

A Study of Subaltern Representation in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract

Society is a place where a person or groups strive to attain equilibrium in cultural, social, political, and economic aspects with a person or groups who possess the power to utilize it. Some people still lack behind in becoming the active part of the society. It may include immigrants, migrants, expatriate, refugees, marginal and subalterns.

Amitav Ghosh is a finest contemporary Indian English Writer whose novels deal with the most contemporary issues such as modern man's perennial problems of existential crisis, problems of alienation, problems of restless, rootless and unsettled, problems of marginalization. His novel "*The Hungry Tide*", published in 2004, narrates the story of miserable life of Bangladeshi refugees and the Morichjhapi massacre. In the novel, he has depicted the unfulfilled hopes and aspiration of the post war and post partition subaltern classes of the sub- continent. Set amongst the small, impoverished and isolated communities of the Sundarbans, the novel focuses on Multiracial and multiethnic issues. *The Hungry Tide*, as a whole, constantly reflects subalterns and subaltern relationships and this paper is an attempt to study the problems of rootless and unsettled, problems of marginalization in the subcontinent and the challenges faced by subalterns in Sundarban.

Keywords: Subaltern, Multiracial, Multiethnic, Marginalization, Sub-continent, Refugee.

Introduction

"Who, indeed, are we? Where do we belong?..

Who are we? We are the dispossessed."

-*The Hungry Tide* (254)

Amitav Ghosh is undoubtedly one of the most important writers writing in English today. His emergence in the world of India English literature is somewhat recent yet he is one of the few writers respected and admired by different kinds of readers. The lists of finest contemporary Indian English writers remain incomplete without his name. Ghosh's popularity gained immensely from his second novel '*The Shadow Lines*'. The other bestsellers are *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Sea of Poppies* (2008), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of Fire* (2015), and *Gun Island* (2019). Ghosh is a noted novelist, an essayist and a non-fiction writer, whose standing in the realms of literature is truly unparalleled. His non-fictional works- *Dancing in Cambodia and Other Essays* (1998), *Countdown* (1999), *The Imam and the Indian* (2002), *Incendiary Circumstances* (2002/2005), *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016), *Smoke and Ashes: A Writer's Journey Through Opium and Empire* (2023) received positive response across the world. His unique style of weaving narratives with a bit of pedagogy is what lends his writings their unmistakable appeal; and his passion for history and people is well evident for his writings. In *The Hungry Tide*, the theme of immigration, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced, along with its bitter and sweet experiences, runs through most incidents in the core of the novel.

Subaltern Class

Subaltern, meaning 'of inferior rank', is a term adopted by Antonio Gramsci to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to 'hegemonic' power. Since the history of the ruling class is realized in the state, history being the history of states and dominant groups. In post - colonial theory, the term Subaltern describes the lower classes and the margins of the society – a subaltern is a person rendered without human agency, by his or her social status. The term has adapted to post – colonial studies from the work of the subaltern Studies group of historians, who aimed to promote a systematic discussion of Subaltern themes in South Asian Studies. It is used in Subaltern Studies 'as a name of general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way'. The notion of the subaltern became an issue in post – colonial theory when Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak critiqued the assumptions of the Subaltern Studies group in the essay 'Can Subaltern Speak?' 'This question she claims is one that the group must ask. Her first criticism is directed at the Gramscian claim for the autonomy of the subaltern group which she says no amount of qualification by Guha – who concedes the diversity, heterogeneity and overlapping nature of subaltern can save from its fundamentally essentialist premise. The people or the subaltern is a group defined by its difference from the elite.

The subaltern are the peoples who have been silenced in the administration of the colonial states they constitute, they can be heard by means of their political actions effected in protest against the discourse of mainstream development, and, thereby, create their own, proper forms of modernization and development. Hence do subaltern social groups create social, political, and cultural movements That contest and disassemble the exclusive claims to power of the western imperialist powers, and so establish the use and application of local knowledge to create new spaces of opposition and alternative, non – imperialist futures.

