

**Environmental Awareness through Indian Green Literature:
An Eco-critical Reading of *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide***

By

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to examine the developing literary theory of ecocriticism on two chosen Indian green literary texts; Bibhutubhushan's *Aranyak* and Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. The theory of ecocriticism is still going under development which means it is still evolving and exploring by various environmentalists and eco-critics. Its main goal is to explore the environment and nature through the portrayal of literature, especially environmental texts. By doing so, it examines the nature, environment which includes both the humans and nonhumans; lives and relationships between human-nature, and human-animal, and the environmental issues we are dealing with day by day along with providing possible solutions. It emphasizes one main conflict of anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism; where the environmentalists and eco-critics tends to blame the anthropocentric views as a cause to imbalance the ecosystems and all the environmental crises, and focuses on the biocentric views. Regarding it, several naturalists have come out with environmental ethics such as land ethics, bioethics which mainly calls for a biocentric understanding and mix of both the anthropocentric and biocentric views for the "common good" of all, and all such can be seen through the stories of these two selected novels. In this thesis, I am going to imply ecocriticism in these two chosen texts by discussing environmental issues and ethics by exploring mainly the human-nature relationship in *Aranyak* and man-animal relationship in *The Hungry Tide*.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Biotic, Anthropocentric, Nature, Environment, Bioethics etc.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis is going to analyze the two renowned Indian novels, Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, from the perspective of ecocriticism in order to investigate where these two Indian authors' ecological consciousness originates from, and how it is represented through the settings, characters and plots of these two long prose narratives. Ecocriticism is a newly found theoretical framework which is still in its development stage. It explores the paths through which the environment is illustrated in literature. Simply saying, it discusses the relationship of nature and human lives, and contemporary environmental issues through literature. By doing so, it also examines and provides possible solutions regarding the concerns of the contemporary environmental conditions. Lawrence Buell in *The Environmental Imagination* has defined, "ecocriticism ... as [a] study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (Buell, 430). Throughout ages, critics have been involved in doing analysis of many literary values that deal with various contemporary issues such as postcolonial, Marxist, feminist, etc. However, literary studies did not pay much attention to the serious facts concerning the environmental issues which has been represented in literature. Our world has been suffering a lot from the global ecological crises, caused mostly by human atrocities and exploitation over nature. How can literature turn its face away from such an important issue like this? Hence, this new area of studying literature has come into the light towards the end of the 20th Century which is a scholarly approach of studying nature writings named as Ecocriticism. This nature and environment-oriented study of literature is also known as Green Studies, Environmental Literary Criticism, etc. This study deals with several ecocritical

themes like human-nature interconnection, conflict of human vs. animal, exploitation of environment, deforestation, postcolonial ecocriticism and ecological imperialism etc.

i) Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a scholarly study of literature that gives special attention to benefits of nature it and also studies the relationship between literature and physical environment. Sandip Kumar Mishra in his article “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature” mentions that, the term was first coined by William Rueckert in the year of 1978 and was updated by Chyrill Glotfelty during 1990s. The word “ecology” stands for the relationship between living organisms and their environment. The word “ecocriticism” stands for the criticism of the “house,” the house as in the environment itself as represented in literature. It is a scientific study, analysis of natural interdependencies that involves relationships between environmental elements such as, land, air, water, plants, animals etc (Mishra, 168). Furthermore, ecocriticism also includes the conflict of biosense vs. anthropocence views. In ecology, the tragic flaw of human beings is their anthropocentric views as opposed to the biocentric visions (169). This conflict is very much present in both the novels that I have chosen to work on. Not only that, this conflict also shows the flaws of human beings, the compulsion to conquer, domesticate, harmonize, exploit, violate every environmental aspects or natural things, and it is very much seen in both the novels *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide* that I am working on in this thesis. The anthropocentric vision prioritizes the human beings. Its focal primacy is on the humans who dominate the environment. Whereas, biocentric visions remove humanities from the central point and studies on both the human lives and the nature by giving importance to the exploration of the complex interrelationships among the human and the nonhuman. Anthropocentric considers the human beings as the caretakers of the earth, who holds the power of dominating the environment for

their interests, whereas, biocentric visions rejects such anthropocentric ideas and works on exploring the joints of all living beings and nonliving things (168). Moreover, ecocriticism also studies the several conflicts such as the conflict of ecosystems vs. ethical systems. It believes that the global crises that our world is going through are not caused by the ecosystems. It is not because of how the ecosystem is functioned, rather it is mostly due to how our ethical systems functions (168). In order to get through the crisis, the understanding of our impact over nature is required. It requires the understanding of such ethical systems of caring, awareness for the welfare of the environment, rather than the intention of exploiting it, and we can try to reform the ecology by using such ethical understandings. And to help our ethical change in favor of nature, naturalists and environmentalists has introduced environmental ethics such as, Leopold's land ethic, and Potter's bioethics that calls for an ethical change towards nature, environment; the whole biotic community for the common good of both the anthropocentric and biocentric sides, and to maintain a healthy ecosystem. Ecocriticism encourages people to think seriously about the relationship of human with nature. It talks about both ethical and aesthetic dilemmas given by the environmental crisis, and about how language and literature exchange values with utmost environmental implications. Ecocriticism has become important day by day because of its environmental political agendas too. Today the leading nations of this world give very less priority to the environment as the welfare of nature does not help in furthering the ideals of imperialism. Also, the anthropocentric mindset considers the world as something to control and the environment as a resource to gain more power and profit by exploiting it. If this continues then the world will continue to get worse day by day and will not last any longer. Therefore, the reason I am willing to work on ecocriticism is that it is becoming an important step in bringing awareness to the environmental problems that the world is facing today. But the only way to

work it out is by enlightening the people about it more and more. If people do not get to learn about it then it will remain in silence and become useless, and the only way to bring a change in people's mindset is by educating the world about it and also bring a change in values. Therefore, I want to contribute in this field of Ecocriticism by working on it through two remarkable environmental novels; *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide* as these two Indian green novels are rich in ecocritical issues.

In my thesis, I want to explore the several ecocritical aspects that is represented in the renowned green literary work titled *Aranyak* which means 'of the forest' as one of my primary sources. This novel is written by a renowned Bengali novelist Bibhutibhushan Bandyopaddhyay whose literary works have contributed in the field of world literature in the form of English translation. This novel is set in a forest land of Bhagalpur where the protagonist starts his new phase of life due to his job, which is the opposite of his urban life. I will try to work on this text by investigating how this prose narrative can create an awareness regarding the welfare of nature by the self-realization of the protagonist Satyacharan about his sin of deforestation that causes harm not only to the environment of that place, but also the lives of the inhabitants. It explores contrast between his urban and forest lives. Although in the beginning, the protagonist had zero love for the jungle life and struggled a lot to adjust there, his love for the forest and environment starts to develop through the course of times, and eventually he turns out to be a great lover of nature, the jungle lives. As the novel progresses, his ego-consciousness gets replaced by his eco-consciousness at the end of this novel. I will be focusing more on the very basis of Ecocriticism; the human-nature interconnections which is given utmost importance in this novel.

