghosh is concerned about bringing the harmonious relationship between human and non human world. Along with this the themes of dislocation and displacement has been taken into consideration. He critiques the notion of anthropocentrism by portraying the effect of British imperialism. As the Third world nations work upon the idea of conservation based on Western ideologies, which is one of the reasons why the native people are ignored and displaced. The colonization as well as the civilizing mission is responsible to the havoc caused in the lives of tribal people. Vineet Mehta in his article says, "Ghosh endeavors to present Colonialism as an ecocidal venture and bitterly critiques the ecocultural damage brought out by India's prolonged brush with the British imperialistic machinery." (Mehta 168)

In the third chapter J.M.Coetzee's *Disgrace* has been discussed, by taking into consideration the environmental issues present in the novel. It is about the relation of human beings with the animals and how modern man understands himself with human as well as non human world. It marks the degree to which the human beings have understood his responsibility towards the environment. Randall says that, "Coetzee's imagination . . . works to discern the relationships human beings establish with the non-human world and to understand and evaluate humanity in terms of these relationships." (Randall 210)

And the fourth chapter comprises of the conclusion of the thesis in which both the texts have been compared and analyzed from different aspects and the themes present in them.

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Chapter 2

The Hungry Tide – A Blend of Historico-Environmental concerns

Amitav Ghosh is one of the most prominent writers focusing on the issues of post colonial era. Born to an Indian middle class family on 11 July 1956, in Kolkata, he spent his childhood at several places like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and other neighbouring countries as his father was a lieutenant colonel in the Army. Ghosh has written many novels as well as non fictional works also. Ghosh has been acclaimed as “an elder statesman” among Indian writers in English (Jaishree 351).

Amitav Ghosh is a central literary figure in contemporary era who deals with the themes of identity crisis, marginalities, histories, knowledge systems, migration and Diaspora. A. A. Mondal comments,

Ghosh mediates upon a core set of issues but each time he does so from a new perspective: the troubled legacy of colonial knowledge and discourse on formerly colonised societies . . . the formation and reformation of identities in colonial and post colonial societies . . . an engagement with cultural multiplicity, and an insistent critique of Eurocentrism. (2)

The *Hungry Tide* describes the history of colonial era and the plight of marginalised tribal people. The setting of the novel is in a very remote area in West Bengal known as, The Sunderbans, which means “the beautiful forest” (8). Sunderbans is an area which is rich in biodiversity, but has very fragile ecology. The area has been described as the land of mangroves, tigers and a number of other species. The novel is divided into two parts: The Ebb: Bhata and The Flood: Jowar. The novel is about current problem of conservation in the Sunderbans delta. This region has remained one of the major sites of conflict between conservationists protecting many endangered species especially tigers and the poor marginalized people who depend on natural resources including forests and animals for their livelihood. This novel provides a critique of the Western model of conservation adopted by Indian government for preserving some particular species. It is argued that:

Ghosh is an ideal representative to comment on environmental issues in India . . . a critique of the neglect of local issues in national environmentalist projects provides a pathway that does not make ecological concerns abstract, but rather facilitates a humanist version of culture-specific, location-based environmentalism. (Sen 367)

The story of the novel runs through two parallel narratives. Nirmal's journal which acts as a background to describe the plight of deprived people. It critiques the role of state authorities in the Sunderbans area. The historical incident of Morichjhapi and the political tensions prevailing in the area are illustrated through Nirmal's journal. Marxist sympathiser Nirmal and social worker Nilima's story builds one part of the story in which the lives of poor people and the role of the state authorities have been described. American cetalogist Piyali Roy and New Delhi based translator Kanai Dutt construct another part of the story in which western approach to conservation has been focused.

The novel opens with an encounter of Kanai Dutt with Piyali Roy, a typical American at a railway platform. Piya comes to Sunderbans for her research on Irrawaddy dolphins found in the Ganges. Kanai comes to Lusibari Island to read the journal which his uncle wanted him to read and translate. Through Piyali, Ghosh foregrounds the Eurocentric version of conservation in which animals are preserved on the cost of tribal people by ignoring their local living conditions.

The major part of the novel deals with the incident of Morichjhapi massacre. This incident takes place because the government has evicted out the refugees. Even government killed tribal people when they resisted against them. The government wants to save the tigers and for this the human lives are put on stake. Nilima is a social activist, who has established the Badabon trust to help the needy and helpless refugees. It depicts the plight of powerless refugees against the powerful class of society.

Ghosh portrays the struggles and sufferings of tribal people through the character of Kusum. She is a poor marginalised woman but also a very bold one. She raises her voice against the governmental authorities. Fokir is the son of Kusum. He is an illiterate man who usually goes for fishing. It is his hobby and he possesses abundant knowledge about the whereabouts of the dolphins. He is familiar with every corner of Lusibari as well as neighbouring Islands. His wife Moyna is well educated nurse who aims to be a doctor.

At the end of the novel, when Kanai, Horen, Piya and Fokir are out on expedition, a disastrous storm is about to come. As a consequence, Kanai and Horen save their lives but Piya and Fokir are caught in the storm. Fokir saves Piya's life by putting his own life in danger. At the end Fokir dies but he saves Piyali's life. Piya decides not to go back but to pursue her research in Sunderbans. She wants to pay homage to Fokir. She names the project after Fokir. She has changed herself, she begins to wear plain sari and she is full of guilt. She takes Tutul and Moyna as her own responsibility. Nilima is a practical woman, she agrees to Piya's decision of pursuing her research in Sunderbans.

The major part of the novel deals with the environment and its relation to human beings. It is a novel in which Ghosh portrays various issues related to conservation and ecology. Human beings are dependent upon nature as nature provides abundant useful resources to them. These resources are helpful to every creature on the planet whether they are humans or animals. But human beings have always tried to exploit the resources for their own benefit without caring for other living beings. Man exploits nature and he considers himself the sole heir of the universe and this attitude depicts his anthropocentric attitude. This particular idea has been dwelt upon by Ghosh in this novel. He tries to revisit history which has been forgotten by the present post colonial India. The incident of Morichjhapi of 1979, is the base on which he tries to revisit history. The evicting out of refugees from the Land of Morichjhapi Island and brutal killings of innocent people was the main focus of the incident. It was done due to the orders given by the Indian government as it declared the area of Morichjhapi as conservation area for the project of tigers. But the fact is that nature as well as tribal people are considered marginalised in front of more powerful or centralised people. As it is said in the article "Dwelling on Morichjhapi" by Annu Jalais:

It was often expressed that the government was happy as long as the tigers thrived and that in contrast, whether the islanders lived or died, as with the refugees, made no difference, because they were just "tiger food. It was also said that earlier both animals and humans lived in harmony and the animals did not harm the human beings. But after the incident of Morichjhapi, the tigers became "man eaters".

(1761)

So, it is clear that those officials who are in favour of making the land as a wildlife conservation area are more concerned with their benefits. The tigers are being used for the international trade and it makes money for them. They are hardly concerned for the tribal people and they had no concern towards those innocent animals. The main concern of the novel is of anthropocentrism that the man considers himself at the centre of the universe. He indulges in those activities which led to the killing of innocent creatures present on the earth.

Piyali Roy has more scientific approach than Fokir. As Fokir being the native of that particular area, knows whereabouts of the dolphins and the area which is safe or dangerous for the human beings. Without Fokir, Piya would have been unable to do her research. But both have a different approach towards the conservation of animals. His livelihood is based on the nature itself whereas Piya shows purely American traits. She uses packed canes for her meals, whereas Fokir collects fresh crabs and cooks them. Fokir is depicted as a marginalised poor tribal man, who is an illiterate and has no formal education.

People have different assumptions according to their different cultural notions some consider nature as a living being which provides food to all the creatures living on this Earth. Whereas some perceive it as a non living thing, they use nature for their own material needs. They do not bother about the harm done to the flora and fauna and the disturbance in ecological balance. People like Fokir and Kusum regard nature as a living goddess. They eat what they get from nature. And the myth of Bon Bibi, the goddess of the forest, clearly shows the way they worship by making small images and going to Garjontola every year. It is mentioned in the novel, “. . . Bon Bibi rules over the jungle, that the tigers, crocodiles and other animals do her bidding” (102). Kusum’s father has built a shrine to Bon Bibi. The myth concerning Bon Bibi is that anyone who is pure at heart will never be alone in this dangerous area. Bon Bibi is both the protector as well as destroyer. People believed that, “No man who is good at heart has anything to fear in this place” (324). The dolphins are called as “Shushuk” and are considered as the messengers of the goddess Bon Bibi. The fishermen believe that it is a good omen for them because after that they easily get fishes in the river.

There is a strong connection between nature and society. Nature and culture are interdependent on each other as one cannot exist in isolation. Cheryll Glotfelty opines that, “All ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that

human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it” (19). Amitav Ghosh makes an attempt to bring out this interrelationship in the novel. *The Hungry Tide* shows that nature is more dominant and more powerful than man. Nature, from the very ancient times, has been considered as a preserver as well as a destroyer. Sometimes, nature is kind and benevolent like mother goddess and sometimes very destructive. One of the major issues in the novel is that of preserving flora and fauna at the cost of tribal people who are expelled. In an article named “Literature and Ecology” it has been opined that, “In ecology, man’s tragic flaw is his anthropocentric vision and his compulsion to conquer, humanise, domesticate, violate and exploit every natural thing” (Rueckert113).

Environment and human beings are not isolated but man is the product of the natural habitat. His economy, culture, physique, psychology as well as development depend on environment itself. Culture is the product of historical, mythological, political and religious conditions (Bachan 367). Culture and environment are inter-related. But, the nature of human being is getting worse day by day. He has become so self-centred that instead of recognising himself as a part of nature, he is trying to show himself as the Supreme Being or Lord over the entire cosmos. He no longer considers himself as a part of the whole Universe but a superior body to dominate on other elements as well as creatures. This all has led to various dreadful consequences which are very detrimental for the human beings themselves in the long run and for the flora and fauna, because they are on the verge of extinction. Nature is an independent creation of the world but man is trying to control it. And this interference and control of man over nature leads to disaster.

The interactions between the state, the poor, the physical environment and the flora and fauna of the area are very well presented in the novel. It also highlights the clashes between the humans for conservation. U. Sumathy says “Ghosh’s biocentric vision as exemplified in *The Hungry Tide* is worth a detailed analysis as it raises many important questions related to sustainability and conservation” (51). The hypocrisy involved in the efforts of conservation is also displayed very clearly. The most important concern towards nature as well as human beings in this world has been ignored by the politicians or the government. John C. Hawley rightly says about the novel, *The Hungry Tide* “it shares Ghosh’s

concern for the individual against a broader historical – or even, in this case, geographical – backdrop” (132).

Change in the climatic conditions of any country or any part of a country is affected due to human interference. The effects like that of ozone depletion, global warming, are some of the major reasons which affect the whole nature comprising animals, plants as well as human beings. In the novel, when Kanai comes to Lusibari after several years, on the invitation of Nilima, his aunt, he sees that the river has totally changed its course. The water level goes down and the people have to face a lot of difficulty to go from one place to another. Now, the things have changed, the situation of today is completely different from 1970's. It is all due to the establishment of Port Canning on the Matla River. So, because of human interference, the nature gets affected as in Sunderbans it is going worse day by day. Ecological damage is very well visible and this dwindling of fishes and other species is going to be disastrous. Moyna tells Kanai, “Mashima says that in fifteen years the fish will all be gone” (134).