Representation of Subaltern in *The Hungry Tide*

Society is a place where a person or groups strive to attain equilibrium in cultural, social, political, and economic aspects with a person or groups who possess the power to utilize it. Some people still lack behind in becoming the creative part of the society. It may include immigrants, migrants, expatriate, refugees, marginal and subalterns. Amitav Ghosh is the most contemporary novelist whose novels deals with the most contemporary issues such as modern man's perennial problems of existential crisis, problems of alienation, problems of restless, rootless and unsettled, problems of marginalization.

The Hungry Tide, although it employs many of the narrative techniques of the earlier novels, such as the 'double – helix' pattern of alternate narrative strands, the use of flashback and memory, and the insertion of textual fragments that offer alternative avenues into a forgotten history. A principal figure in *The Hungry Tide* is a scientist, this time a cytologist called Piya Roy. Cytology involves the study of marine mammals, and their particular Field of expertise concerns the freshwater river dolphins that are to be found in Asia's great waterways the Indus, the Mekong, the Irrawaddy, and, of course, the Ganges. The daughter of an Indian emigrant to the United States, she has had little Contact with her ancestral country but she is drawn to her parents' native Bengal in order to conduct a survey of the marine mammals in the Gangetic delta. The novel opens with her meeting with one of the other principal

characters, an urbane, highly educated representative of modern India called Kanai. Significantly, he is a translator by profession, expert in six languages and proficient in several others, but he is also the nephew of an elderly woman, called Mashima by the local people, who has established an extremely successful rural development organisation called the Badabon Trust: an exemplary non – governmental development agency that has built up a rudimentary modern infrastructure including a school, a hospital and other welfare provisions.

The ‘tide country’ is the central metaphor that constitutes the common point of reference that binds Piya, Kanai and Fokir together. As the novel makes clear the tide is a scientific phenomenon that needs to be comprehended by people like Piya, is integral to the rhythms of life for people like Fokir. Kanai is the bridge, the one who is able to translate the idioms of one into that of the other. The *Hungry Tide* is a novel which foregrounds language and textuality, and its relationship to lived experience. As the three of them launch into the elaborate backwaters, they are drawn unawares into the hidden undercurrents of this isolated world, where political turmoil exacts a personal toll that is every bit as powerful as the ravaging tide. Already an international success, *The Hungry Tide* is a prophetic novel of remarkable insight, beauty, and humanity. The narrative is meandering, long, slow, often covering over the previous happenings until the right time, much like the topography it is set in. Not particularly predictable, it still is gradual enough to allow reader to be patient and trust the author to reveal the clever undercurrents running through the story eventually.

Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* narrates the miserable life of Bangladeshi refugees and the Morichjhapi massacre. He had depicted the unfulfilled hopes and aspiration of the post war and post partition subaltern classes of the sub-continent. The problems which are depicted in the novel are the post war aesthetics of postcolonial migration and settlement of refugees and orphan. The novel is an account of the journey of an Indo – American cytologist Piya Roy. Fokir, a fisherman who assisted Piya in her research for the river dolphin. Kanai, a Delhi based business man set out to Lusibari on the request of his aunt Nilima, who invited him to read the journal of his dead uncle, Nirmal. In the novel Nirmal and Horen are the witnesses of the Morichjhapi massacre of Bangladeshi refugees. The refugees come from Bangladesh after the partition. Kusum with her little child, Fokir, returns along with refugees in Sundarbans. Kusum resists for the rights of refugees and is killed in assault. Nilima narrates the incident of Morichjhapi carnage to Kanai she says:

“...In Bangladesh they had been among the poorest of rural people, oppressed and exploited both by Muslim communalists and by Hindus of the upper castes.” (HT 124).

The novel brings forth the history of post – partition India and the crisis occurred. The refugees come from east Bengal and are sent to Dandakaranya, Madhya Pradesh in 1961. They are forced to settle and live there in an unhealthy atmosphere and have to face the assailant by native tribes. Thus, they are harassed and remain unheard. In the novel, Nirmal’s diary entries recounting Morichjhapi and the plight of the Fokir’s mother Kusum serve as a true reality of the Sundarbans. On the Morichjhapi island, the refugees construct their small world of happiness. Kusum invites Horen and Nirmal to participate in their celebration of getting home. Nirmal says: - “Was it possible, even that in Morichjhapi had been planted the seeds of what might become if not a Dalit nation, then at least a safe heaven, a place of true freedom for the country’s most oppressed.” (HT 205). The dreams of these refugees very soon

come to end, when they are asked to turn back to their previous place. Kusum expresses her violent anger by questioning, which makes Nirmal totally dumb and helpless. Bengal government declares Morichjhapi island as the area of preservation for animals. Kusum asks, “who are these people...who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them?”. The refugees fought for survival, became the victim of Morichjhapi after the water and food supplies were cut off to the islands to coerce the refugees to flee. The police forces arrive in Morichjhapi for patrolling and announcing consistently to abandon the place. They not only destroy tube wells but also impede the supply of ration which results in starvation.