Another text on which I am going to work on, and use as another primary source of my thesis is titled *The Hungry Tide*, written by another Indian novelist Amitav Ghosh. The novel is

set in the mangrove forest of Sundarbans located between West India and Bangladesh. It depicts the lives of the inhabitants and deals with their sufferings. The massacre of Morichjhapi took place in 1978-79 that forms a background for some parts of this novel; the government of West Bengal expelled thousands of Bengali refugees forcibly who had settled on the island. This novel explores themes such as humanism and environmentalism mostly whenever they come into a conflict with each other. Through different characters like Piya, Kanai and Fokir who belong to the different backgrounds, the novel presents diversity among their opinions regarding environment and human lives that often show conflicts of human vs. nature, and as it is set in the mangrove forest it brings mainly the relationship and conflict between human and animal such as the survival battle of man vs. tiger. In my thesis, I will be focusing on the ecocritical issues mainly on human-nature and human-animal interconnections, referring to these two primary texts *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide*.

i) Green Literature

Now moving on to literary field regarding this school of criticism, the green literature is any literary work that includes nature as an important element, and Ecocriticism is the tool to criticize such green literary works (169). It talks of interconnections between nature and culture as its subject, specifically the language and literature's cultural artifacts. It puts its one foot in literature and the other on the land as a critical stance, and then negotiates between the human and the nonhuman as a theoretical discourse. Moreover, when we see or listen to the word "green" the first thing that comes to the mind is trees and that links to the nature and the environment itself. Just like that, the term "green literature" too is associated with the subject of nature and environment along with other aspects, and the reason why it is called the green literature is simply because of that. The definition can be given that, which literary work deals

with nature, environmental issues along with other issues or the focal point is regarding the environment and spreading the awareness among people towards saving the nature for the wellbeing of everyone and everything; both the nature and human, living and nonhuman beings are called green literature. There are a lot of renowned green literary works from poetry to prose; in every literary field we can find this genre. For example, so many Romantic poets, especially William Wordsworth in general has become one of the key icons of green literature and ecocritical studies. Wordsworth has received the position as a great pioneer of ecocritical studies for his views on nature and how human beings treat it. His sonnet; “The World Is Too Much With Us,” lyrical ballad; “Tintern Abbey,” poems such as “Daffodils,” and “I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud” etc. are the great examples of green literary works as these are not only set in nature but show almost religious reverence for it. Another pioneer in the field of green literature is Thomas Hardy. His so many poems and novels like *Far From the Madding Crowd*, *Character and Environment*, *Return of the Native* etc. show his love for nature and thus his works spread awareness for nature’s welfare.

ii) Indian Green Literature

Moving on towards Indian green literature, so many Indian authors have contributed to the field of green literature from many years ago. India being a large Asian country holds huge natural resources and it is rich in nature and environmental elements, the very reason the British colonizers had targeted this country to colonize for two centuries saying to civilize the so-called “savage” native people, but with the undeclared mission of making profits by exploiting the nature and its people. The “colonization” itself is often considered to be the seed of ecological issues that the colonizers have sowed in the colonized countries, the seed of human’s interests, unlimited desires over making profits through the exploitation and destruction of the nature and

environment. Like many other countries India too deals with such post-colonial consequences. Hence, the Indian authors like Rabindranath Tagore, Kiran Desai, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, and more recently, Arundhati Roy and Amitav Ghosh have brought out the environmental issues through their writings. The examples of Indian green literature can be Rabindranath Tagore's poem "The Tame Bird Was In A Cage" talks about the human's mere desire or so called lavish "hobby" of having birds as a pet by keeping the birds in a cage and departing it from nature and snatching away its freedom of flying up in the sky, in the open environment. Such cruelty of humans, such "hobby" leads the caged bird to the extent that it has "... even forgotten how to sing" (169). Also, another poem of Tagore titled "I Plucked You Flower," this poem presents the fact of human feelings of "... plucking flowers as their own right" and wish, and through this poem he warns us about nature's not being a silent spectator (169). That one day it will react in its own way which may not be just like a thorn prick but can be a mighty tsunami we never know! And the human beings should be aware and careful of it. Also, the novel titled *The God of Small Things* written by Arundhati Roy shows the exploitation of nature by human beings in the name of progress and modernization and presents it "... as a dominant theme of the novel" (170). Bhabani Bhattacharya's novel *So Many Hungers!* depicts Indian culture and people's struggle over food, poverty and freedom. It shows humans dependency over nature and how nature retaliate when it is threatened. Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is the portrayal of how Kanchanjungha is paid for the brutality of Nepali insurgency (170). The beauty, calm, serenity and quite atmosphere get fully destroyed. Amitav Ghosh's novels like *The Hungry Tide*, on which I am working in this thesis, the story leads us to the Sundarbans; the place full of animals and how they influence the lives of the inhabitants. "The delta of Sundarbans has been presented as the destroyer and preserver of life" (170).

Throughout the novel we get to see the terror of the tigers that are known for killing humans and other animals among the people of islands. Also, his Ibis trilogy; *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke*, and *Flood of Fire* can be read from the ecocritical perspectives. Then another great Indian author whose literary works has been contributed to the world literature greatly is Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. Almost all his writings have been translated into English. The heart of his novel is based with man and his interactions with nature and environment. Being a Bengali Romantic writer, his novels deal with the two waves of ecocriticism. He has got fame for his famous *Apu* trilogy which has received more popularity in a motion picture form by the famous film maker Satyajit Roy. Bibhutibhushan's novel *Making a Mango Whistle*, originally titled as *Aam Anthir Bhenpu* is an abridged version of his eternal novel *Pather Panchali*, that too was popularized by Satyajit Roy's film. It revolves around Hari Har, who is a poor priest and his family. This novel shows the characters' lives as ruthless and miserable as the hot summer noon, yet the children of the family remain unaffected by poverty and gets immense pleasure in the open lap of the nature. Moreover, ecocriticism is at its best in Bibhutibhushan's famous novel that I am working on is *Aranyak*. As I have mentioned before, this novel represents how the protagonist who is a city dweller, Satyacharan becomes a nature loving soul. His sense of guilt and remorse after deforestation of the land for earning more profits, revenue for his employers. The novel is considered as a great example of serious concern for nature. More and more literary works of different authors have been published which falls under the umbrella of green literature which can be studied from eco-critical point.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Before going to the analysis this section will give selected review of existing literature on the chosen topic. Also, the literature review is divided into two sections. The first one is the selected review on the literary works of the theory of ecocriticism that will include the discussion on its history, conflicts and environmental texts. And the other part is the selected review on the literary works of the chosen two primary texts.

i) **Ecocriticism; History, Conflicts and Environmental texts**

Ecocriticism as a literary criticism is a new movement that has arrived through the last few decades; studying how human beings relate to the nonhuman nature, the surrounding environment in literary context. This thesis also aims to present a brief review of the growth of ecocriticism as a literary theory and for that those who have contributed to this field by presenting their literary works in favor and well growth of this theory deserves to be known as well.

Though a consciousness regarding the welfare of nature and environmental issues has been growing since 1960's – 1970's, ecocriticism remained unorganized unlike other theories such as feminism, Marxism etc. for a longer period of time. The publication of William Rueckart's article titled "Literature and Ecology; An Experiment in Ecocriticism" published in the year of 1978 is considered to be the birth of the word "Ecocriticism." In the article he has entitled "Ecocriticism" as "... application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (Rueckart, 107) and focused on explaining this school of criticism. Afterwards, ecocriticism was in a break as it was not brought up in discussion again for a long time and developed rapidly mostly since 1990's by various eco-critics like William Howarth, Lawrence

Buell, Harold Fromm, Cheryll Glotfelty etc. Furthermore, the study of literature by relating to environment has started as a major critical theory in the 90's and the book titled *Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* which was edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm has presented it officially. In this literary work both of them has encouraged and made urges to other literary critics to work and develop an ecological approach to literature, making the cultural dimensions of human being's relation to the environment as a primary focus.

Moreover, the history of ecocriticism theory includes two following waves. The first wave can be known from Lawrence Buell's book titled *The Environmental Imagination* where he has focused only on the nature writings as an object of study and taken it as a meaningful practice, and the ecocritics' focus was mostly on the writings that include nature; "... nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fictions" (Buell, 138). The connection of "nature" with the "human" was hardly seen unlike the recent environmental criticisms. It was mainly meant to be understood for the earth care aims, and the objectives was to contribute to "... the struggle to preserve the 'biotic community'" (21). The second wave of ecocriticism has introduced human concerns as well as non-human nature to all kinds of literary texts including wilderness, urban to suburban environmental settings, unlike the first wave which was limited in only nature writings. This wave is also known as newer revisionist wave as it has been often involved to the environmental science, mostly to the life science. Jonathan Bates in his book *The Song of the Earth* presents the Romantic notions of "nature" to be a metaphor for the self rather than merely a tribute to the biotic world. He opines that the civilized man praises nature as a painting piece and tend to undermine the real issues that concerns environment. He encourages the eco-critics not to limited their works in nature writings only and to focus on the environmental crises with

which we already have been dealing with, and which are knocking at our door for the future entrance.