The attacks on Morichjhapi Island are still going on because of which several people lost their lives. Here, Kusum, a marginalised tribal, totally disheartens, says in a very feeble manner,

This island has to be saved for its trees...it has to be saved for its animals, it is a part of a reserve forest, it belongs to a project to save tigers, which is paid by people from all around the world. (261)

The people behind these acts are those people who belong to the Bhadrakalok class, which is the upper class of Kolkata that is, out of the tide country. And Ghosh too mentions the people who belong to the First world nation that is the westerners. They took nature as an entity which is to be conserved for its valuable assets. And to safeguard these valuable and expensive assets they are ready to put at stake the lives of innocent human beings. This has been very well presented in the novel through the voice of suppressed and the tribal people.

So, anthropocentrism is working from upper class to lower class due to the hierarchical levels set up by the society or human beings. The change is clearly visible that occurred in the society and in the minds of the people and as a result literature too depicts that change. In the book by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, it is said that;

The literary construct of nature during much of the nineteenth century mirrored that of a society with a profound need of nature as spiritual healer and the literary conception of nature for much of the twentieth century mirrored that of a society which valued nature as an economic resource. (201)

Kusum is one of the refugees who speak against the cruelty, which is faced by the tribal people due to government's policy of turning out the people from Morichjhapi and making it a forest reserve area. Kusum's words seem to depict that from the very ancient times, nature and humans have lived in harmony. The relation between both of them is of interdependence on one another. As she says,

No human being could think this a crime unless they have forgotten that this is how humans have always lived – by fishing, by clearing land and by planting the soil. (262)

Earlier people look upon nature as a deity, but now it has been reduced to the status of merely a thing or an entity to be used by people who can control it. With the change in cultural values, the value of nature is also changing with the passage of time. There is a dire need to protect the image of nature. It is said that "nature has grown silent in our discourse, shifting from an animistic to a symbolic presence, from a valuable subject to a mute object" (Manes 17).

The entire novel depicts the relationship and inter-connectedness between nature and man. Ghosh depicts a dual face of nature in his novel. First it is presented as a kind and benevolent nature and the other as a disastrous one. At the end of the novel, there are instances that man sometimes is shown to be at the mercy of nature. There is no hard and fast rule that human being or nature only one will win out of the two, but sometimes nature dominates human beings and vice versa. But the storms in the tide country are the proof that man cannot always impose his domination over nature. At last, we see Piya, sitting alone and helpless on a branch of a tree. She has lost all her equipments as well as the data which she has collected in her ongoing research about the dolphins in the tide country because of the disastrous storm. The scene of storm is depicted in the novel;

Powerful as it already was, the gale had been picking up strength all along ... It sounded no longer like the wind but some other element ...The air was now filled with leaves, twigs, branches, dust and water. This dense concentration of flying objects further reduced the

visibility... It was difficult to imagine that the wind could grow any stronger or more violent. (379)

So, here it seems that nature refuses to accept the dominion of the human beings. Moreover, it looks like nature has been portrayed as a character in the novel rather than being a non-living object only. It seems that Ghosh depicts nature both as a preserver as well as a destroyer. The novel very aptly describes humans' responsibility towards nature and a balanced relationship between man and nature. Hawley comments about the ending of the novel, "The last point is certainly true: the cyclone is powerfully described and reminds readers very forcefully of the humility that is demanded in the face of nature, and our place in it" (134).

The problem arises when man's relation with nature gets imbalanced because man does not consider himself as a part of nature. Getting out of the domain of nature, he begins to control it, which becomes a problem for man himself and consequently, the ecological balance gets disturbed.

There is a reference in the novel about the importance of crabs in the tide country. Their presence is helpful for the mangrove trees. The following lines depict their importance for mangroves.

They kept the mangroves alive by removing their leaves and litter; without them the trees would choke their own debris . . . intertidal forests should be named after crabs rather than mangroves (142).

The natural species had their own importance, it is not the human beings who think that they themselves are of sole importance in this world but each and every species and organism possess their own importance. In an article named "The Comic Mode", Joseph W. Meeker argues that, "a climax ecosystem is much more complicated than any human social organisation, only because it integrates the diverse needs and activities of a very large number of different species" (162).

It is quite clear that man uses animals for his own purposes. There is a reference in the novel about the use of dolphins to make oil which would be used to supplement the dwindling supplies of petroleum. It is a very heinous crime done by human beings on the innocent animals to fulfil their need. It is the main reason why the population of dolphins known as "Mekong Orcaella" declined in 1970s almost to the verge of extinction. Ghosh says, "These dolphins were hunted with rifles and explosives and their carcasses were hung up in the sun so that their fat

would drip into buckets. The oil was then used to run boats and motorcycles” (306).

Another instance when Piya and Fokir are on their way to look for the dolphins, they see the carcass of an Irrawaddy dolphin. It is a newborn calf. It is mentioned in the novel, “The injuries suggested that the dolphin has been hit by the propeller of a fast moving motorboat” (346). And Piya tells that it is a kind of official boat usually used by the coastguard or the police or even the Forest Department. So, one who pretends themselves to be the savers of the flora and fauna of a particular area announced by the higher authorities are themselves responsible for their destruction.

The theme of dispossession is another theme of the novel. Ghosh tries to depict this theme through the character of Kusum. She is one of the refugees who are displaced and are suffering a lot of hardships in the hands of governmental agencies. They are being exploited in the name of conservation of Bengal tigers, a species that has been declared as endangered. In the words of Mondal, the incident of Morichjhapi has been described as;

The incident dramatizes the conflict between different ways of thinking and being, between the logic of modernity and development and the ensuing politics of ecology on the one hand, and the ways of life of indigenous peoples and their relationship to the environment.
(18)

It is a kind of tragedy which has been inflicted upon the refugees, by the state authorities who force them to admit that they are helpless and powerless. The authorities are much more powerful and they harass the weak and defenceless. The hunger and instability is not the only difficulty in the Island but the matter of concern is the difficulty to endure the pain which has been given by higher authorities when they do not bother about the sufferings of the native people. As Kusum says in a very harsh tone:

Saar, the worst part was not the hunger or the thirst. It was to sit here, helpless and listen to the policemen making their announcements . . . our existence, was worthless than dirt or dust.
(261)

Ghosh seems to depict the political issues related with the tide country in India. The novel is a depiction of the conflict prevailing between the conservation

of endangered species and of the human beings who suffer because of this conservation. Ghosh admits:

In *The Hungry Tide*, I have tried to depict the technological, social ethical complexities of living in the world today . . . the living conditions there are extraordinarily difficult. The deprivation and difficulty are unbelievable, and it's shocking to hear that so little is known about it. There are four million people living in the Indian Sunderbans, and it's not the tigers but the poverty that is killing them steadily. It's a continuing catastrophe. (The Hindu)

Nirmal is an ideologist, a teacher and a Marxist, who thinks that the policy of government is not appropriate. It is an injustice to the poor people. It is in favour of elite class and does not take into account the suffering which poor people have been facing. In the novel, the class has been referred to as "bhadrak", whose interests are based on the conservation of animals. No doubt, nature plays a very dominant part in our lives but the elite class bothers only about their own self interests. Even there is a lot of corruption in the name of conservation of wild life. Nirmal helps refugees by going against his wife and even puts his own life in danger. He stands with them against the government and state agencies. He is much concerned with the well being of humanity. Nirmal questions the anthropocentric concerns. He mentions the name of Sir Daniel Hamilton that if he is allowed to make use of the land for creating his experiment, then why these poor people are not allowed living here. He says, "Were the dreams of these settlers less valuable than those of a man like Sir Daniel just because he was a rich Shaheb and they impoverished refugees?" (213). The conversation between Nirmal and Nilima, depicts their clashes. It is about the help of refugees who has suffered in Morichjhapi incident.

'They want the trust to help them set up some medical facilities there.'

'So what did you say?'

'I told them there is nothing we could do.'

'Why can't you help them? They're human beings; they need medical attention as much as people do anywhere else.' (213)

Nirmal's wife considers refugees as squatters who have grabbed that land. She is with the governmental agencies while he demands justice for the refugees

and tribal people. But, tragically he loses his life due to this reason. The incident of Morichjhapi points towards the failure of Marxist notion of Nirmal. This led to the killing of lots of innocent people including children and women. Their bodies were found floating in water and this killing which has been depicted by Ghosh is not the part of mainstream history. It is clear from the following lines:

. . . thirty police launches encircled the island thereby depriving the settlers of food and water; they were also tear gassed, their huts razed, their boats sunked, their fisheries and tube-wells destroyed, and those who tried to cross the river were shot all. (279)

These lines depict the cruel and harassing attitude of government towards the poor people. In a way, nobody is concerned with the welfare of weak and dispossessed people besides Nirmal and some of his other friends, and finally, they too are shot dead by the government. It is rightly pointed out by Mondal, about the attitude regarding refugees by the Indian government,

In his latest novel, *The Hungry Tide*, refugees are also the centre of attention as he recalls a marginalised episode in the coercive history of the modern post-colonial Indian state, namely the Morichjhapi incident. (133)

The plight of displaced people and tribal people is emphasised. It is the political scenario which has been depicted, how for their own selfish interests, the powerful people exploit the less powerful ones. The novel explores the plight of displaced people which is Ghosh's major theme a group of refugees from Bangladesh who seek support in the tide country that is, the Sunderbans. As a consequence it leads to violent confrontation with the Indian Government. The reason behind their worse condition is hunger. As a consequence, refugees are forced to do the hunting and fishing to meet the demand of their one time meal, which further results catastrophic.

Through the voice of Nirmal, Ghosh tries to emphasise upon the truth in history and about several facts, which are actually concealed from the public. The narrative starts from the depiction of a place called Morichjhapi Island where several settlers come from other places to settle there. But their idea of settlement lead to a great event, called "Morichjhapi incident of 1979". Through this incident Ghosh displays the plight of displaced people. One of them is Kusum, who reacts

against the conservation policy. The state authorities cause the displacement of tribal people. It has been remarked by Huggan and Helen that:

The novel gives us to understand that previous violence against the refugees has been perpetrated by Bengali politicians in the name of the tiger, which makes it difficult to come to any other conclusion than that the tiger is being turned into a sacrificed symbol of violence itself. (190)

Kusum, a marginalised subject, has suffered a lot and it is the Badabon trust, developed by Nilima, a social activist, which helped her. Kusum's mother falls prey to the mechanism of powerful people like Dilip Chaudhary, who exploits her and takes her to a brothel. And the next is the turn of Kusum, but she is saved at last point by Horen. It is "Mohila Sanghothan" who took care of Kusum.