“Who are we? We here do we belong? ... We are the dispossessed.” (HT284)

The above cited quotation of rootlessness expresses the hollow life of the refugees, who wander aimlessly in search of their existence and sits there helpless and listening to then policemen making their announcements, hearing them say that their lives, their existence was worth less than dirt and dust.

Homi Bhabha, the most important thinker of post-colonial thought, propounded that the importance of power relations in the subaltern groups as had been focused as oppressed minority groups whose presence was crucial to the self-definition of the majority group: subaltern group of the social structure also in a position to subvert the authority of those who had hegemonic power. The refugees of the novel who are the victims of the constructed East Bengali Muslims as the ontological ‘other’ who are every – where depressed, oppressed and as well as marginalized. The eminent critic of subaltern is Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak whose epoch – making line is fully apt – “Can the subaltern speak?” implies that silence is the critical component of subaltern identity. Interestingly the maneuvering the Dalit and the gendered subaltern Kusum’s story retold by the male and elite class representative Nirmal. The role and the complexities of the subaltern language also very prominent in the text of the novel. The ethnicity and the gender intersections are the crucible for articulating the relationship between internal colonialism and subaltern studies which has been prominent in novel – The hungry Tide.

The refugees, explicitly, are people without financial, commercial, or political power. As the refugees reached India, they understood that they were not entirely welcome here either. The refugees were the subaltern classes who were forced to seek out a dwelling elsewhere but unfortunately forced to shelter into resettlement camp somewhere in central India. *‘They called it resettlement’, said Nilima, ‘but people say it was more like a concentration camp, or prison. They were surrounded by security forces and forbidden to leave. Those who tried to get away were hunted down.* (HT124). This narrative part shows the political brutality towards the refugees. And here they can’t speak against these and it again proves the silence of the subalterns.

Nirmal, a revolutionary during his earlier days is enthused by the spectacle of resilience shown by the Morichjhapi incidents. He decided to record everything in his book so that history can get certain publicity through the Kanai. Nirmal in his journal finds a strong utopian strand in his endeavor, in his attempt by the dispossessed to possess something of their own. It is brutally repressed by the government forces and aftermath Kusum is killed. Nirmal as a Marxist believed in rapprochement across class barriers that can bring subaltern people and the elite together which generation later Piya repeats with Kusum’s son Fokir. The

inherent cause of the brutal violence, the Morichjhapi was for a long time in both for ban academia and popular imaginary can be attributed to the invisibility of the low caste and class identity. The west Bengal state committee meeting in 1982 also justified the eviction by pointing out that the refugees could not given any shelter under any circumstances. Ghosh is questioning this decision of government and to the global people through Kusum, “Who are those people, I wonder who love animals so much that they are willing to kill us for them.” (HT 284).

Through these words of Kusum Ghosh is trying to show the brutality of elite class people towards a subaltern group, a group of refugees. So, the condition of the dispossessed, displaced, deprived is unpredictable and hostile in the terrain of the Sundarbans. The massacre, the tiger killing Kusum’s father and Fokir’s vulnerability to the state officials are instance in the novel that depicted the subaltern as well as the marginalized people’s predicament.

The voice of the common men, their struggle and sacrifices which went unnoticed in the annals of the history began to get a prominent voice in the fiction of Amitav Ghosh in a different way. History ceases to be the forte of those who wield power. In the recent period novelists are currently obsessed with in acquiring the lost history in which the powerless, marginalized and subjugated expresses themselves and move towards the center. But the center and the dream of oppressed of finding a voice meet a silent death. Amitav Ghosh portrays these subaltern classes with using history as a tool which at least come to terms with our troubling present. *The Hungry Tide* as a whole constantly reflects subaltern relationships; the elite western and eastern characters respond to the impoverished Indian characters and in turn the reader and the characters respond to the animals in the novel – namely the tigers – and adding one more thread to this relational web, both the rural poor and the tigers all have to potential to turn against their elite oppressors. All these relationships and connections are multifaceted and are in constant transitions of balance of power and understanding.