Furthermore, ecocriticism includes two major conflicts; anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism and ecosystems vs. ethical-systems, and mostly due to the first one that whether people should emphasize on the human interests or, on the interests of the biotic community. And environmentalists and eco-critics believe that the focus should be given on the interests of the biotic community rather than only on the human benefits. Which is why naturalists like Aldo Leopold has come up with ethics regarding land, and he has written an essay titled “The Land Ethic” where he calls people for having some ethics regarding land, nature, environment; the whole biotic community. In this essay he has discussed about the ethical sequences, community concept, ecological consequences, conservation etc., and he mainly urges people not to focus on the economic interests and not to take the land as a tool to use for that interests. He says that, the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and we need to cast off the very belief that the economic determines all land use (Leopold, 225). Another scholar named Van Rensselaer Potter has come up with “bioethics” and he has published an article titled “Real Bioethics: Biocentric or Anthropocentric?” where he presents his belief that he has named bioethics which calls for the need of both, as in the mix of both the anthropocentrism and biocentrism for the “common good” of both. Therefore, he suggests that people should not “... attempt to promote a contest between biocentrism and anthropocentrism” (Potter, 179).

Moreover, Lawrence Buell’s book *The Environmental Imagination* is considered to be one of the major texts that have contributed in this field. This text mainly helps in recognizing environmental texts that can be used in implying this theory. In this book he offers four criteria through which a text can be determined whether it is an environmental text or not. The criteria

he presents are; “The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history ... The human interest is not understood to be the only legitimate interest ... Human accountability to the environment is part of the text’s ethical orientation” (Buell, 7). This text has helped me in determining my two primary texts of this thesis that I have chosen to work on as environmental text as the criteria that he has mentioned goes very well with both the novels, and I find his desires to push for readings of environmental texts in literature worthy too.

In terms of selecting Indian environmental texts, Sandip Kumar Mishra in his article titled “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature” has briefly discussed various Indian literary works that can be used in this school of criticism. He has mainly talked about the Indian green literature such as various literary works of Rabindranath Tagore, Kali Das, Arundhati Roy etc. as well as works of Bibhutibhushan Bandyopaddhyay and Amitav Ghosh whose novels I am working in this thesis as primary texts. More on this article has been already discussed in the Introduction part.

ii) The Two Chosen Texts

The novel *Aranyak* by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay represents several eco-critical issues and mainly emphasizes on the human-nature relationship by showing the protagonist Satyacharan’s transformation from a city dweller to a nature loving soul. This novel with its setting, themes, characters etc. fits very well with the given criteria of being an environmental text and to be a part of green literature. And it is considered as a great example of serious concern for nature too.

Regarding the eco-critical issues that are seen in this novel, Sandip Kumar Mishra along with Dr. Durga Prasad Dash has written an article titled “Down Memory Lane: An Eco-critical

Approach to Bibhutibhushan's *Aranyak-Of The Forest*" where they have discussed the role of memory used in creating this classic and presents eco-critical theory by focusing on the human's relationship with nature from the author's personal feelings which he has penned down in his diary and presented through the protagonist Satyacharan. The article talks about Satyacharan's change of falling in love with the beauty of nature, they described this saying, "Satyacharan is now a nature priest who can't reconcile to the fact that he himself was responsible for abolishing the primordial forest." He being the voice of the author, denounces the third world style of development where development is meant for only a few and most people are focused to live in the filthy environment. Satyacharan's sense of guilt always haunts him as his hands are smeared with the blood of forest plants (Mishra and Dash, 120). Another article on this novel titled "*Aranyak: A Chronicle of the Homeless*," written by Dr. Sarannya V. Pillai focuses mainly on the characters of this novel such as Satyacharan, Bhanumati, Raja Dobru etc. and she opines that, "Aranyak does not resolve the complexities in the lives of the people in the forest land but presents a holistic view of how and why things changed in the forests and the tenants in course of time" (Pillai, 324).

Moving on to the next novel, *The Hungry Tide* too fits very well with the required criteria to be a part of green literature due to its perfect green settings, themes, characters' attitudes, lives and experiences in the mangrove forest of Sundarbans. Throughout the story it beautifully depicts the scenarios of human-nature relationship along with other eco-critical themes, but mainly emphasizes on the human-animal relationship.

Regarding eco-critical issues of this novel Dr. A. Anitha Sree has written an article titled "Eco-Critical Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*" where she brings out some eco-critical issues of Sundarbans that is seen in the story. She states that, "the relationship between

nature and society plays a prominent role in a country like India with ecosystems ranging from Himalayas in North to the Indian Ocean in South and the dry Thar of the West ... human culture is connected to the environment and affecting it and affected by it” (Sree, 297). Furthermore, regarding the human-animal relationship and other problems of Sundarbans Marie Josephine Aruna and E. Devabalane have published an article titled “Human vs. Nonhuman: Environmental Issues and Concerns in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*.” In this article they both have mainly focused on the relationship between man and animal, and identified the core environmental problems of Sundarbans along with its people, habitants, and animals, also manmade calamities that portray the entire ecological systems. They opines that, “The relationship between varied disciplines such as Literature and Environmental studies has been harmoniously reintegrated by Gosh ... the writer has taken significant efforts to give a clarion call towards the understanding and conservation of life in the Sundarbans” (Aruna and Devabalane, 42).

iii) Point of Departure

The existing literature on this literary theory and the relevant concepts and events have been undoubtedly helpful for my research, and working on this thesis in terms of providing proper directions and information. They have provided helps in understanding this literary theory of ecocriticism in a better way along with understanding the aims and functions that this school of criticism possesses, which I will be attempting in this thesis while doing the analysis on the two primary environmental texts *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide* by keeping the objectives and necessary criteria of this theory in mind. However, it seems like most of the existing literary works on this literary theory of ecocriticism has been done in providing the definitions, setting the goals, and in the attempt to provide the understanding of it to the readers along with introducing texts or criteria of the texts on which this school of criticism can be applied on.

Mainly works have done in urging the scholars or critics to work in this field to spread the environmental awareness, but hardly works on the environmental texts can be seen on which this theory have been actually applied practically. Though there are several Western literary works which have been done using this theory, very few have done outside of the Western literature. Therefore, I have decided to attempt the existing notions, goals, themes of this school of literary criticism to practically apply them in the analysis of the two novels *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide* which are the part of Indian green literature and world literature, and set in the East. A very few works have done on these two texts based on this particular school of law, and the ones which are done mostly just address the environmental issues that are seen in the stories. However, to differentiate my work to the others, along with addressing the environmental issues that can be seen in the stories, I will also discuss and apply the environmental ethics such as the land ethic, and bioethics as a main need or, solution to overcome the environmental crises we are dealing with as it indicates to rethink about nature and the environmental issues in another light. Thus in doing so, I am aiming to address and fill the gaps that I believe has existed in regards of using this literary theory. Also, by addressing the eco-critical conditions from these two novels; that are related to my own culture I am hoping that this thesis will not only help in the contribution to this developing new school of criticism, but also in opening the eyes of the people of my own culture too in creating awareness regarding the environmental issues.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The research methodology for this thesis is going to be qualitative, and comparative among the two chosen texts; *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide*. For analysis of these two texts, I will be applying the theory of ecocriticism and also compare them as in how both the novels mainly focus on two different parts regarding the welfare of the environment; that though both the novels talk about the welfare of the environment and ecology in general, both the texts mainly focus on one particular concern regarding human-nature, or human-environment relationship in a much broader way. For example, in *Aranyak* we see the concern of human-nature relationship portrayed in a broader way, whereas, in *The Hungry Tide* we see the concern of human-animal relationship portrayed in a broader way. Thus, the analysis of these two texts would bring a comparative discussion of these two human-environment relationships.