One of the basic agenda of Ghosh while writing the novel is to depict the politics behind the conservation taking place in India, and the struggle between environmentalists and local people inhabiting in that area which has been declared as "a reserve". In an article entitled, "Restoration of Human Spirit in The Hungry Tide of Amitav Ghosh" Ambethkar mentions:

The tigers are zealously protected by various international environmental groups who apply economic and diplomatic pressures on the Indian and Bangladeshi governments to maintain the tiger habitats by military or police force. But in the name of tiger preservation human lives are threatened; the tigers routinely maul and kill the islanders and their cattle. (6)

A huge number of human lives are threatened on the cost of conservation. This is one of the reasons why incidents like Morichjhapi takes place. Ghosh depicts the voice of the subaltern and marginalised people through his fiction. In this way he tries to bring the issue of conservation versus survivalists into forefront. There is an ongoing conflict between native people and the government to which both the literary postcolonial as well as environmentalists of the country have taken into consideration. In the words of Huggan and Helen:

Such conflicts of interests have attracted the attention of both postcolonial and environmentalist critics, who are alert to the dilemmas involved in livelihoods of local (subaltern) peoples, are simultaneously put at risk. (185)

The rulers rule over the country and make colonies by power or hegemony is well elaborated by Ghosh. If we take into consideration, a different shade of anthropocentrism, then the rule of Britishers, like Sir Daniel Hamilton can be looked upon from a different perspective. No doubt, he wants a classless society where there should be no distinctions regarding class, race and religions. "It would be a country runs by co-operatives . . . here people would not exploit each other and everyone would have a share in the land" (52).

This is the practice of making people civilised which depicts that human centeredness is on the top. According to his progressive ideas, people should be provided with telephone, bank and currency and electricity. So, it can be said that a capitalist dreamed about colonial India. He wants that the people should work hard. This is a kind of colonial rule that he wanted to establish in that cyclone prone area that is Sunderbans.

This is all about considering human beings at the centre and dominating nature for our own benefits. It is very well known that the area where the port named "Canning" is going to be established is a cyclone prone area even then it was ignored and the Britishers made that particular port in the Island and the consequences were disastrous, as the port was dismantled after a short period of time. Whenever man tries to curb nature or dominates his own will upon nature, it shows her disastrous face as contrary to that of benevolent and kind nature. Christopher Manes opines that,

We must need to learn a language free from the directionalities of humanism, a language that incorporates a decentred, postmodern and post humanist perspective. We require the language of ecological humility that deep ecology is attempting to express. (17)

Thus there is a dire need to save the environment as we all know it is the only planet where life is possible for human beings. They should think it as a serious task for them. They must understand the world of non living as well as their surroundings because it is the surroundings of an individual which affects him or her most of the time.

The people like Daniel Hamilton are those who come from the West and they try to colonise the country and want to colonise the land as well as the psychology of the native people. By mutually getting acquainted with the natives, they try to mould the thinking of the people who are being colonised in one way or

the other. Ramchandra Guha, focusing on the Third World Environmentalism rightly says that,

In India and Malaysia the businessmen and industrialists (the most hostile critics of the greens) are joined by state officials and technocrats, with both private and public promoters of development attacking environmentalists as motivated by foreigners ... or as wishing only to keep tribal and rural people 'backward', placed in a museum for themselves and their fellow romantics to gawk at. (124)

The upper strata of the society and the government authorities look at poor people as marginalised. The same is the case with the nature, which is looked as marginalised being. But the approach of the western people towards nature is very different from those of the natives. The western people take conservation as a task to be completed, but they totally ignore the sufferings and feelings of the native people. In an article by Divya Anand it is mentioned that in "The Chronicle Interview" Ghosh asks, unique to Third World and Fourth World peoples, if you care for the environment does not mean that you don't care about the plight of human beings, especially impoverished people? (33).

In this way there is always an ongoing clash between western approach of looking at the conservation projects and the hardships faced by the natives. Even the political parties also involve in this process, they are unaware of the harassments faced by the native people or they consciously avoid it. In an article by Divya Anand, "Words on Water: Nature and Agency in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*", a politician belonging to the Communist party, named Radhika Ranjan said,

Tigers are the best conservators of the forest. They keep human beings away. If there are no tigers in the Sunderbans, the forest area would be left bare in months. (35)

The state authorities also adopt westernised form of conservation which denies the needs as well as sufferings of the native people. One of the main hindrances in the conservation in Third World countries is due to lack of grants. To overcome this lack of finance, the government of these Third World countries depend on the First World nations. This results in the financial dependence for conserving endangered species on the First World or developed countries. Due to this, the conservation taking place in these Third World countries have to take

decisions in accordance with the developed countries and this is the reason why tribal people and refugees are ignored and considered as marginalised. This novel questions or highlights the important ecological queries associated with the Third World countries. As Vineet Mehta says in an article entitled, "Amitav Ghosh's Ecocentric vision in *The Circle of Reason*, *The Hungry Tide* and *The Sea of Poppies*", "Ghosh establishes himself as an ecocritical writer by questioning imperialism, globalisation, western models of science and scientific progress and calling for a symbiosis between man and nature" (164).

In the novel, Piyali Roy is a First World ecologist. She comes to India to conduct research on the Irrawaddy dolphins in the Sunderbans area. Her perception of nature is quite different from those of the natives. She goes with Fokir at several places where the dolphins are found. As James Rachels, an American philosopher says:

We kill animals for food; we use them as experimental subjects in laboratories; we exploit them as sources of raw materials such as leather and wool; we keep them as work animals. These practices are to our advantage, and we intend to continue them . . . if animals are conceived as intelligent, sensitive beings, these ways of treating them might seem monstrous. So humans have reasons to resist thinking of them as intelligent or sensitive. (129)

It is said that how westerners look at the nature is contrary to the way natives look at. In *The Hungry Tide*, Kanai says to Piya, "What you see as fauna he (Fokir) sees as food" (8).

For natives nature acts as their primary need for their survival. In the end of the novel, when Fokir dies due to the disastrous storm, it is the sign of hardships and sufferings which the marginalised people had to face. He tries his best to save the life of Piyali Roy. And while helping her he loses his own life leaving behind his wife and son all alone. This all can be looked upon as an indication that whenever civilization takes place in a rural area, it is the native, poor and tribal people who have had to put their life on stake. On the other hand, the resources which are to be used by the people who possess the power to have them, there too poor people lost their lives. It is due to the fact that processes of extracting the resources are extremely difficult like mining etc. It is the natives and the poor who suffer due to urbanisation. It is only poor who lost their land as well as their lives.

Thus, it can be linked to the colonial history that when Britishers had tried to make different countries its colonies then several people lost their lives and that process is still continuing. According to Mehta, “Ghosh endeavours to present Colonialism as an ecocidal venture and bitterly critiques the ecocultural damage brought by India’s prolonged brush with the British imperialistic machinery” (168).

The theme of divisibility and displacement is another issue of the novel. As Mondal says, it is more about shift in position of the colonised and the coloniser; the colonial as well as post colonial situations are represented while taking into consideration the history of the nation and its religion, beliefs, superstitions. He deals with the issue of environmental concerns, how the nature and animals have been marginalised by the humans by considering themselves as the superior beings. It is a novel which tries to depict the present scenario of our nation that how politics plays an important role in determining the lives of marginalised people. Thus, the main concern of Ghosh is how the man who is in power exploits the other who is powerless.

Ghosh takes into consideration the psychology of human beings. The characters have been portrayed vividly as they belong to different occupations and they possess their own ideologies for instance, Piyali Roy, a cetologist who have been living in America since her childhood but was born in India. She is much more concerned with environment as she thinks that the use of motor boats by the forest department could be very harmful for the dolphins as their speed would kill several marine animals. Nilima, the social activist also says that the use of nylon nets for catching crabs as well as prawns and fishes could be very harmful. The reason behind this is when the fishermen use these nets the fish get caught along with their eggs, which as a result leads to slow growth rate and finally a threat to the ecological balance. Nirmal, a social activist also raises his voice against the injustice done to the land of Bon Bibi that is, Sunderbans. He depicts the change as he says,

Age teaches you to recognise the signs of death. You do not see them suddenly; you become aware of them very slowly over a period of many, many years . . . the birds were vanishing, the fish were dwindling and from day to day the land was being reclaimed by the sea (215).

The intermingling of different cultures, myths as well as of languages is one of the other aspects of the novel. Piyali's encounter with Kanai, on arriving to the Lusibari Island shows Ghosh's depiction of intermingling of different languages. Kanai is a business man, who is proficient in more than three languages. He is the product of metropolitan city who believes that life does not exist out of these cities, but his trip to Lusibari, to his aunt Nirmal proves him wrong. He acts as the communicator between both Piyali Roy and Fokir, the native illiterate fisherman. Although Fokir is illiterate but he is intelligent, he knows about every nook and corner of his area, he has proper knowledge about the presence of dolphins. He helps Piya in her adventure, she feel quite comfortable in his company as they both are not able to understand each other's language but through gestures. Fokir is able enough to understand Piya's unspoken words. To quote, Dr. Ratnagiri Usha

The novel takes to address the issues connected with the predicament of millions of the disinherited immigrants, refugees, settlers, squatters and land grabbers who find themselves in the perpetuations of conflict with the authorities that are determined to evacuate them as much as with the predators and the cyclones and storms (52).

Piya is the protagonist of the novel. She is a staunch American but born in India. Her parents are from Calcutta, she is from Bengali origin, but does not know Bengali language. She says, "ami Bangla jani na" (4). Piya has lost her identity as she does not know about the customs or the language; she has become half Indian and half American. Piya is depicted as an ecologist who is much concerned with the animals. She becomes the victim in the hands of corrupt officials. When she takes permission from the forest officer she was granted two helpers one of them is pilot and the other one is the forest guard. The guard is assigned to her because he can better guide about the route and would help in hiring the boat, but they try to get money from her whenever they got the chance. They showed their excessive greed of money. In the novel, it is mentioned,

She asked to see the launch and was told that that would not be possible – it was anchored some distance away and they would have to take a boat to get to it. On inquiring about the price she was quoted a clearly excessive figure. She knew now that this was a set-up and she was being cheated. (31)

Even the guard has a leather bandolier and a rifle, to which Piya reacted as if the gun is really necessary. The guard replies in a positive way which shows that those who are the conservationists they themselves kill the tigers when their lives are on stake. Once again there is a reference to anthropocentrism, that whenever man is in danger he firstly tries to protect himself from the outer danger he is going to face.

Piya meets Kanai, the business man and a translator who is living in Delhi. He comes to Lusibari Island on the request of Nilima, her aunt. She convinced him to come and read the diary which her husband, Nirmal has written. But now he is dead and he wanted that his diary must be read only by Kanai himself. Kanai is proficient in six different languages. They both first meet at the railway station. He likes her appearance and feels inclined towards her. Later on, when Piya, Fokir and Kanai all meet at the Island of Lusibari, both Fokir and Piya sense spiritual attachment towards each other. They belong to different regions, castes, and backgrounds. Overcoming the obstacle of language, they both understand each other through their gestures. Though she is highly educated, a research scholar and Fokir being illiterate make a room in the heart of Piyali Roy. Thus, Ghosh portrays in his novel an intermingling of different languages as well as cultures and customs.