In terms of the subaltern being faced with the cosmopolitan and being subject to metropolitan dominance. The relationship between Kanai and Fokir, is a model in which the relation displays the imposing the rule over the marginalized. We may say this kind of relation as a relation between city over rural. This kind of dominance is displayed in *The Hungry Tide* by the authorities’ treatment of the people of the tide country. Spivak confronts the issue of allowing subaltern voices to manifest against the might of colonial and elite powers. In the case of *The Hungry Tide* the subaltern are the rural poor of west Bengal. When these impoverished eastern people exist in a world dominated by the west, the issue must be confronted with regards to their ability to have their voices heard and their opinions matter, as Spivak comments:

“We must now confront the following question: On the other side of the international division of labor from socialized capital, inside and outside the circuit of the epistemic violence of imperialist law and education supplementing an earlier economic text, *can the subaltern speak?* (Spivak 283)

Spivak’s concern is with the politically and socially silenced subaltern, it is an injustice which requires a resolution. She suggests that some resolve exists in the narrative that elite Indians can provide on behalf of the subaltern Indians, yet this is still not sufficient:

“Certain varieties of the Indian elite are at best native informants for first world intellectuals interested in the voice of the other. But one must nevertheless insist that the colonized subaltern subject is irretrievably heterogeneous” (Spivak 284).

Kanai is Ghosh’s example of the Indian elite and to some extent he does speak for Fokir and may be included as a heterogeneous subaltern voice as he is not a westerner like Piya. Kanai’s representation of Fokir however is somewhat clouded by his pride in caste and his need for superiority. Ghosh joins Spivak in her struggle to give the subaltern a voice and to empower this group of people.

In *The Hungry Tide*, the challenge of the dispossessed is registered via the human make - up of the tide country. Each invader to the country was compelled by the government to leave the place and seek for new start. The island of Lusibari had first been populated as result of a philanthropic colonialist, the Scot Sir Daniel Hamilton, who had bought land from the forestry department in order to give an impoverished rural population a chance to settle new land and begin new agricultural projects. We can consider this story as an example for colonization the western invasion to east.

The novel’s four major women characters can be widely categorized based on their cultural positioning as rural and urban women. Nilima and Piya, the urban group of women are in a sense alien to the Sundarban topography in that they were not born into these adverse surroundings and had not been culturally conditioned into its rules of survival. Culturally removed by their superior learning and upbringing both these women are at pains to accustom themselves with the harsh realities of the rural life. Removed from their cloistered urban lives Nilima and Piya develop their personal networks - each unique in their application to forge a deal with their combative surroundings. The zeal and determination that these women exhibit even at face of terrible personal crisis have been faithfully chronicled in the text.

Married to Nirmal, the staunch Marxist, Nilima had long lost her husband to his revolutionary zeal and poetic temperament. Displaced from the comforts her affluent middle class upbringing Nilima seeks to construct some permanence within the unsettling flux she suddenly encounters. Out of the ashes of her lost faith in her husband’s impractical Marxism she creates her phoenix-the island’s Mohila Songothon – the Women Union – and ultimately the Badabon Trust. Years of hard work and dedication turns it into a beacon of hope amidst the general gloom of the water ravaged countryside. While Nirmal mellows in his poetry and idealism Nilima’s backbreaking efforts bear fruit, and Lusibari hospital becomes a model medical facility to the deltaic population. Nirmal’s hunger for a revolutionary moment in his life drives him to Morichjhâpi but Nilima is worldly wise and knows that their efforts can only end in self-annihilation. Although sympathetic to the plight of the Morichjhâpi refugees her prosaic nature intervenes for the greater good. She stubbornly isolates herself and her organization from the revolutionary zeal that had gripped the islanders even at the cost of losing her husband to her rival and his muse, Kusum. To Nilima “the challenge of making a few little things better in one small place is enough” while for Nirmal “it had to be all or nothing”. (HT387) However Nilima’s voice is muffled under the mad crescendo of Nirmal’s poetic hallucinations. The agency of language remains loyal to the patriarchy so that Nirmal’s ‘notebook’ – a metaphoric male discourse gains in supremacy under its new patriarchal benefactor, Kanai. Thus, towards the end of the novel we hear the ‘subaltern’ Nilima’s pain-stricken plea: ‘And after you’ve put together his notebook, Kanai,’ she said quietly, ‘will you