Theoretical Framework

i) Ecocriticism and Objectives

As it has been discussed before that this is still a developing theory which was first introduced by Rueckert's article "Literature and Ecology; An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. This theory is all about the relationship between human and non-human; living, nonliving beings and their surrounding environments are the part of this theory. It is made in showing concerns for the welfare of nature and environment, but it does not exclude the human beings from being a part of its discussion. As both the human beings and the environments are existing, living together along with the non-human things in this world, hence the discussion has included all of these for a better analysis. Several books and other literary works have published explaining the objectives or role of the eco-critics. For example, a scholar named Kate Rigby discusses in the chapter of

Ecocriticism of the book, *Literary and Cultural Criticism at the Twenty-First Century* about her concerns regarding the relationship of society to the natural world in the modern era. She opines that the more cultured a person become, the more he/she goes away from the natural world. Rigby blames the unmindful activities of the civilized world for endangering all lives on earth; the very ecosystem. She blames the civilized world's activities such as exploitation of nature, consumption and destruction of animals, environmental pollution, ozone layer's destruction, global warming etc. She presents the study of culture-nature dichotomy along with the views that culture is mostly elevated at the cost of nature. The writer further clarifies that the eco-critics do not promote vegetarianism, rather they are concerned on the self deceiving behaviors of modern man that how people does not see such large scale of meat consumption to be the suffering and harm of the animals in our environment. Rigby disagrees with the Western Christianity's notion of anthropocentrism that believes that the God has created man as the centre of universe and nature is at his disposal Also, points out that the West is not alone to blame for the destruction of the ecosystems, but the other cultures and societies are also involved in it too more or less, as they have not lived harmoniously with the ecosystem too. And in my thesis, I am going to show it by the analysis of the two primary chosen texts as these novels are set in the East and shows the attitudes and reactions of the Eastern people with their surrounding environment. She strongly admits that the human culture should be indebted to nature always for providing everything that is needed for the survival.

Further, she specifically presents some objectives of the eco-critics that; the eco-critics should study literature in the light of ecological perception of nature to change the ways through which human inhabit the earth. They should deconstruct the way the nature is represented in Canonical texts and to provide the notion that nature should not sub-ordinate to culture rather it

should be brought to the centre of attention. The eco-critics should reframe the existing literatures and re-evaluate them to determine whether there are certain values and assumptions can be found in the different works of the different writers who presents environment and non-human lives. She gives the example of Keats Pastoral idyll “To Autumn” that shows not as an escapist fantasy but a valuable “meditation on how human culture can only function through links and reciprocal relation with nature.” Eco-critics should also study on how the binary opposition of I/It or I/Thou between man and nature can be avoided in literature or nature writing (Rigby, 157). Moreover, Rigby further urges the eco-critics to relate eco-criticism as a theory to the other theories like postcolonialism, postmodernism, feminism, structuralism, Marxism etc. and examine how one theory can be influenced by the other. It has also included ethics or ethical discussions regarding environment such as the land ethics, bioethics etc., proposed by several philosophers and naturalists. And in my thesis I am going to use such ethical discussions regarding environment for the textual analysis of my two chosen environmental texts.

ii) Environmental Ethics

Ecocriticism includes the discussions of having ethics regarding environment. The need of including environmental ethics to our ethical systems has mainly come out due to the conflicts such as anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism, and ecosystems vs. ethical systems, where the first one is the debate of what should be our primal focus or given the primal importance. Should the focus be on the benefits of human beings, or the biotic community? And the other conflict is mostly of blaming one another for the poor condition of the environment. Is it the fault of our ecosystems, or the ethical systems? The environmentalists and ecocritics believe that its due the faults in our ethical systems that causes harms to the ecosystems, because the ecosystem is functioned on the basis of how we function our ethical system, that how we decide to use and

behave with our environment. Therefore, several philosophers and naturalists like Aldo Leopold, Arne Naess, Van Rensselaer Potter etc. has talked about the importance of having environmental ethics for the welfare of both the land and every living being that are included in the environment. Naturalist and forester Aldo Leopold is often considered as the father of wildlife ecology, and previously he was mostly concerned about serving human interests. Though his focus was mainly on anthropocentrism, he changed his views later on the ecocentric side due to one of his experiences which moved his heart completely. Leopold has talked about his experience in his book titled *A Sand County Almanac*, that while he was having lunch with his other forester colleagues on a rim rock, there suddenly they witnessed some wolves; a wolf with her babies were crossing the river and when the wolves reached the shore the foresters started to kill them by firing gun shots. That very situation triggered something deep in his heart and he admits in his book that, after seeing their deaths he sensed that "... neither the wolf nor the mountain... agreed with such a view" (Leopold, 130), and this experience helped him to rethink about the goals or roles of a forester, that Leopold thought a forester should start focusing on the interests of ecosystems rather than only on human beings. Afterwards, he started to develop environmental ethics which he called, the land ethic, and it was built mainly to understand our ethical relationships with nature. Many philosophers who are working on environmental ethics they either seemed to be taking an individual approach or a holistic approach. The ones who believe in taking individual approach they think of individual beings as the main unit of moral consideration. For example, they asks questions like how one should treat the individual animals in the wild; should they help individual animals or, how one should raise them for further use. However, the land ethic rather than focusing on how one should treat individual beings, it focuses mainly on how we should morally consider the entire ecosystems; the biotic community.

When Leopold observed the death reaction on the wolf's eyes, he realized that without wolves there would be too many deer as there would be no wolves to eat them as food (130). Therefore, the imbalance due to the less number of wolves and huge number of deer would interrupt the functions of ecosystems. This would cause to suffer the entire ecosystems as everything is interconnected. Therefore, we have to consider the consequences of our actions on the entire ecosystems. Hence, this land ethic is based on the eco-centric philosophy, rather than an anthropocentric philosophy. Leopold has written about the land ethic in his essay titled the same as it is about, "The Land Ethic," where Leopold mentions that, "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (Leopold, 204). And the central guiding principle of Leopold's land ethic is that he believes, a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community, and it is wrong if it tends otherwise (210). The basis of this philosophy is about morality functions to make us cooperate, and how one should act as the member of this community. As humans are members of the biotic community, as in members of the land; this is because ecosystems have a huge effect on how we live. Human beings are the integral part of this community, so Leopold suggests, this community; the biotic community should be regarded as a moral community. Also, to have well ecosystems we the humans need to act as a well responsible members of this biotic community. Therefore, being a good responsible member of this biotic community, or the land it is our duty to provide well treatment to the environment and not to destroy it, or anything that could cause vital harms to the environment. He urges people to not take the land as something which they can use as however they wish, and he suggests people to cast off the believe that "... economic determines all land-use" (225). He further states that,

The evolution of a land ethic is an intellectual as well as emotional process. Conservation is paved with good intentions which prove to be futile or even dangers, because they are devoid of critical understanding either of the land, or of economic land use. I think it is a truism that as the ethical frontier advances from the individual to the community, its intellectual content increases. (225)

Therefore, Leopold's essay suggests that people should embrace his ethical principle of land that is; we the humans should preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It also talks about conservation which is "... a state of harmony between men and land" (207), and he urges to accept it for the welfare of the environment, the land as in the whole biotic community. Furthermore, another environmental ethic includes the discussion of "bioethics." Van Rensselaer Potter has coined this term bioethics in order to describe a new philosophy which talks about biology, ecology, medicine and human value. Most importantly, it focuses on both the land and deep ecology and it is built on to clarify the conflicts of anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism, that Potter in his article titled "Real Bioethics: Biocentric or Anthropocentric?" mentions that,

Real bioethics is not merely biocentric or merely anthropocentric. Instead, real bioethics calls for an idealistic mix of biocentrism and the kind of humanism that is concerned with the needs, interests, and welfare of human beings, or, in other words, an enlightened or realistic anthropocentrism that acknowledges the central role of biosphere in the continued existence and "common good" of the human species ..." (Potter, 117).