Piya enjoys every moment with Fokir. Even one can say that there is a love triangle between Kanai, Piya and Fokir. But no one is able to express his or her feelings. In the same way there is a love triangle between Horen, Kusum and Nirmal. Piya and Fokir both enjoy each other's company. Kanai acts as a wall between three different characters and their relations become stronger. Ghosh has very well depicted the emotions of love, humanity, courage and faith in his fictional work.

Piya and Kanai both are outsiders as they both come here for some work to be done. They live life of metropolitan people as against Fokir who lives in a place which is far off and dependent on nature for his food. He is a native but always moving from one place to the other. His knowledge of the whereabouts of the dolphins, the dangers and safer side of the various places is all helpful to Piya's research.

Fokir is one of the most important characters of the novel. He is the hero of the novel. He is the son of Kusum, a dispossessed one. He is depicted as a

marginalised man who faces the harsh realities of life. He is an illiterate man, who possesses no knowledge regarding studies as against his wife, Moyna. Fokir is a powerless creature who becomes a puppet in the hands of powerful ones that is, Nature as well as the government. Nature plays a very dominant role in the lives of people and the islanders as well as refugees were dependent on the environment for their essentials. Fokir always goes for fishing crabs in order to get food from the river. He takes his son named Tutul with him. He is also interested in going to expedition with his father. But his mother, Moyna did not like this at all. She wanted him to study and go to school but he is happy in enjoying nature.

Fokir is a native fisherman who knows each and every corner of the Sunderbans. His ignorance as well as illiteracy turns to knowledge when he helps Piya in her research. It is remarked that “The novel appears to advocate the sensible policy of no conservation without local consultation and participation” (Huggan and Helen 188). Fokir never displays his knowledge. It is he who goes with her at the place where the dolphins were present. He is a tribal man who lives a very simple life. He is shown as a dynamic character by Ghosh. The reason for his instability lies in his shifting of ignorance to that of a knowledgeable human being. Through the character of Fokir, Ghosh tries to voice the unheard plea of the subaltern and the marginalised.

Fokir tells the myth of the legend, Bon Bibi to Piya and Kanai, but even Kanai himself is unable to translate the content of this complex traditional song. He enchants without looking into the book, which shows his deep knowledge as well as his concern towards the nature and their local goddess. This myth is told by his mother, Kusum when he was a child. Usually they visit every year to the Garjontola Island to worship forest goddess, where a shrine has been built and it is from here that he learned this prayer.

No doubt, Fokir is illiterate but he is more knowledgeable than Kanai. He understands Piya, her unspoken words and both of them communicate with each other through gestures. Though their language is not the same even then they are able to communicate and establish emotional contact.

The island Lusibari is a small area which supported several people. The people have migrated from other places arrived in several waves first in 1920s and second in 1947 and later in 1971 after the Bangladesh war. But the West Bengal

government evicted them out forcibly for making a wildlife conservation area (59). Ghosh tries to portray the gloomy picture of the sufferings of those islanders as well as refugees who became the victims of marginalisation and deprived of even the very basic necessities like food, water etc. According to Dr. Bindu, in an article named “Humanism vs. Environmentalism in The Hungry Tide”,

The government declared that the permanent settlement would disturb the forest wealth and ecological balance. The police deprived the settlers of food and water, they were tear gassed, and their tube wells destroyed and boats sunk. People who tried to cross the river were shot. Several hundreds died and their bodies were thrown into the river. (135)

Therefore, Amitav Ghosh depicts those stories which never appear in history. He reconstructs history and uses it as a tool to focus on the present sufferings of the tribal people. A.A. Mondal rightly points out that Ghosh’s texts, “In its own way, each of these texts challenges the Eurocentrism of History, sometimes by simply concentrating on non-European histories” (133). He depicts in most of his novels that how the tribal people are forced by colonial powers or by the capitalistic society to become refugees. The state as well as elite class considers the people living close to the natural environment as a burden. As a consequence, people living close to the natural environment longs for their harmonious association with the nature.

The women characters which Ghosh employ in his novel are not depicted as marginalised or weak but they are depicted as independent and self sufficient. Moreover they are ambitious. They all have their own ideologies. Nilima, one of the most important characters of the novel is married to Nirmal; they both come to Lusibari Island in 1950. Nilima married Nirmal against the wishes of her family. This shows that in that time when girls are not allowed to see their bridegroom, she marries the boy of her own choice. Later on, Nilima decided to make a foundation of the island's “Mohila Sangathan”.

Nirmal thinks after hearing Kusum, that the “legend has perhaps taken shape in the nineteenth or early twentieth century, just as new waves of settlers were moving into the tide country”(247). So, from these lines it is clear that Ghosh tries to remove the boundaries or borders that divide human beings from one another. Anthropocentrism is again questioned here, that human beings

themselves made fences, as they think they are more superior and well cultured in comparison to the people of other castes and religions. Thus by breaking the barriers between human beings Ghosh tries to assure that the hierarchical levels which he himself has set up to consider an individual superiority, are transitory and imaginary. As the novel shows,

The tide country is a meeting point not just of many rivers, but a circular roundabout. People can use this pass in many directions – from country to country and even between faiths and religions. (247)

So, through these lines it is clear that Ghosh seems to think beyond casteism and hierarchies which try to divide human beings from one another.

There are many instances in the novel where hierarchy prevails among different species whether it is human beings themselves or with nature. The human beings have become so self-centred that they do not bother about other human beings with whom they do not have any relation. An instance in the novel is when the doctor, a psychiatrist visits Nilima and she is worried about the health of her husband, Nirmal. She explains the whole matter to the doctor about Nirmal's concerns about the Island Morichjhapi. The doctor replies in following words to Nilima:

Oh these refugees! Such a nuisance. But of what concern is this to your husband? Does he know anyone on that Island? What they are to him and he to them? (275)

Thus, man himself has created hierarchical levels among his own species. Today he is an isolated being in his own species.

Another instance of hierarchical difference is seen between Kanai and Fokir. Kanai believes himself as a well qualified and a cosmopolitan who is proficient in six languages. He considers himself superior to the natives residing there in the tide country. When he meets Piya, the cetalogist, he says, "Six. Not including dialects". Kanai acts as a translator between Piya and Fokir. He always regards Fokir as a marginalised being. When Fokir and Kanai both come to the Island of Garjontola, it seems that "the authority of their positions had been suddenly reversed" (325). Fokir starts addressing Kanai as "Tui" from the respectful "apni". All the hierarchical set up dwindles when Kanai who thinks himself as a knowledgeable and well cultured man now begins to use so harsh and abusive language for Fokir. So despite of his knowledge, he shifts to the

abusive language, to which he is powerless to stop those words which were coming out of his mouth endlessly.

On the whole it can be said that Ghosh incorporated a bunch of themes in his novel rather than sticking with only one theme. The Hungry Tide is a narrative on division, deconstructing history, themes like love, romance, religion, Diaspora, sexuality and that of myth especially. Mondal comments about the novel;

The Hungry Tide is a plea as well as a testimony to the many other songs of the earth, sung by the many different peoples who live on it and claim some portion of it as their own; a plea that they do not go unheard, that they are not swamped by the hungry tides of either development or environmentalism. (19)

The novel is more about the shift in position and of the environmental and climatic change. Ghosh assumes that the land of Sunderbans is not only an area where several rivers meet but different cultures and myths also intermingle with each other. The Hungry Tide has been acclaimed as an ecocritical text, depicting the gaps present in western environmental thinking and proposes to adopt a new approach to conservation which is based on the interests of local people. Therefore, Ghosh represents the social, environmental as well as religious and political spheres as interrelated.

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Chapter- 3

Anthropocentrism across Racial and Geographical Divides in *Disgrace*

John Maxwell Coetzee is one of the renowned authors of this contemporary era. His versatility lies in his ability to cover a broad canvas for his writings. His issues comprises of political, historical, ethical as well as gender differences. He is famous as a novelist, essayist as well as a translator. Coetzee tries to focus on the issues related to late colonial and post-colonial South Africa. It is argued that, "Coetzee's ethnicity- in the South African context- has had a crucial bearing on his literary identity" (Head 22).

In his creative world, he deals with number of themes such as apartheid, issues related to racial discrimination, gender inequality and injustice done to animals. His major issue in *Disgrace* is the treatment of animals and their exploitation by human beings and their rights of protection. John Douthwaite says, "Disgrace begins by creating a stressful sense of void, conveying a message of pain, futility and the meaninglessness of the present state of affairs" (130).

In the novel *Disgrace*, Coetzee is engaged politically, compassionately and ethically with the pain and suffering of animals. He is very much concerned with the rights of animals, their welfare and the problems related to their suffering. *Disgrace*, is a story which is symbolic of "gender relations and of a postcolonial situation, as well as of the alienated condition of modern man" (Douthwaite 113). *Disgrace* is a novel which includes a multi- layered story with its setting in South Africa. It is also concerned with the lives of humans, blacks and whites in apartheid South Africa. It is a novel about the attitude of people towards nature like humans with animals as well as with nature. Man is at the centre of this universe and he exercises his power on other creatures of the world. The novel describes the relation of environment with society. It raises the question of appropriate treatment of the animals i.e. whether they are treated like an individual being or only as 'the victims' of the hierarchical order. It is argued that, "The interrelationship between history, politics and ecology makes the novel a critique of the domination of species and the earth and a piece of committed ecocriticism" (Neimneh and Muhaidat 13).

The novel *Disgrace* opens with David Lurie who is a professor of Advanced communication skills at Cape Town University. He is of fifty-two years and married twice, but he is sexually unsatisfied. This unsatisfied sexual urge leads him to his

involvement with several whores. In the beginning of the novel, David is in relation with Soraya, a Muslim prostitute. He visits her every Thursday to meet his sexual needs. He is even involved with his student named Melanie, a dark one. His weakness is the black dark eyes of women. She is a black girl who has taken Romantic studies as a part time course. She is interested in drama. David exploits women through his male dominance. He is sexually involved with Melanie not once but many times. When the case discloses in front of the University committee, Lurie is immediately expelled from the university. Though he is given a chance to apologise but he is not ready for repentance. After leaving his job, he comes to his daughters' home in Eastern Cape. Lucy is his only child who lives alone in a rural area in her farmhouse. She has a small piece of land which she uses for growing flowers and vegetables. She earns her living by selling the crop in a nearby market. She maintains a kennel where dogs of different species are kept. Petrus a black African, who describes himself as a "dog man" is her neighbour. When Lurie comes he is indifferent to animals as well as blacks.