put my side of it together too? 'Kanai could not fathom her meaning. 'I don't understand?' 'Kanai, the dreamers have everyone to speak for them,' she said. 'But those who're patient, those who try to be strong, who try to build things - no one ever sees any poetry in that, do they?' (HT 387) Kanai however sees ample poetry in Piya, the migrant cytologist who soon turns to be the object of his male 'gaze'. In spite of her superior learning and global upbringing she can't help but fall a prey to corrupt and vulgar forest officials. Stripped of the luxury of the vernacular, Piya is truly a 'subaltern' until Fokir rows her to the safe haven of the dolphin's pool. It is among these river dolphins that Piya regains her natural strength and confidence. A troubled childhood and a nasty affair have permanently silenced her so that she prefers the humbling presence of nature to human conglomerations. Her passionate involvement with the Irrawaddy Dolphin can only match Nilima's obsession with the Trust hospital. Piya's mobility and rootlessness create a false sense of empowerment which runs her into the perils of negotiating multiple spaces for herself. Piya is left vulnerable to the ploys of patriarchy bereft of any emotional or social stilts against the harsh realities of a migrant life. Cocooning herself in the gravity of her scientific work this globe trotter had tried to save herself from future damage only to be exposed in a primitive encounter with the man of the 'other' world, Fokir.

Fokir breaks through her shell so that she is able to communicate with him at supravverbal level. But Nature intervenes and Fokir dies trying to save her. Fokir's death dooms Piya to a life of perpetual guilt. A Rajavritta 'widow', Piya is condemned to a life of silence, unable to overcome the death of the man who had changed her life. But the grim realities of Sundarban and the resultant flux fortify Piya beyond any simplistic binaries so that she can exploit her mobility to build public opinion over the sensitive ecology of this Gangetic delta.

The rural women of this marshy habitat have developed their own set of survival tactics unique and different from privileged order of urban women in that they draw sustenance from primitive belief structures and social norms. Positioned in an altogether different societal infrastructure than Piya and Nilima these native women of deltaic Bengal, Moyna and Kusum have sharpened their own tools of survival. However, a similar upbringing cannot gloss over the generational gap in the multiple aspirations of these women. The Sundarban women of a lost generation of Kusum's had craved for a portion of land to claim as their own while the Moyna's of the present anchor themselves on modern education and learning to get on in life and break free of their oppressive surroundings. Thus, the ever-silting topography of the region echoes in the changing aspirations of the women and the novel methods they adopt to counter Nature's brute forces.

It is an obstinacy to survive that makes Moyna the most haunting character in the novel. Oppressed and deprived under the patriarchal control Moyna braves all odds to educate herself and get on in life. But no sooner had she taken flight than she is perpetually shackled by the chains of patriarchy in an unequal marriage to the illiterate Fokir. Never abandoning her dreams to qualify as a nurse Moyna coaxes her husband to move to Lusibari and give proper education to her son. Her marital tussle with her unpragmatic husband echoes similar battles between Nilima and Nirmal. To complicate matters Moyna is a mother so her son 'safety weighs utmost in her mind: It's people like us who're going to suffer and it's up to us to think ahead. That's why I have to make sure Tutul gets an education. Otherwise, what's his future going to be? (HT 134) Fokir, her fisherman husband however loves to take his only son to his numerous fishing expeditions thereby endangering both their lives. Moyna, the

rooted subaltern stands in sharp contrast to Piya, the globe trotter. What Piya has lost in her multiple voyages; Moyna has gained in her rootedness. Piya, the migrant finds it difficult to negotiate her space in the modern western society where she is at pains to fit, or in the Sundarbans a part of her long forgotten past where people cheer the immolation of a tiger. Bereft of the traditional support structures of marriage and family Piya is constantly victimized as she inadeptly tries to fit the diverse roles bestowed by an alien world. The apparently disadvantaged Moyna on the other hand has developed her personal networks through her association with the Trust hospital – a precious weapon to survive the contingencies of Sundarban life. Even when nature takes its final toll on her, the widowed Moyna, like Mahasweta Devi's 'the five women' in *After Kurukshetra: Three Stories* is better able to bear Fokir's death.