He further mentions that, "... there should be no attempt to promote a contest between biocentrism and anthropocentrism ... but a continuation of both, a humanistic biocentrism as

Leopold advocated a matter of organizational morality directed by an intuition for the “common good” (179-181). Bioethics simply believes that for the common good of both the sides; human beings and environment, we need the mix of both, a symbiosis and not putting them to any contest. Hence, we should not debate on whether we should be anthropocentric or biocentric, rather we should focus on the bioethics that calls for the “common good” of both the sides.

Chapter 4: Analysis

This thesis is mainly going to explore human-nature and man-animal relationships in the two selected novels *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide*. The discussion of 'Rethinking Nature' would include the conflict of anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism, and as mentioned before in methodology, this conflict is mostly about the debate of which one should be given most importance. Also, include another conflict of ecosystems vs. ethical-systems is basically like blaming game; both the sides are blaming one another for the damnation of the ecology, that the error in the environmental issues are happening due to the error in the functions of ecosystems or ethical-systems. On the other hand, bioethics talks about the need of harmony between both the sides of anthropocene and biosense, the biotic community, and it talks about the needs of having environmental ethics as in "bioethics." Bioethics prioritizes Leopold's notions regarding land ethics and according to what Van Rensselaer Potter explains it in his article "Real Bioethics: Biocentric or Anthropocentric?" that, real bioethics does not put anthropocentrism and biocentrism in a contest against each other, it is not merely biocentric or merely anthropocentric. Instead, it calls for an idealistic mix of both the biocentrism and "... the kind of humanism that is concerned with the needs, interests and welfare of human beings, or, in other words, an enlightened or realistic anthropocentrism" which acknowledges biosphere's central role "...in the continued existence and "common good" of the human species", as the welfare of the biotic community is intended for the welfare of human species too (Potter, 177). Its main goal is to make us "think" in a different way about nature and the environment and make us question regarding "true happiness," that if we really want happiness in materialistic progress despite destroying nature, or it should be the opposite, or rather a mix of both. Both the texts *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide* bring out these issues through different characters, incidents and scenes of

their stories, and want us to rethink about nature, so we can get through the environmental issues. In this discussion of rethinking nature I will be implying these environmental ethics in the analysis of both the novels. At first, I am going to analyze *Aranyak*; focusing the human-nature relationship, and then *The Hungry Tide*; focusing the man-animal relationship, and through the analysis I will be showing a comparison of how both the novels present environmental issues and advises us to accept bioethics and rethink about nature in a different light.

i) Rethinking Nature; Human-Nature Relationship in *Aranyak*

Aranyak is written by Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay during 1937 and 1939 and at first it used to be published serially in the monthly titled “Prabashi,” and this novel is originally written in Bengali. However, it has been translated into several languages and being a remarkable environmental text it has secured its place in the world literature field, and the one I have chosen for this thesis is translated in English by Rimli Bhattacharya. Apart from showing human-nature relationship in this novel, I will also show how the notion of progress, developments such as economic, industrialization etc. affects the landscape and changes the social scenarios. *Aranyak* presents the story of forest destruction caused by the cultivator’s in the name of progress and for the sake of profits. The novel is told from the point of view of the protagonist Satyacharan (Satya) and we see him being appointed as the manager in an estate situated in the district called Bhagalpur. Being a manager there his duty is to monitoring the potential tenants, creating and dealing with new legal deeds and settlements until the majority portion of the forest is ruined for settlement. Before coming to this forest land Satya has been suffering terribly from unemployment and when he gets the opportunity to get rid of that very problem as his friend

offers him this job he just takes it without giving any second thought. He never thinks about the forest destruction or the consequences it would bring upon the landscape and also to the inhabitants. He has simply started his journey there to remove his unemployment scar. And at the first phase of his life there, he has suffered very badly to cope up with the new rural lifestyle in such an environmental place full of green and nature no matter where he lays his eyes on. However, he managed himself to settle there in that new rural lifestyle and that too not by force, but naturally. Satya gradually develops his love for nature, beautiful landscape of the forest. He gradually learns to value the beauty of nature by himself. Not only that, he also develops love and companionship with the inhabitants of that land. He gets changed and becomes a lover of nature, and starts to work for the welfare of the environment rather than the urbanizing progress of the land, and we see it as he admits, "I had come here to settle new tenants in these forests. Having come to destroy the forestland, I have instead fallen in love with the beautiful forest maid" (Bandyopadhyay, 113). Thus, this novel shows how a man from urban landscape who used to carry zero concern and love for nature can eventually change in quite a polar opposite form. However, despite his gradual change and love for nature he is bound to carry out the mission of his very job for which he has been appointed there. He is left with no other choice but to destroy the forest with whom he has fallen in love with, the love he was unaware of before. Therefore, the guilt comes in his heart which he even considers a great sin and to lessen it he starts to write his forest life stories from his memories, and hence, this novel is written in the form of a memoir. From the prologue of this novel we see him to confess that his life that he has spent in the jungle has been the most beautiful life that he ever had in his lifetime. As mentioned before, the protagonist did not carry love for nature until he developed it by experiencing the beauty of nature by himself in Bhagalpur district which is surrounded by the

places like Saraswati Kundi on the northern borders of Lobutulia, Nara-boihar etc. Satya was brought up in urban landscape and used to live his life in the city of Culcutta which is filled up with sounds of vehicles, factories, humans and everything that is included in the list of human civilization. Hence, it is natural that he would find it difficult in adjusting his life in the rural space where nothing that can be included in the list of human civilization. He suffered to adjust his noisy city life with the silence of the wild in Bhagalpur forest land. He has been fearing of having a lonely life that he was going to spend in the "...twenty or thirty thousand bighas of jungle land" (8). However, soon he starts to anticipate it and overcome the fear as Dr. Sarannya V. Pillai says in her article "*Aranyak: A Chronicle of The Homeless*" that, "The city becomes the "other" for him and the natural world his home" (Pillai, 325). And we see it through Satya's words, "The jungle will get inside of you. By and by, you won't be able to bear any kind of disturbance or put up with crowds. That's what has happened to me ..." (Bandyopadhyay, 11). Throughout his time there we see Satya to fall in love with the beauty of nature along with the inhabitants. Especially, he starts to have a soft corner for those who care for the wellbeing of nature instead of caring for the monetary benefits or desire after materialistic lifestyle. For example, we see him to interact with the nature loving characters like Jugalprasad who despite having the opportunity to do something for a better earning chooses to spend more time in nurturing the nature. Jugalprasad is a character that today's world needs for the environmental progress. A deep love and concerns for the nature lives within his mind and heart. He is a man who cherishes an extreme habit of planting seeds and trees of verity kinds, especially the rare flower seeds. He would travel from one place to another in search of different plants and seeds and sow them in his land Lobutulia. Seeing the innocence and deep love for nature, Satya too gets interested in it and gets touched by Jugalprasad's habit that he too starts to cooperate with

him in collecting and planting different trees in Lobutulia. In this regard Pillai says, Jugalprasad "... makes a deep impact on his attitude towards the world that he starts lending a helping hand to Jugalprasad in his selfless endeavor, thus contributing to the well being of nature rather than exploiting her. The once sickening landscape becomes his companion" (Pillai, 327). Thus, we see Satya's concerns in the environmental welfare despite what his job actually demands, which is emptying the land by burning the forest or cutting down the trees for giving them on lease. He develops completely the opposite of what his job demands to his characteristics. Therefore, we could see his shift from anthropocentric views to the biocentric views as he starts thinking about nature nourishment rather than the materialistic benefits.