In the second half of the novel, there is an attack on Lucy's farmhouse. The intruders first enter in Lucy's house and shoot the dogs. The three black men shut Lurie in the washroom and raped Lucy one by one. Lurie is then set to fire as they put methylated spirit on him. He is too helpless to save his daughter from the blacks. He now realises his disgrace when his own daughter is raped by the blacks. After this incident he returns back to the city. There he looks at the broken locks of the house and he comes to know that some things have been stolen. After this he goes to meet Melanie's father, Mr. Isaacs to apologise. This lead to Lurie's changed attitude towards his own life and he begins possessing humility towards other human as well as non-human forms. He returns to his daughters' home. He starts working with Bev Shaw, who works in a clinic for the welfare of animals. He helps her in disposing off the dead bodies of the dogs. And by giving a respectful funeral to the dogs he wants to give meaning to his life. There is a party organised by Petrus for his coming child. Here David recognises a relative of Petrus among the rapists. There is a reversal of roles between whites and blacks. David wants a police complaint of rape done by intruders but Lucy refuses to do this. She thinks it as a price paid for living on the land of Africans. She thinks history is responsible for her condition. At the end, Lucy accepts the marriage proposal of Petrus but Lurie opposes the idea.

The theme of marginalisation is the main issue of the novel. Marginalisation occurs on the basis of gender and race as well as on the hierarchical level set by human beings. Animals suffer in the hands of humans, as they consider themselves as more superior species on this earth. Women too are shown as a marginalised subject in the hands of patriarchal society. And on racial basis, the blacks are placed on the marginal space as opposed to the whites who actually possess the central position. But, *Disgrace* is a novel about the whites being marginalised on the land of South Africa. It can be said that it is a post-apartheid novel. The novel describes the history of South African land after apartheid regime, where the position of the whites has been reversed.

Melanie as well as Soraya, one a student of David Lurie and other a Muslim prostitute both are depicted as marginalised subjects and they remain silent as victims in the hands of more dominant patriarchal discourse. As Gregory R. Pritchard says,

By representing Soraya, Dawn and Melanie as animal-like, they are closer to nature and therefore inferior to the more 'civilised' Lurie, who represents the European culture of the coloniser. (204)

Therefore, the text also seems to present that men subjugate women as well as animals. The rape itself is one of the instance from which it is clear that there is a lack of understanding "the other" in patriarchal society. Sometimes "the other" is understood mainly a low creature, then either it is race based, or gender based that is women, or hierarchy based that is animals. Non-white races are also compared with nature because they are considered uncivilised by the whites. Female is generally considered closer to nature. Pritchard in his article, "J.M.Coetzee and the Problem of Evil" says that,

Both women and non-white races whether male or female, have traditionally considered as closer to nature and this imbues them with primitive animal instincts and passions. (204)

Coetzee tries to portray in this novel, the vision of South Africa with its contemporary problems. The novel talks about the political situation of the native land and it also discusses, rape, lawlessness, and racial divides as its major concerns. It seems that Coetzee tries to depict the history in two different parts, one is pre-apartheid and the other is post-apartheid. In pre- apartheid history there is a control of whites over blacks. It was the time when white people were the colonizers

and treated black ones as their slaves. Because of racism whites treat the native people of Africa as marginalised beings. Whites consider their race as superior one and blacks as inferior race. Their relation was that of coloniser and colonised or master and slave. It is in the pre- apartheid history that white people used dogs in their homes for their own protection. They were watch dogs and are used against black people to protect the property of white land owners. On the whole, the blacks were treated mercilessly, their position was worse than animals.

But, the post- apartheid era comprises of the reversal of roles of blacks and whites. Whites were now on the other side of the coin as black people asserted their rights for their own freedom. For this Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up, and it was one of the most important agency created at the time when Nelson Mandela became the president of which helped the victims to hear their complaints. It was one of the organisations which got established in 1995 under the leadership of Archbishop Tutu (Apartheid). It brought about the democracy in South Africa. Now blacks began to come in power and whites being marginalised in the African land. This is the situation which has been described in the novel *Disgrace*. Raval rightly opines, “In *Disgrace* at least some members of the committee investigating Lurie’s case may be taken to represent the TRC’s project of reconciliation through confession and remorse” (Raval 147).

Coetzee critiques the history of whites as well as of blacks with emphasis on violence and brutality. And the targets of violence are mainly women and animals. It describes that animals as well as humans are on the same footing, as the sufferings of humans are compared with the animals and those of animals with the human beings. For instance, Lucy compares her situation with that of dog. Coetzee mentions in the novel as,

Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level.
With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no
weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. Like a dog. (205)

Whereas, animals are also shown as they too have the ability to feel, “they can smell your thoughts” (142). They are compared with the human beings as they to possess soul. Coetzee, very pathetically presents the sufferings and the feelings of dogs, in these lines,

Dogs know their time has come. . . . The dogs in the yard smell what
is going on inside. They flatten their ears, they droop their tails, as if

they too feel the disgrace of dying; locking their legs . . . which they somehow know is going to harm them terribly. (143)

In the second half of the novel, Lurie visits his daughter Lucy. She lives in the town of Salem in Eastern Cape. She owns a small holding where she manages dog kennels and growing flowers and vegetables. She earns her livelihood by selling vegetables and flowers. A man named Petrus; her black neighbour helps her in managing the kennel. She is nature loving girl and is compassionate towards other beings. But Lucy is raped by three black people; she becomes a victim of racial hatred. Lucy refuses to complaint against those three people and she thinks her rape as a price paid for living on this land only. She is surprised to see their hatred for her. She says, "It was done with such personal hatred. That was what stunned me more than anything. The rest was . . . expected. But why did they hate me so? I never set eyes on them" (156).

So, Coetzee seems to portray a totally different kind of life that white people live in South Africa. Lucy lives a different life as opposed to his father Lurie. She thinks that history is responsible for her exploitation in the hands of black people. She asks her father not to intervene in her matter. As Lucy says to her father, "Don't shout at me, David. This is my life. I am the one who has to live here. . ." (82). So, she accepts the hatred of blacks because she understands the past in relation to its present circumstances. The three men one of them is named Pollux, is recognised as Petrus's relative. Petrus does not resist Pollux; rather he remains silent and supports his own tribe. He calls them as "my people", and regards Pollux as a child of his own family, which clarifies that he is on their side. Petrus, says to Lurie that, "You have no work here. You come to look after your child. I also look after my child" (201).

Petrus tells David that Pollux is too young to get married, so instead of him he himself will marry Lucy and her farm will be his dowry. This disturbs Lurie a lot. But Lucy's response to Petrus offer is more realistic. As Salman Rushdie, in his book *Step Across This Line* says "Petrus comes closet, but his presence grows more menacing as the novel proceeds" (340). But as Lucy argues with David about Petrus's offering and says that he is not able to get the point. Coetzee says:

Petrus is not offering me a church wedding followed by a honeymoon on the Wild Coast. He is offering an alliance, a deal. I contribute the land, in return for which I am allowed to creep in under his wing. (203)

So, Lucy very well accepts her fate that if she has to live on where she is living then she has to tolerate the brutality and cruel behaviour of blacks and keep her life going on as it is. She is able to understand what David cannot.

Lucy, thus holds apartheid South Africa and its white population responsible in the final sense for the trauma experienced by whites like herself through acts of vengeance by black South Africans. (Raval 148)

Thus on the whole, it is the time when blacks were demanding their rights and revenging against the whites for the treatment they had done with blacks in the past.

Therefore it can be said that *Disgrace* is a novel set in post apartheid era which shows the reversal of power. It is a novel about “post-colonial” South Africa. It is concerned with “Apartheid” in South Africa which means separation or apartness. It is the policy of discrimination that has led to the suppression of human rights of black and colored people of South Africa. Apartheid forced terribly heavy burden on the people of South Africa. The consequence was that whites who were there in South Africa were well fed and they were financially sound as compared to the native population living there. In *Britannia Encyclopaedia* it is said that,

The economic gap between the wealthier few, nearly all of whom were white, and the poor masses, virtually all of whom were African coloured, or Indians was larger than in any other country . . . Africans suffered from widespread poverty malnutrition and disease. (927)

The implementation of apartheid was made possible through the “Population Registration Act of 1950”, which classified or divided all South Africans on the basis of race that is, black, African, colored, white and Asian (Apartheid 910). In the beginning of the twentieth century, the South Africa continent was under the rule of European power. The South African government itself was dominated by White Population which was present there in minority. As a result apartheid as a policy was imposed on the people of South Africa, which evoked intense hatred in both races. But 1990 was the era when acts were made to eliminate the Population Registration Act which was the reason for the segregation.

As a result, the Europeans used racial segregation as an important tool in colonizing the people who were colored and belonged to other race. *Disgrace* as a novel of post- apartheid thus means the dismantling of this policy of racial

discrimination. There is an attack on Lucy's farmhouse by some strangers who were blacks. They attacked on the house and robbed David's car as well as they set him at fire and shot their dogs and above all they raped Lucy. This incident was the outcome of the hatred which was there in the hearts of black people due to their feelings of revenge. When Lucy had been raped, Lurie talked to her, and when Lucy points towards the intense hatred in the act, Lurie says that, "It was history speaking through them... A history of wrong...it may have seemed personal, but it was not. It came down from the ancestors" (156).

So it is clear that the rape was not an outcome of only personal hatred but history in which a lot of racial discrimination was prevailing is largely responsible for this incident. In a way they both had different thoughts on the rape as she thinks it more in terms of history seeking its revenge but Lurie interprets it in another way. He wants Lucy to inform to police but she refuses to do so, he also asks her to sell the farm and leave this place. But Lucy had a more humane attitude toward their neighbours or it must be the result of the place where Lucy has been residing in a rural area she understands how racial relations in the past were there and how they had been affecting the lives of individuals even today also. The power relations have been changed and Lucy thinks that the whites will have to live like intruders in South Africa. In a way the novel represents the racial politics as well as the cultural situation of post-apartheid South Africa. As it is said that,

Coetzee concludes *Disgrace* with an ambiguous scene in which David Lurie chooses not to forestall Bev Shaw's killing of crippled dog . . . but Lurie's reengagement with society. The concluding episode, while bleak, presents David Lurie as a motivated and even compassionate part of a social unit. (Grayson 168)

There is a shift of power from the Europeans to the Africans. It was rather a reversal of fortune as Lucy became pregnant by the blacks and now the seed in her womb would be of black. David is against Lucy as she wants to give birth to the child, but David is very much worried about her daughter's future. Petrus, who is black by race, tells himself a dog-man. One of the rapists is detected as Pollux in the party of Petrus. Pollux is the relative of Petrus and when David tells him that Pollux is the rapist; at this he is not surprised. He tells David that Pollux is too young to marry Lucy; instead he himself will marry Lucy. Petrus demands farm as his dowry. He represents the dominance of patriarchal society and he takes Lucy as a

sale of commodity. His thinking as a dominant male is depicted in these lines when he asks David Lurie about Lucy, "But here, it is dangerous, too dangerous. A woman must be marry" (202).

Lucy accepts the offer of Petrus. She is ready to become his third wife. She gets agreed to hand over her farm to Petrus and she tells that her house will remain hers. Lucy is helpless and powerless. So she has to accept the proposal of Petrus to make herself secure on the land of South Africa. And she says, "I will sign the land over to him as long as the house remains mine. I will become a tenant on his land" (204). Lucy considers herself defenceless as she does not have any support of brother and father. Lucy asks Lurie to consider her situation objectively. She says,

Objectively I am a woman alone. I have no brothers. I have a father, but he is far away and anyhow powerless in the terms that matter here . . . Practically speaking, there is only Petrus left. Petrus may not be a big man but he is big enough for someone small like me. (204)

It is clear from these lines that the power has shifted from the whites to the blacks living in South Africa. From these lines one could infer the condition of women in South Africa, as Petrus also says "it is dangerous, too dangerous. A woman must be marry[ied]" (202). The whole scenario is visible through the characters which Coetzee has portrayed in the novel.