Born into the complexities of refugee life in the Sundarbans Fokir's mother Kusum had instinctually learnt its lessons of survival. The myth of Bon Bibi had long served as a source of sustenance, an anchor of belief for the people of 'the land of eighteen tides'. Women had chanted the name of Bon Bibi, the saviour of the land for the safe passage of their kin. Kusum had lost her father to the snares of the dreaded tiger, animating out of the legend of Dokkin Rai, the demonic oppressor. She had however never lost faith in Bon Bibi and her mercy – a belief structure moulding her survival strategies. Even when her family tears apart after the untimely death of her father, Kusum never runs out of spirit. Vulnerable to vulgar mercenaries she finds herself uprooted from the soft yielding mud of her native land to the sooty town of Dhanbad. Kusum strikes the best possible deal with life and marries Rajan banking on the traditional support structure of marriage to keep trouble at bay. However, the subsequent death of the husband and the onrush of the uprooted refugees back to the tide country sweep her to the familiar yet hostile countryside.

Unlike Nirmal or Horen, Kusum aims to build something concrete through her active involvement in the Morichjhapi project. As things turn sour and the Morichjhapi refugees, trying to resettle on conserved land are brutally exterminated by government forces, Kusum becomes one of their many preys. Kusum's life lived in a flux and her brutal end reverberate the vulnerable niche the subaltern has constantly to negotiate in their adverse surroundings. However, Kusum ensures the safety of her son Fokir, the best possible bridge under these situational contingences to span the binaries of rural/urban, inter-religious and cross-cultural divide. And the string that binds all these 'widowed' women together, the hospital or rather the Badabon Trust, has turned into a source of substance and weapon to fight the claws of widowhood in the 'tide country'. Nilima's Mohila Songothon becomes a source of female bonding that helps these women both urban and rural to find a reason however small to live. To Nilima it becomes an oblique escape from the frustrating emptiness of marriage, to Kusum a haven though temporary from the cruelties of an orphan life, to Moyna her only chance to get on in life and finally to Piya a sponsorship and hence a reason to stay connected with Fokir's tide country. The female networks that these women develop help empower them and many such subaltern women of the region. The heroics of these unknown women of Sundarbans had long eluded the realms of history. Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* chronicles the daily negotiations and bargains of these subaltern women with the 'jowar' and 'bhata' of their lives and thus rescues them from being obliterated to anonymity by the 'flood of history'. Through these four characters Ghosh is trying to engage his novel with that of Spivak's theories on women as subalterns.

Conclusion

Ghosh traces the trajectory of the silence of the subaltern primarily through the incident of Morichjhapi as a movement from the act of being silenced to the act of first resisting that silence, then to the act of appropriating that silence, and eventually to an ultimate journey of making that silence one's own and transforming it in such a manner that it characterizes our way of knowing and being. Silence then is not opposed to language, but is something that is complementary to language: it adds meaning to language. Silence here functions as rhetoric; and we shall see that it is not treated in terms of Western binaries as something that is opposed to speech and is characterized by absence; — that silence is characterized by presence and has a life of its own; silence here is a creative force. Subaltern groups frequently use silence as rhetoric, since they are often denied the privilege of representation in mainstream narratives. Silence would often be a better tool than language, because language is the discourse of the powerful. Silence would not only resist the equation of power, but would also disrupt the very tools that have created the discrimination. Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* we have a journey from enforced silence to creative and collaborative silence.

Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Hungry Tide*, explores the challenges faced by cosmopolitans seeking to make an ethical intervention in a subaltern space. By dramatizing the encounter between bourgeois characters and the traumatic history of people inhabiting the Sundarbans region of Bengal, Ghosh suggests that an unreconstructed cosmopolitanism is incapable of addressing social injustices; to effect any positive change, the cosmopolitan must undergo a transformation.

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