Furthermore, we meet another nature loving character named Raju Parey in Jungalmahal. He is a poor man who only gets to eat Chinese grass, salt and makai as his food. However, despite being in such a poor condition he considers himself to be a happy man. Seeing his poor condition, Satya offers him a few bighas of land to deforest so that he could use it in farming and earn money from it. Though he accepts the offer and the lands, having deep love for nature and no greed towards wealth Raju feels discomfort in deforesting the land for raising crops as he thinks that deforestation would cause harm to the forest. His philosophic mindset of nature care and fear of displeasing the nature by causing any kinds of harm upon it uncovers as he says,

The forest ... is very beautiful. The flowers ... blooming for a long time and the birds sing, each with their own call; the gods themselves have merged with the wind and have left their mark on the earth. But whenever there is money or transactions of cash, loan and receipts, the air becomes polluted. The gods chooses not to stay on any longer. So, whenever I pick up the cutter and the axe, the gods come and snatch away my tools. They

whisper such thoughts into my ears that all thoughts of land and property are driven away from my mind. (Bandyopadhyay, 74)

Raju does not even wish to leave his land and move to the urban city for better earnings. Even when Satya comes back to his city life in Calcutta, Raju stays in the ruined forest for his eternal love for the nature. Raju Parey is such an example who believes in land and bioethics. He prioritizes the welfare of nature over the materialistic and economic benefits and denies anything that could threaten the wellbeing of environment. He understands the ecosystem that by deforesting the forest it would put the birds in a difficult position, the singing birds would have to leave as their home would no longer be there. The beautiful blooming flowers that increase the glow of jungle will be vanished. Both the flowers and birds are inevitable beings of maintaining a healthy ecosystem and so ruining the forest would ruin the ecosystem as such elements like birds, plants flowers along with other environmental stuffs that work for a good ecosystem would no longer be there which would displease the God too. Hence, the ethics that people like Raju and Jugalprasad are carrying within themselves are helping in the welfare of the ecosystems as due to their bioethics they are working for the betterment of nature and refusing to harm the environment. On the other hand, those who do not have any bioethics, the people unlike Raju, Jugalprasad and Satyacharan prefer to destroy the forest for other economic benefits. People like those who have appointed Satya feel no hesitation in destroying the forest through the employer like Satya. Unfortunately, Satya being in love with nature still could not do much to save it from getting fully destroyed. As Sandip Kumar Mishra and Dr. Durga Prasad Dash opine in their article “Down Memory Lane: An Eco-critical Approach to Bibhutibhusan’s *Aranyak-Of The Forest*”

Satya was assigned to do so as a part of his profession. The jungle land of Nara-baihar and Lobutulia had been leased out. There remained hardly any forests like those of former times. All the shady groves and creeper entwined trees and the secluded paths composed by nature so many years were lopped off by the ruthless hands of the labourers. What had taken thousands of years to come up was destroyed in a matter of few days for setting up human habitation. (Mishra and Dash, 118)

The beauty of the forest was all gone; no longer remain any mysterious green where the enchanting fairies used to roam in the nights of moonlit. There no longer remain any thick jungle where the god of wild buffalos named Tarbaro, used to put up his hands in saving the wild creatures. All was gone and destroyed because Satyacharan had no option but to lease out the lands to the new settlers for the monetary benefits of his employers.

Moreover, these nature loving characters; Jugalprasad, Raju Parey and Satyacharan are the perfect examples of those who have environmental ethics, especially as they believe to Leopold's advice to cast off economic desires that demands damnation of land. The author has beautifully presented them to the readers so that by reading about them and knowing their thoughts on nature people would also realize the value of nature and think of developing such selfless attitudes in the favor of environment. Because, we need thousands of nature loving people like them to bring a massive environmental change and for having more people like them we need to re-shape our thinking towards nature. We have to rethink about what could be done for environmental progress and most importantly rethinking about the very choice of "happiness"- questioning ourselves about the very happiness that we truly want and need. Do we need materialistic progress more over environmental progress? Would such materialistic progress bring us happiness despite ruining the nature and environment? We see such rethinking

in Satyacharan when he says, “What do human beings really want: progress or happiness? Was it of any use making progress if no happiness came with it? I knew so many people who had certainly progressed in life but had lost happiness. Excessive indulgence had blunted the edges of their desires, ...” and now there is nothing that could bring them joy. Life has become monotonous to them like without any colour and significance. “No stones shored their inner being; no sap flowed within.” (Bandyopadhyay, 244)

If we see around us we would be able to relate to Satya’s words very well. We would realize what he says is not untrue that “excessive indulgence” really had dull our perimeters of happiness. We can hardly find joy in our lives as it has become really monotonous and the number of depressant people are increasing day by day, and that makes them to take a short vacation in a place full of nature, wild environment to refresh and sooth themselves. People take short vacation in greenish places, thus the untouched rural or wild landscapes are turning into tourist spots. Does this not indicate how much we need such green, wild nature for our happiness? That we all need to take parts in preserving nature? However, it is also seen that though people go in search of short refreshment in wild, green environmental places, they fail to realize one simple fact of the very “need” for nature and its preservation. People merely take them as tourist spots and often seen to be ruining the places by throwing up trashes, or harming trees, thus proving their unconsciousness for nature welfare and this is really sad. On one hand they go there in search for refreshment and happiness and ends up ruining the place on the other hand! Whereas, they should be doing the opposite; realize the value of preserving nature while having the refreshment. Such example can be seen in *Aranyak* too where Satya criticizes the city people who having the lack of imagination exploits forest by cutting branches from trees, throwing up wastages around etc. They merely take it as a picnic spot to have fun. Satya

criticizes some of the city women, “The women were a motley collection, completely devoid of imagination. They ran about gathering twigs for fire on the edges of the forest and chattered endlessly but not one of them were around to see where they were ... Did they know that only a dozen yards from where they sat, the forest spirits dance in the moonlight?” (185).

Regarding it Mishra and Dash further claims that, Satya’s criticizing the city people for their “... lack of imagination” and exploiting the jungle surely shows a clear change in Satya’s attitudes to nature (Mishra and Dash, 118). Hence, the portrayal of change of heart and mind shows up again with it; the rethinking of nature, the need for a change of thoughts regarding environmental welfare.

Now moving towards the ways of having such change of thoughts in oneself; as mentioned before, Satya being a city man did not carry the love and care for nature at first, instead he has developed it in his characteristic slowly in himself by living in full of nature, wild landscape. By experiencing the nature for a certain period of time Satyacharan realized the value and beauty of nature. We see many scenes where he compares his city life to his life in wilderness. Satya often compares between urbanesque and rural landscape;

This was a very different sort of life ... When I had left Calcutta and come to this terrible loneliness, to an utterly natural sort of lifestyle, how intolerable the uncivilized life here had seemed; but now, I feel this is better life of the two. Nature- rude and barbaric here- had initiated me into the mysteries of freedom and liberation; would I ever be able to reconcile myself to a perch in the birdcage of a city? ... I would not wish to exchange this happiness for all the wealth in the world. (Bandyopadhyay, 61)

Such drastic change in Satya also suggests that this kind of change in mindset needs the experience of nature, wilderness by living in such place for a certain period of times, just like Satya have. He realizes the importance and value of nature, his rural life because he has lived there for a certain period of his lifetime. Otherwise, it would not come out that easily. And it simply indicates of the need for experiencing the nature so that we can catch the importance of it. However, people hardly get to experience nature in this world full of hunger in making material progress and industrialization. Hence, the only available option to experience nature in other way is by reading this kind of environmental texts as words deeply helps in creating a strong imaginary world in the mind while reading. Thus, experiencing it to some extent which is why we need the environmental texts to apply the eco-critical thoughts on them and to enhance our ethical sides towards these important environmental issues.

ii) Rethinking Nature; Man-Animal Relationship in *The Hungry Tide*

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, this novel portrays the debates of anthropocentrism vs. biocentrism and ecosystems vs. ethical-systems in much more broader way by emphasizing on the man-animal relationship throughout its story. And like *Aranyak*, it also urges the readers to rethink about nature, environment and to consider bioethics as Potter has proposed not to think these conflict as any contests of one against another.