When David comes to know about Lucy's pregnancy he is feeling extremely helpless for not being able to save her from such a disgrace and humiliation. He was startled at her daughter's decision, he says, "It is humiliating... to start at a ground level. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity" (205).

The whole novel deals with the theme of shifting of power. Talking from the perspective of David Lurie, one could see that how in the beginning of the novel he used the prostitute Soraya and then his student Melanie but there was an overturn in the power relations. Initially Soraya was silent, unable to speak, who had to meet with the demands of Lurie every week. But suddenly her attitude towards Lurie changes or one could say, the object herself transforms into a subject now. She says to Lurie, "You are harassing me in my own house. I demand you will never phone me here again, never" (10).

David's attitude towards Melanie could be conceived as a parallel to Lucy in the violence she receives in the hands of the strangers. His attitude towards women changes and he learns to give up his obstinacy and becomes more down to earth. One of the major changes in Lurie after the rape of Lucy is that he decides to meet Mr. Isaacs, father of Melanie to apologize for his mistreatment of her, "I apologize for the grief I have caused you and Mrs. Isaacs. I ask for your pardon" (171).

David's sense of superiority has vanished as he is not able to protect his own daughter. The sense of self disgust and helplessness and the loss of authority give him the sensation of being out of place in their society. Michael Marais mentions that,

The emphasis on Lurie's resistance to the burden of responsibility in these descriptions of his relationship to his daughter indicates that, just as he does not choose to become the dogs' 'keeper', he does not choose to become his daughter's 'keeper'. It happens because he loses himself and, in the process, gives himself to the Other. (11)

At the end of the novel he becomes a sympathetic character. He realises that his western teaching has no importance in this post apartheid South Africa. It is said that, "The celebration of Western culture through a teaching of its canonical texts in apartheid South Africa no longer made sense in the post-apartheid era" (Raval 147).

Now, he comes to know that the power relations and political conditions of the country are changing. From the various incidents whether it is rape of Lucy, demands of Petrus or humiliation of David all lead to the conclusion that the positions were changing. The marginal is coming at the centre, the violator being violated and the colonizers are turning into colonized and vice versa. As John Rees Moore writes about the novel that:

Disgrace is more than graceful: it is humorous, powerful and searching. South Africa after apartheid still provides horrors to be chastised, though now the shoe is on the other foot. White however innocent can be the victims of black revenge. (462-463)

Disgrace is a multi layered novel in which Coetzee incorporates lot of symbols. The text itself is enriched with a lot of themes related to the socio-political conditions of the country but the use of symbolism makes it more affluent. Woodward mentions that,

Animals are not just symbolic . . . they are sentient beings with consciousness, intentionality and creativity. They live with humans and may extend our limited purviews of time, space and relationship (112).

“Dogs” are one of the most important symbols used in the novel. Through dogs, it is shown that how they were used as weapons for protection of one race against the other. It is said that in the novel, dogs are “connected with particular places, histories and discourses” (Woodward 112). Dogs are innocent creatures but on Lucy’s farm they are brutally killed having no fault of their own. Pritchard says, “The metaphorical linking of the rapists to the dogs is one of the stronger statements in the novel” (205).

It is the human being who uses them as weapons for their personal hatred against other human races. This became one of the reasons why those three black men first attacked the dogs with gun. As in Apartheid era watch dogs were used by whites for the protection of their villas from black people. The dogs thus became the symbol of violence. The most pathetic situation is created when they were brought to Bev Shaw’s clinic and they are killed because they suffer from distempers, broken limbs, infected bites etc. They are killed only because they are too many. Bev Shaw says, “The dogs are brought to the clinic because they are unwanted: because we are too menny” (146). Bev Shaw herself says to Lurie, when he visits her clinic. “On the list of the nation’s priorities, animals stand nowhere” (73). Animals, in *Disgrace*, especially dogs are compared with something downtrodden. They are compared with non-living things too. As it is said,

They are part of the furniture, part of the alarm system. They do us the honour of treating us like gods, and we respond by treating them like things. (78)

Initially when Lurie visits Lucy’s farm, he had a disliking for animals. He thinks that humans must be kind to animals but should not lose perspective. “We are of a different order of creation from the animals. Not higher, necessarily, just different” (74). But Lurie’s mind set up changes completely. In the end, when he visits Lucy’s farm he begins to recognize his own situation after losing his job. He evaluates his behaviour towards animals. His sympathetic concerns with animals enable him to be down to earth. He observes Lucy’s dogs as,

They are very egalitarian, aren't they No classes. No one too high and mighty to smell another's backside. He squats, allows the dog to smell his face, his breath. It has what he thinks of as an intelligent look, though it is probably nothing of the kind. (85)

When they accept Petrus's demand, the disgrace of Lurie as well as Lucy, has been compared to dogs, which is with nothing. "No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity. Like a dog" (205). Sometimes, it seems to represent that the condition of dogs is like they possess no rights in a country like South Africa. As it is said,

Lucy's admission that this state is being "like a dog" critiques the position of dogs as sentient beings that are without rights in South African law. (Woodward 108)

"Fire" has a special reference throughout the novel and is used several times with different meanings. Firstly, it refers to hatred when David is set to fire by the three black people in an attack on Lucy's farm. Fire has been compared to vengeance in the novel. "Vengeance is like a fire. The more it devours, the hungrier it gets" (112).

Secondly, it denotes the honour which is to be given to the dead bodies of the dogs by incinerating them. Lurie thinks that by consigning their bodies to flames will be an honour to their souls. Thirdly, the symbol of fire has been used for passion also. When Lurie visits at Isaacs home, to confess his guilt he then compares his passion to "fire". He asks Mr. Isaacs,

A fire: what is remarkable about that? . . . Yet in the olden days people worshipped fire. They thought twice before letting a flame die, a flame-god. It was that kind of flame your daughter kindled in me. (166)

"Earth" symbolises the patience of Lucy that how she bear the violent attack of intruders. As the earth bears burden of whole creed of people, in the same way Lucy accepts the things as they are going on. For instance she gets ready to sign over the papers of land.

Petrus represents feudalist patriarchal South African tribe. It is well expressed by the author when Petrus wants to marry Lucy and in return he demands for dowry. His patriarchy is shown in the sense that he is married twice and he feels no shame in accepting Lucy as her third wife.

Melanie is also an appropriate symbol representing the “Other”. She is a female and secondly, she is a black, “Melanie: the dark one” (18). She has been shown as suppressed by the dominant or more powerful one. Melanie symbolises the subaltern voice in the novel. Douthwaite says that:

. . . Melanie represents the ultimate step in his downfall because she is female, young, and coloured . . . she is an apt symbol of the moment of crisis and transition in society. (136)

David Lurie’s disgrace also symbolises the disgrace of the nation. In the beginning of the novel, Lurie represents the dominant discourse and an exploiter of the weaker human. But the latter half of the novel deals with his disgrace. He ends his life humiliating as his daughter receives the same treatment what he has done in his life. He becomes a servant as Petrus was. John Douthwaite, remarks that;

His raping Melanie brings about another disgracing role reversal: Lurie is also punished by the ethnic Other through the rape of his daughter by Petrus’s retarded relative and two adults. The wheel has come full circle. (157)

Coetzee has also incorporated animal metaphors in the novel. Sometimes at various places in the novel the animal other has been related to the female other too. “Snake” is used as a metaphor, as David thinks himself as a snake and the intercourse between Soraya and himself as “copulation of snakes: lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract, rather dry, even at its hottest” (3). “Butterfly” as a metaphor is used for David’s need of women as it is said, “His needs turn out to be quite light, after all, light and fleeting, like those of butterfly” (5). Then the metaphor of “Bull” is used, it seems that it represents compatibility between Soraya and David. “From the beginning it was satisfactory, just what he wanted. A bull’s eye” (7). Soraya’s children are compared with “cubs” represents innocence. When Soraya refuses to do work for the agency, David telephones her and her words surprises David:

Her shrillness surprises him: there has been no intimation of it before. But then, what should a predator expect when he intrudes into the vixen’s nest, into the home of her cubs. (10)

Metaphors like “rabbit” and “fox” are used in the novel. Rabbit represents innocence and is used for Melanie and “fox” represents David Lurie’s greed for sex.

Not rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core. As though she had decided to go slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of the fox close on its neck. (25)

Moreover animal terms like “mole burrowing” (25), “bucking and clawing” (9), “fairest creatures” (16), and many other words like these have been used in the novel. Randall comments,

Intensified focus on the animal enables Coetzee to write in a zone of intersection between sociopolitical and ecological concerns, to elaborate an ecologically oriented ethics that sharpens the critique of modern political regimes that dominate and exploit fellow beings both human and non-human. (210)

Therefore, Coetzee’s use of animal terms and more focus on the animal world shows his ecological concerns and he seems to critique the very centeredness of human beings and their tendency to dominate upon other creatures of the world. In the words of Wendy Woodward,

. . . Coetzee has made profound ecological statements about the dualistic thinking of racism, speciesism and their reticulations. The narrative not only deconstruct familiar racialised discourses about dogs and their legal locations in human social formations- as in the South African Constitution which has animals only as property- but also challenge the assumption that humans have the right, as an apparently privileged species, to impose our will on animals, and, by implication, on the earth. (113)

In the novel, Coetzee locates the problem of the dogs that are “useless” or “unwanted”. This thing not only depicts the poverty of these underdeveloped countries but it also shows the negligence or lack of caring policy of the African government towards the “sterilization of stray animals” (Woodward 95). Wendy Woodward says that,

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee very specifically locates the problem of “unwanted” animals as a concomitant to the poverty of an economically underdeveloped township in the Eastern Cape. (94)

Disgrace in a way raises various questions that how the animals are being treated by human beings – their slaughtering as well as their unwantedness. In an article, “J.M.Coetzee and the ‘Problem of Evil’ ”, Pritchard says that, “Coetzee’s

investigation of the problem of evil, represented in how humans treat each other, and how humanity treats animals” (209). Animals are not recognised as “loved ones” but as unwanted beings or one can even say as unwanted things; which are thrown away out of the house when they become useless or outdated. Thus there is a clear depiction of the pitiable condition of animals in the novel. It is said that,

In *Disgrace* much of the import of the narrative lies in which humans interact with animals, not just in the psychologies of the various characters. The treatment of sheep, goats, and in particular dogs, largely carries the symbolic meaning of the text. (Pritchard 202)

It is clear that animal treatment by the human beings is one of the important themes which have been taken into consideration. There is another reference to the killing of dogs in the novel when the attack is done by the blacks that are the natives of South Africa. When they entered the plantation boundary the caged dogs barked at those strangers, they fired at the dogs one after the another. The lines clearly suggests,

There is a heavy report; blood and brains splatter the cage. For a moment barking ceases. The man fires twice more. One dog shot through the chest, dies at once; another, with a gaping throat-wound, sits down heavily, flattens its ears. . . (95)

Rural-urban divide in perspectives toward the ecosystem/animals is another case in point. Coetzee has depicted contrast between the characters in his novel; he has depicted characters belonging to rural background as well as of urban background. David Lurie as well as Lucy, his daughter is in contrast to each other. After leaving his job as a Professor, disgraced, he moves to his daughter’s farm in Salem, a town on the Eastern Cape. It is from here that a drastic change in the nature of David Lurie is delineated. Lucy, his daughter is totally a rustic girl who loves nature. She keeps herself busy with sowing, harvesting. She makes her living by selling flowers and vegetables. In the novel it is mentioned that, “This is how she makes a living: from the kennels, and from selling flowers and garden produce” (61).

Lucy is portrayed by Coetzee as a pure nature loving girl. She tells her father about not to waste water, not to contaminate septic tank, this shows her concern and care for the resources of nature. She rejects the notion of anthropocentricity

and says, "There is no higher life. This is the only life there is which we share with animals" (77).

In a way she is totally one with nature. She has kept several dogs and she had a more sympathetic attitude towards animals. But there is a lot of difference between the urban and rural life as Lurie is not able to cope up with the rural setting as he is not as loving towards the animals as Lucy is. In the beginning of the novel Lurie, is shown to have no caring attitude towards animals. He considered them as inessential. He says to his daughter, "I have brought my books. I just need a table and chair" (62).

David thinks about the soil like a barren land, good for nothing, he does not have that kind of feeling and thought towards nature as considering it a living being but thinks it to be a non human thing. He says, "Poor land, poor soil". He even gets irritated by the noise of the barking dogs.

But now, he slowly began to realize his feelings towards them. He, at first shows his disassociatedness with "Animal Welfare League". Initially he rejects to change, but he accepts and this change is seen in his attitude towards non human beings. As the lines suggests,

The more killings he assists in, the more jittery he gets. One Sunday evening, driving home in Lucy's Kombi, he actually has to stop at the road side to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. (142)

Thus these lines very clearly depict his changed attitude towards other beings. Lurie is not able to understand about his own nature that is why he has been so indifferent and cruel towards animals until now. His attitude towards his life changes drastically. Coetzee mentions in the novel Lurie's changed behaviour as,

He does not understand what is happening to him. Until now he has been more or less indifferent to animals. . . He assumes that people from whom cruelty is demanded in the line of duty, people who work in slaughterhouses, grow carapaces over their souls. (143)

There is a reference about the death of dogs how they are disposed off and Lurie takes charge of disposing them off. As the lines shows,

The morning after each killing session he drives the loaded kombi to the grounds of Settlers Hospital, to the incinerator, and there consigns the bodies in their black bags to the flames. (144)

Lurie himself does the job, he loads them to the trolley and then put them into flames. Leaving them as such in the garbage dump, according to Lurie, would be a dishonour to them and he says, "He is not prepared to inflict such dishonour upon them" (144). He has taken up this job to lighten the burden of Bev Shaw, who is the care taker of animals as she runs animal refuge. Lurie now comes to recognize the dogs as souls. Woodward rightly points out that:

Dogs, like all other animals, are mortal – and potentially immortal. Because human life- spans tend to be longer than those of dogs, we outlive them; thus they can teach us about impermanence, suffering and death. (113)

Therefore, man must remember that he too is a part of nature not an authority upon it. Though our civilisation has progressed a lot but human beings were a part of nature and in the future too they will be a part of it. In the novel, the presence of dogs teaches the human beings about "the spiritual aspects of dying" (Woodward 113). As we see, Lurie undergoes a change as from a patriarchal and stubborn man he has become an "old man" giving up everything he loved. He left meaning in his life; he left his womanizing which once upon a time was one of his primary activities. It is said that:

Lurie, both by necessity and choice, relinquishes much of his former status, and the trappings of civilisation to end the novel as the 'dog man', preparing dogs for incineration. From an attitude of animals as things he has been transformed by his sympathy. (Pritchard 207)

David Lurie is a man, who cannot satisfy his sexual desires as the very first line shows, "For a man of his age, fifty two, divorced, he has to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well" (1). From these lines, it is clear that his primary need is sex, as he regularly visits Soraya, a prostitute on every Thursday. But after his parting from Soraya he feels some kind of lack. It is a kind of emotional lack which he would have enjoyed as a married man. "Lurie's relationship with a prostitute named Soraya only reveals the inadequacy of physical intimacy to satisfy David's hunger for emotional intimacy" (Grayson 162). He then got involved with one of his students named Melanie Isaacs, from his Romantic course. She is thirty years junior to him. Lurie tries to force her and he notices:

She does not resist. All she does is avert herself: avert her lips, avert her eyes. She lets him lay her out on the bed and undress her: ... Not

rape, not quite that, but undesired nevertheless, undesired to the core.
(25)

Lurie makes relation with women one after the other; it shows the discourse of patriarchy which confirms his domination over them. In a way, he could be called as a predator, an exploiter of women. So, it is clear from these lines that he is totally a man with patriarchal values in his head and heart. He is depicted as a man who is more superior as well as more powerful with concern to both race and possessing physical strength. Another instance of patriarchal discourse is when he says, “. . . A woman’s beauty does not belong to her alone. It is part of the bounty she brings into the world. She has a duty to share it” (16).

This dichotomy of power is not only visible in the relations of men Vs men but also in Men Vs non- humane world. Lurie behaves like a colonizer who wants women for the fulfilment or gratification of his erotic desires. Thus he acquires the position of power, as these women are quite or they are unable to question their desires. When Lurie is accused in front of the committee he refuses to confess he says,

...what you want from me is not a response but a confession. Well, I make no confession. I put forward a plea, as is my right. Guilty is charged. That is my plea. That is as far as I am prepared to go. (51)

He further asserts, “Repentance is neither here nor there. Repentance belongs to another world, to another universe of discourse” (58). So, it is clear that from the very beginning of the novel Lurie projects himself as a free as well as an autonomous subject. There is a lack of interest which in the later part of the novel will be exactly opposite to this. He defines himself as “a servant of Eros” (52).

Lurie is a person who shows his authority as well as his superiority both on the basis of race as well as gender but the place where he has come to live is now the dominion of the race that has come back to claim its possession. And in this changed scenario where the European/white race has come to be in a socially inferior position in relation to the natives, the tables have turned for the Lurie family.

Earlier in the case of Melanie Lurie was less introspective as he does not accept his act to be considered as rape. But he gets shocked when his daughter was raped. He gradually realises his mistake and his attitude toward animals’ changes overall. The disgrace of the country has been compared to the disgrace of David Lurie. The novel tries to question how the relations between blacks and

whites affect their personal lives too. The relationship between man and woman as well as man and animal has been analyzed in the novel.

Disgrace is more about the after effects of the apartheid policy. The status of society in relation to its ethics as well as politics is depicted. It is the novel which describes the condition of Third- World nation where state of disillusionment exists even now. The idea of democracy is in its infancy when a nation got liberation from the shackles of colonizers. This is the thing which has been put up in the form of question in the novel. Although racial segregation do not exist in this period, but the past plays an important role as history cannot be erased entirely. So, Coetzee is one of the African writers who try to portray the condition of the third world countries by visualising the torment of the people due to the inner commotion. The novel is about the chaotic condition of the South Africa. When Disgrace first came in 1999, it was criticized as a depressing critique of post- apartheid South Africa.

Many whites in and outside South Africa found appalling the novel's seeming justification of rapes of white women by predatory African males as an inevitable consequence of the years of domination of the blacks by an oppressive white regime. (Raval 146)

In the latter half of the novel when Lucy has been raped by the three black men, it seems that the revenge which blacks want to take from the white people is complete. In the past blacks were the victims in the hands of the white people. When Lurie sexually exploits Melanie, he thinks himself as right in his own way. He thinks that our biological instincts are responsible for this and he asserts his right presumption that whatever he has done in his life is absolutely right and he has no confess over it. But when her daughter receives the similar treatment from three black men and they assaulted her it is clear that the revenge is complete. Lucy thinks that no one other is responsible for this but the history only. It parallels the situation of Lurie as well as Mr. Isaacs as their daughters received same attitude in the first one Lurie himself is responsible. Earlier he is the victimizer and latter a victim. It is argued that:

Lurie as a burgeoning stoic, a man threatened by emasculation, and an individual suffering from a lack of intimacy while positing that the novel depicts the attainment through "secular humility" and the struggle to remain human in an inhuman world. (Grayson 161)

Thus Coetzee in his novel tries to focus upon the complex working of Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He too was dubious because of sudden beginning of a new era based on democratic policy. It helps in admitting the historical past when blacks were slaves under whites.

Coetzee explores the more complex alternative which acknowledges the historical trauma and the lasting scars suffered by the victims of the apartheid and which in turn makes some whites understand their own role in deeper terms. (Raval 148)

After coming up of TRC and democracy in South Africa the situation began to change. Now the shoe is in other foot that is blacks were coming into power. They began to question about the land holdings under white people. The thinking of native people was changing. In *Disgrace*, blacks hate Lucy's patch of land which she possesses. Petrus demands for her farm as a dowry. This seems to suggest that now blacks want to dominate whites. After the rape incident, the boy named Pollux again visited Lucy's farm, it was the hatred in their hearts because of which they do such kind of acts. David gives him a solid kick and the boy shouts in pain "I will kill you" (207). An instance of hatred is when the black man spoils Lucy's farm where vegetables were planted. It is said in the novel, "He turns; deliberately trampling the potato bed, he ducks under the wire fence and retreats toward Petrus's house" (207).

Therefore, a change in racial hierarchy is visible thoroughly while reading the novel. The contemporary situation of South Africa has been put into words by Coetzee.

To the novel's whites, its black inhabitants are essentially a threat – a threat justified by history. Because whites have historically oppressed blacks, it's being suggested, we must now accept that blacks will oppress whites. An eye for an eye, and so the whole world goes blind. (Rushdie 340)

The situation seems to have changed totally, where the whites stood at one time now blacks are on their position. Now Lurie also believes that there is no relevance of teaching western canon in the South African Country. It is a post-apartheid era in which the West has become obsolete for the native black African people. In the words of Salman Rushdie, "Lurie believes that the English language is no longer capable of expressing the Southern African reality" (339).

Coetzee's way of putting things is remarkable. He is concerned with the sufferings of the African people. When the novel is about to end, it seems that Coetzee takes two sides that is, by sympathising with whites and showing blacks coming in power. Lurie is portrayed not as an extremely negative character by Coetzee. He gets sympathy due to his changed behaviour towards other beings. Lurie loses all the benefits he got earlier being a white man but now it is not like that. Petrus is shown ploughing fields on a tractor and Lurie becoming a dog man as Petrus was. Lucy, bearing the offspring of black, thus clarifying the reversal of roles whites earlier played. This is what blacks wanted to oppress whites living on their lands.