This novel is set in the mangrove forest of Sundarbans; the one-third of the mangrove forests that belongs to the West Bengal region of India. Ghosh presents a fundamental story of the Sundarbans which is considered to be a unique and broad archipelago home for the thousands of species that includes both the human and nonhuman lives. Also, the UNESCO has designated

it as a world heritage site and biosphere reserve. The story presents three major characters; Piyali Roy, Kanai, and Fokir whose lives are caught in the tide country and through their journey there we get to see the survival battle between the man and animal; living together in the same environment. Ghosh describes, “A mangrove forest is a universe unto itself ... leaves are tough and leathery, the branches gnarled foliage often impassably dense ... every year dozens of people perish in the embrace of that dense foliage, killed by tigers, snakes and crocodiles” (Ghosh, 11). Marie Josephine Aruna and E. Devabalane in their article “Human Vs. Nonhuman: Environmental Issues and Concerns in Amitav Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*” mentions, the Sundarbans which means “beautiful forest” has derived its name from the predominant presence of the common species of mangrove- the Sundari trees whose spread protects the entire region from the fury of cyclonic destructions at the whole region by preventing erosion due to tidal action (Aruna and Devabalane, 44). It shows how important Sundarbans really is to protect people and environment from any natural disasters and to maintain the ecosystems. The novel reveals issues that are related to the “... life and existence on this delta with its diverse ecosystems in which both man, animal and other beings strive for their own eco-space,” and thereby trying to find their means of survival (44). This novel portrays the conflict of human vs. non-human; the man-animal relationship where on one hand we see the living difficulties of everyday lives from the human being’s point of views and attitudes, and on the other hand, from the non-human beings which includes the most powerful creatures, the Royal Bengal Tiger, through that Ghosh presents the man-tiger conflict.

Through the character Piya the author brings out the issues of dolphins that how in the ecosystems; Sundarbans is home for the Gangetic and Irrawaddy dolphins, that despite its ever depleting richness in the biodiversity which is mainly the outcome of the deaths of several rare

species, lives for every living beings is a struggle that is "... at odds with Nature and simultaneously with other beings as well" (44). We see Piya who is an American of Indian origin, being a cetologist who studies cetology; the branch of marine mammal science that studies various species of dolphins, whales etc. She comes to Sundarbans for her field study and research on the Irrawaddy dolphins (orcaella) and she takes help from the native fisherman Fokir in doing her works. Piya sees a group of seven orcaellas and noticed their behavioral pattern to be slightly unusual than what she has studied and seen before. Piya observes a calf "... coming to the surface in a 'corkscrew' pattern with its little head protruding out of the water- an indication that it still had to learn to breath smoothly" (Ghosh, 77). This species of dolphin is considered to be endangered critically and she thinks that the way they are behaving in the water here shows that they are trying to adapt themselves in the tidal ecology which mostly indicates "... clues to the conservation of this endangered species" (Aruna and Devabalane, 45). It indicates the very conservation that we need in this world in order to live in harmony with other living beings in our given environment. Bioethics too talks about conservation, urges people to willingly develop this within themselves. Just like the dolphins are adapting themselves in the tidal environment, humans too need to adapt themselves living with the nonhumans as they too are the part of the environment. Because, as Leopold simply defines it, "conservation is a state of harmony between men and land" (Leopold, 207). And according to his land ethics the land collectively includes "... soils, waters, plants, and animals" all the living beings (204).

Furthermore, Piya learns that how the dolphins helps the fisherman in fishing with their cast-net by increasing the amount of fish they get to catch, this act of cooperation also proves that how they are helping humans economically. And we see it through Piya as she recalls one of her memories in the river of Mekon, that once "They had herded a school of fish into shallow

water and the hundred creatures had buried themselves in the mud in a futile effort to evade their pursuers” (Ghosh, 109). As the net pushes numerous numbers of fish on the river’s floor that makes the dolphins to have their fill while the fishermen have their catch and seeing that Piya wonders about the symbiosis between human and animals as she throws a rhetoric saying, “Did there exist anymore remarkable instance of symbiosis between human beings and a population of wild animals?” Even we get to know from Fokir that the dolphins are considered here as the messenger of Bon Bibi who is worshiped as the goddess of the forest. He has learned it from the stories of Bon Bibi that his mother Kusum had told him that the dolphin brings news of the rivers and floods to the Bon Bibi. Though it is merely a story, however, the way animals reacts before any natural disasters’ existence it gives us clues and warnings of that very disaster’s arrivals. As we see how Piya seeing the very unusual behaviors of the dolphins, she could assume that a strong storm is coming up. Because, the dolphins mostly starts reacting peculiarly as they are very sensitive to the atmospheric pressure. Hence, it also proves how the dolphins are involved in the ecosystems and biotic community. However, though they naturally cooperate with the fishermen in catching great numbers of fishes, this sort of natural economic helps seems not to be enough for the human beings. As we further get informed from Piya that how their species are getting threatened by the humans as they are catching dolphins and putting them into various big aquariums, pools where visitors comes to see them in order to entertained themselves by paying money. Hence, the human beings are threatening the dolphins as their species are becoming very rare day by day because of humans’ money increasing intentions. We also get informed through Piya as she mentions to Kanai about a dolphin that was called “Mr. Sloane who had victim to the flourishing Clandestine trade in wildlife.” Throughout the eastern Asia new aquariums were opening and the demand for river dolphins was growing. “Mr. Sloan was a valuable commodity-

Irrawaddy dolphins had been known to fetch as much as one hundred thousand dollars on the black market ... Mr. Sloan would soon be sold off to an aquarium (201).”

Piya used to get worried about Mr. Sloan as “... For days afterward she was haunted by a nightmare in which Mr. Sloan was driven into a corner of his tank by a line of hunters armed with fishnets” (539). Not only that, as if such inhumane act was not horrible enough to threatened their existence, people even use them to make diesel fuel. We get informed about this cruel act of human beings from Piya as she tells Kanai that, “The once abundant population of Orcaella in the Tonle Sap, Cambodia’s great fresh-water lake, had been reduced almost to extinction,” they were hunted using explosives and riffles, “... and their carcasses were hung up in the sun so their fat would drip into buckets. This oil was then used to run boats and motorcycles” (200).

Aruna and Devabalane further claims that, the rich biosphere of Sundarbans is in great danger of being exploited even more as a result of anthropogenetic intervention in the form of globalization, economical development, ecotourist (Aruna and Devabalane, 46), and we see this being true when Piya gets shocked by learning that the people of one of the fast moving motorboats which could belong to the coastguards or the forest officials or even police, had hit one of the calfs and it gets killed by that hit of the motorboat. Further, Fokir even mentions that he has witnessed 3 of such incidents before. Thus, Ghosh beautifully presents the threatening information of dolphins through Piya, and from these acts of humans toward the dolphins one fact comes clear that the humans are using the helpless dolphins as however they wish for their economic purposes which nobody throws a question on. However on the other hand, when the tigers are targeting and killing humans as their prey because, the humans themselves have placed their existence into the tigers’ territory on the first hand, then the people goes on blaming the

tigers and killing them whenever they get the chance of killing them. The tiger is powerful so they are killing humans to have them as their food and on the other hand the humans are powerful than the dolphins so they are using and killing them as however they wish for their materialistic benefits. When a tiger is killing a human being the news comes out shockingly but no one cares when a dolphin gets killed for making diesel fuel or when any other animals gets killed due to the greed of human beings! It shows how this world is so much focused on the anthropocentric sides and how little to the biotic sides. We have few people like Piya who actually cares about the threatening issue of the Orcaellas. In order to have a radical change we need to have ethic regarding it too, as Leopold suggests in his “The Land Ethic” that “... the economic determinists have tied around our collective neck, and which we now need to cast off, is the belief that economics determines all land-use” (Leopold, 225).