Thus, Coetzee, a very prominent and contemporary writer of South Africa deals with the issues of post-colonial era. His main concern is for the rights of the animals as well as their welfare. This issue has been taken by him in the novels like *Elizabeth Costello* and *The Lives of Animals*. It is said that

In Coetzee's vision, plants and landscapes are unduly ignored and exploited in times of political strife, which accounts for Coetzee's ecocritical – and by implication political – relevance. Coetzee's ecological vision is still richly political as inveigh against various forms of injustice, including but not limited to apartheid. (Neimneh and Muhaidat 12)

The way the human being is assigning his authority over other beings and considering himself as the supreme being of the universe who is above all the species means that he thinks himself as belonging to a higher hierarchy level it will be acutely harmful for the ecosystem as well as for the man itself to live on this planet. Coetzee pays a special attention by focussing on minor forms of life as important part on this planet.

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Conclusion and Comparative Analysis

Amitav Ghosh and J.M.Coetzee both are very significant writers in English fiction writing. They depict the gradual change in the natural world of twentieth century which has occurred because of human activities. Man is continuously trying to conquer the resources of the whole planet and is consciously or unconsciously, degrading the environment on a large pace by doing so. Thus, due to degradation of environment, authors as well as intellectuals became aware and consciously started writing about these issues. It has changed the mode of writing and authors begin to depict their ideas to make people aware about the ecological imbalances in nature. They concentrate on common threat which became a danger for human survival as well as for environmental life. This idea describes that man destroys nature and therefore in return nature annihilates man.

The study of these two novels, *Disgrace* and *The Hungry Tide* highlight that there is a close relationship between the study of literature and environment. Literature is the product of society and society develops in nature. The language, culture, and manners of a particular society are illustrated in literature. Both the writers depict in their writings the co-relation of humans and environment. So, to maintain the balance between individuals and their surroundings it is important to preserve the valuable resources of the environment. It is evident that since ancient time, our ancestors used to live in jungles and depended on natural environment for their food and shelter. But during the last few decades, the selfish nature of man and the competitiveness in this globalised world has compelled him to take control over nature to fulfil his desires. Nature is no longer worshipped by man as it was in primeval times. And now environment is just a thing to be used by man. Gradually, man becomes an exploiter of nature; he is trying to violate the laws of nature. The very notion of anthropocentrism and man's ability to conquer nature has already resulted in disastrous consequences.

So, both the writers, J.M. Coetzee as well as Amitav Ghosh can be studied in this light, that they are conscious about the results of the degradation of environment. There is no doubt that there are lot of cultural as well as geographical variations among the background of both the authors. Amitav Ghosh is an Indian writer and he looks at these issues through the glass of Indian society. On the other hand, J.M.Coetzee is born on the land of South Africa. And he is conscious about

the rights of Afro-Americans. But both these writers portray voice of the marginalised or the “Other” in their works. They portray the realities of the “Third World” nations. Both these novels *Disgrace* as well as *The Hungry Tide* are the products of late 90's, in which the socio- political scenario has been discussed. Ghosh tries to focus on the issues related to anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism. He critiques anthropocentrism, imperialism, colonialism, and he adopts modernist attitude in his writings. Whereas, Coetzee is known as a post-modernist writer whose chief concern is the suffering of animals. He is sympathetic towards non-human forms of living organisms whose survival is significant for the humankind.

This study, despite its limited scope suggests that the humanities as well as literature are cultural discourses which are primarily concerned with human perception of environment. As a consequence, they all are anthropocentric. However the ideologies, philosophies and attitudes towards nature; its flora and fauna, determine the way non-human aspects of this Universe are well elaborated in literature. Man considers himself as an intellectual being and he tries to control over everything. And he thinks that the process of society is a complex phenomenon whereas nature is a simple one. But it depicts his anthropocentric vision, as nature and its laws are not as simple as human being think. So, the need of the hour is to critique this anthropocentric vision to make the human survival inhabitable not only for present but also for progeny. So, literature plays a significant role to bring out the environmental issues to forefront.

Both Coetzee and Ghosh evaluate the hegemonic modes of development in their works. From the sixteenth century or the advent of modernity and enlightenment, anthropocentrism has been a main ideological perspective of western civilization. Man began to consider himself as a sole heir of the nature and its valuable assets because of his high intellectual and rational thinking.

The works of both the writers are highly considerable, known for its language and aesthetics. Ghosh as well as Coetzee both the writers have contributed a lot in the canon of world literature. Both the writers deal with the prominent issues of social and political premises. No doubt, both the works are very complex in the sense that they do not focus only on a single issue, but they focus on some other issues such as administrative corruption, issues based on gender differences, caste and race prejudices and various other socio political issues. The primary focus is on critiquing anthropocentrism and environmental degradation.

There are some common issues discussed in both the novels on different grounds. Both these novels are post colonial novels in the sense that they are set after colonialism is over, in independent countries. The setting of both the novels is woven on different grounds. As *Disgrace* has been set in South Africa it covers urban as well as rural area, whereas *The Hungry Tide* comprises of a small locale called “The Sunderbans”, a tide country.

They critiqued the notion of anthropocentrism, which is the common issue of both the novels. The concept of anthropocentrism states that the human beings comprise the central position in the Universe. This forms the hierarchical levels in the society, in which some are powerful and some powerless. So in this sense, the theme of marginality arises in both the novels. In *The Hungry Tide*, refugees and tribal people in India who had migrated earlier from Bangladesh are depicted as marginalised. Characters like Kusum as well as Fokir are on the margins. They are powerless people who are victims in the hands of government authorities. So, Ghosh in one way or the other critiques the political scenario of the country. In *Disgrace*, blacks in the earlier part of the novel are shown as marginalised. Women characters like Soraya and Melanie are depicted as marginalised who are exploited in the hands of David Lurie, who represents the powerful patriarchal discourse.

Coetzee and Ghosh, both are very much concerned about the degradation of the environment, which depicts that it has become a worldwide issue. Man considers himself as an authority over the nature, not as a part of nature. This is one of the major reasons why nature has been exploited. This notion of anthropocentrism has been used by these authors in a variety of shades.

Coetzee depicts that how animals are considered as unwanted and humans believe that only their lives are significant. Coetzee critiques this self centeredness in his novel *Disgrace*, as the way the sheep are slaughtered for human food, and the way they are tied with a rope and not given something to eat shows man’s cruel attitude towards animals. Coetzee himself is a vegetarian and according to some critics it is said that he opposes to commit such kind of heinous acts towards animals.

Both these novels represent the history of the colonial era, it depicts that even after the colonial rule, the condition of the third world nations continues to be the same as it was. For instance, in South Africa after the liberation in 1994 and in India after 1947, the role of power has been changed, the colonial people have

become free. But, the situation of the tribal people, women, animals, refugees, all of whom are considered as marginalised section of the society remained unchanged, because power shifts from one hand to another. Being slaved they suffered in the hands of foreign rulers and after independence they worked under rich class of society.

Coetzee depicts the patriarchal dominance through the character of David Lurie. It is due to his lack of physical intimacy as well as his psychological and emotional involvement show that he possesses no feelings for other beings. Therefore, it is the way that how Coetzee depicts anthropocentric concerns through the attitude of a particular man.

Both the authors elaborate the common issue of innocent creature or animals in their novels. As in *The Hungry Tide*, dolphins are depicted as innocent creatures. When Piyali Roy looks upon a carcass of a baby dolphin, she notices that its injury shows that it has been hit by a motor boat. It brings into forefront the interference of humans with the natural habitat of mammals. The use of nylon nets became the reason for the death of several living organisms. In this way while using nylon nets to catch fishes, their eggs come along. It leads extinction of their species without coming into existence. In *Disgrace*, dogs are depicted as innocent creatures. They are innocent in themselves. They also feel the same disgrace of dying as human beings. Dogs are brought to the clinic of Bev Shaw to get rid of their acute pain because they are suffering. They are brought there to be killed, but it is not said directly. And the word 'disappearance' is used for their death.

Through this novel Ghosh critiques the notion of anthropocentrism, the way in which man is trying to grab the land where animals continue to exist. Ghosh takes into account the other concern of development in area of Sunderbans; it is a place which is enriched with flora and fauna. Now urban development is going to take place in this area and tourist spots, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls will be built under this project of development.

As in *The Hungry Tide*, the area where delta is formed it presents the mingling of rivers and it represents also the amalgamation of different cultures, castes, religions and most important myths also. So, Ghosh denies the man made borders which are the symbols of a nation that divides the human beings from each other.

In *Disgrace*, Coetzee treats the racial issues and denies the man made borders. Lucy seems to erase such distinctions based on the level of race, colour and creed.

Because she accepts the proposal of Petrus and she gets ready to become his third wife. She also gets ready to hand over her land to Petrus. The mindset of Petrus is well understood by Lucy but David is unable to understand all this.

Both these novels deal with the psychology of man. The Hungry Tide highlights a conflict between the conservation of environment and the rights of human beings whereas; Disgrace deals with the psychology of man as how he should act morally and ethically towards animals. It tries to awaken the conscience of human beings. Both the novels no doubt, are based on humans' relationship with nature.

The Hungry Tide is set on a historical Morichjhapi incident. Its main reason is that the area has been declared as a forest reserve. As a consequence, people were expelled out of the area which led to a great massacre. The idea of conservation emerges from the West's interest in preserving particular species like the Bengal tigers and the Gangetic river dolphin etc. This kind of conservation results in the negligence of local tribal people and the settlers living there, and they have to face terrible hardships.

The issue of violence is one of the major themes which have been taken into account in both the novels. In The Hungry Tide violence takes place because of political issues for the conservation and the power game played by the administrative agencies of the government. It depicts that violence leads humans as well as animals to the tragic end. It is one of the dominant themes of his novels. The theme of violence is also described in Coetzee's novel Disgrace. In this novel violence is based on racial prejudices. Its main cause is the apartheid policy in South Africa, which was imposed on the blacks. It is also the root cause of racial discrimination between blacks and whites.

Ghosh's characters are woven in a remarkable way. He depicts his characters as movable rather than static ones such as researchers, professionals and refugees. These kinds of persons occupy a special place in most of his novels. Ghosh voices the subaltern and marginalised who is unheard in this contemporary political scenario. Coetzee also tries to give voice to the marginalised section of the society. He builds his argument on the basis of racial issues. Coetzee voices the unheard and marginalised ones by reversing the roles of whites and blacks.

Summing up, it can be said that anthropocentric orientation is a major challenge to preservation of natural environment and appropriate treatment to other living beings. Further, troubled history and prevalence of rampant inequality

increases the problem. Amitav Ghosh presents the conflict between humans and nature in which marginalized people suffer the most. Similarly, in Coetzee's *Disgrace*, weaker living beings have to suffer more. Dogs get bad treatment at the hands of man and once colonizers white people like David Lurie get treated badly by the newly emerging blacks like Petrus and in between them women suffer the most.

This was only a preliminary study into a very relevant topic, because degradation and ill treatment of other human beings, other living beings and overall nature is a big concern today and both these texts under study provide some insights about this issue. Much more work is required to be done on this field to understand the discontents of human philosophy and cultural biases. Related to this work, other novels of Amitav Ghosh and J.M. Coetzee can be brought under consideration as many of their novels deal with similar issues.

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