Moving towards more on the man-tiger clash of Sundarbans, Ghosh has created a strong representation of the interaction between human and tiger of the tide country. How the inhabitants of Sundarbans are living there everyday with the threats of getting killed by the powerful tiger. We learn how Kusum’s father gets killed by the tiger when he went inside the deep forest to cut down some firewood. Sundarbans is the only mangrove forest in the world that houses the tiger with the highest tiger population in the world being found in this tiger reserve. As several studies show the conservation of this majestic animals has been a privileged one for the poor humans of the place (Aruna and Devabalane, 46). Also, as Sundarbans is becoming a world heritage site therefore, it has placed the tiger in the center while marginalizing the inhabitants of the islands at the same time. As the number of tigers are increasing hence, remains a question about the movement space of tigers. Because, there is danger for the both sides; human and tiger. As the tigers often wanders inside human spaces and ends up eating them or

ends up getting killed by them, and with that Ghosh vividly presents anthropocentric vs. biocentric conflict through this man-tiger survival battle. For example, we see a scene when Piya, Fokir, Kanai and Horen fall under a situation where they witness the killing of a tiger by a mob. The inhabitants are already angry towards the tiger as it has killed two people and a buffalo before, and its revisiting for the second time has made the people furious enough to kill the tiger. We can picture this scene as Ghosh beautifully presents, “When they neared the crest of the embankment Horen pointed to a large mark in the dust and gestured the animal had surveyed the village and picked its prey ... a few hundred meters away, was a small mud-walled structure with a thatched roof.” More than a hundred people had gathered around this little hut: mostly the men were armed with sharpened bamboo poles “... Their faces were contorted in such a way that they seemed to be in the grip both extreme fear and uncontrollable rage. Many of women and children in the crowd were shrieking. Mar! Mar! Kill! Kill!” (Ghosh, 191)

Through this incident we get to see the anthropocentric vs. biocentric point of views; from Piya we get biotic notions and from the rest, Fokir and Kanai we get anthropocentric notions. Piya seems to be the only one who wants to save the tiger while others are in favor of killing it, and she gets shocked learning that even the nature lover Fokir is in favor of killing it too. Piya being sensitive to the rights of animals does not get the difficult situation of humans fighting for their survival against the powerful tiger. From Aruna and Devabalane’s article we further get to learn some real news like, the New Sunday Express in its [5] February 3, 2013 issue had published news regarding mob attack on the tiger. The year 2012 is considered as bad year for tigers because more than 88 tigers have been killed on roaming inside human dominated habitats. The wildlife authorities have now recommended section 144 of Cr Pc to be extended to the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to prevent the mobs around tigers that enter their landscapes

(Aruna and Devabalane, 47). The loss of life on both the sides are bound to happen as an outcome of man-animal conflict, as there is no clear line that separates between human habitation and tiger land.

Moreover, here the government gives priority towards saving the tiger's life over the poor lives of the inhabitants and it simply because the tigers are the assets for them as Sundarbans is becoming a world heritage site and the poor inhabitants' lives values almost nothing to them. So, it does not matter to them if the inhabitants there lives or dies. As in the Morichjhapi's incidents suggests where the refugees from Bangladesh comes to India and take shelter in a refugee center, but later they flees from there as they were getting inhumane treatments by the authority and they goes to Morichjhapi and starts to live there. The government goes against them saying they are threatening the reservation of tigers, hence they takes violent actions to eradicate the refugees from Morichjhapi. It actually does not suggest anthropocentric views because they are not caring for the human lives, but the lives of tigers that too not for the environmental welfare but the very monetary achievements that they would collect due to the existence of the tigers. Hence, this incident really shows such a pathetic tricky way of human minds of those who are in the power works. Where as in here, as Potter's bioethics suggests, there is no competition between anthropocentrism and biocentrism, rather the mix of it, a balance between them is what we need for the "common good" (Potter, 177). And, as tiger is a part of the environment, human too is a part of the environment because, both lives in this world together. So, when the questions of survival come out, we cannot really put one life prior to the other on the basis of the economic interests. It is normal that both would fight in their defense, and it rather becomes a question of luck, that who's going to win the battle of survival. If the tiger wins the man would die and if the man wins the tiger would die; there is no choice but to leaving it under the wishes of God.

However, making laws of preserving only tigers and not valuing human lives at all, because the helpless poor inhabitants does not provide much monetary achievements like the tiger does makes this issue very unethical. It becomes more unethical when we see that on the very first hand, it is very much those who are in power have forced these helpless poor people to take shelter in Morichjhapi along with other areas of the tide country. And if we even go back to the very history of human settlement in Sundarbans then we could see that Sundarbans was only full of nature and wild animals, and there was no human existence until S' Daniel Hamilton; driven by his dream of creating a utopia land, started to encounter bunch of poor people there in the hope of making it a peaceful land. However, his dream of building a utopia land failed miserably. Hence, it shows how it was the ones who had powers started the human settlement there in the first hand. And this man-animal conflict as I have said falls under the bioethics too. Regarding it Dr. Anitha Sree in her "Eco-critical Issue in *The Hungry Tide*" claims that, "The natural world is one with which they live in mutual dependency, fishing it and when necessary defending themselves against it" (Sree, 298). Here, by "necessary" surely she suggests the need for survival and not the economic development.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the developing literary theory of ecocriticism along with reviewing the selected existing literary works on this theory and the two chosen novels, and the methods that I have used in doing their analysis. Throughout the analysis of the two primary texts, I have included the discussion of rethinking nature; at first I have discussed Bandyopadhyay's *Aranyak* by focusing the human-nature relationship and then Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* by focusing the man-animal relationship. And by doing so, I have shown a comparison of how both the novels portray the environmental issues and encourages us to adapt bioethics and rethink about nature in another light. The environmental ethics, especially the bioethics talks about the need of harmony between both the sides of anthropocentrism and biocentrism, and it talks about the needs of having environmental ethics, it calls for an idealistic mix of both the biocentrism, and anthropocentrism for the "common good." It carries the objective of making us "think" in a new way about nature and the environment. Both the environmental ethics and the two novels bring out questions like; do we really need materialistic progress, economic development, industrialization over the welfare of our environment? Are we really getting "true happiness" by ruining the nature and harming the environment? Both the texts show us that, the error in the environmental issues is happening mostly due to the error in the ethical systems. Because, it is our ethical systems that holds the responsibilities behind how the ecosystems is functioning. Hence, both the texts *Aranyak* and *The Hungry Tide* bring out these issues through different characters; Satyacharan, Jugalprasad, Raju, Piya, Fokir etc., incidents and scenes regarding deforestation, conflict of man-animal relationships through dolphins and tiger that are seen throughout the stories. And all these urge us to rethink about nature and the environment in a new way, to take these issues into our consideration so that we

can get through the environmental crises. The gist of what ecocriticism truly believes and the environmental awareness this thesis is actually indicating to spread around can be seen and shortly concluded through Satyacharan's words in *Aranyak* that, "What nature gives to her own devotees is invaluable. However, it is a gift not to be received until one has served her for long." If you want her, you will have to stay with her. Otherwise, "... like a hurt maiden she will not unveil herself again. But if you lie in her, the greatest gifts of nature- beauty and exquisite peace- will be showered on you so abundantly that they will drive you to ecstasy" (Bandyopadhyay, 94). To find happiness through the beauty and gifts of nature we have to nurture, cherish and work for its welfare. If we do otherwise and continue our mistreatment on nature like we have been doing so far then nature will stop showering her blessings over us, and retaliate in a worse form for all the mistreatment we have done upon her. Therefore, it is time we adapt environmental ethics to rethink and start working for the wellbeing of our environments before it gets too late.

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