

**Human, Nature and Balance: A Comparative Analysis of Eco-critical Parallels in *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley**

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the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in English

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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/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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## Approval

The thesis titled “Human, Nature and Balance: A Comparative Analysis of Eco-critical Parallels in *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley” submitted by Ayesha Akter Promy (20303031) of Spring 2024 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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**Dedication:**

Maybe this is a small achievement of my life, still it will forever remain one of my most treasured accomplishments. Thus, I want to dedicate this thesis paper to myself for holding my patience and all the seen and unseen hard work and struggle throughout the journey.

**Human, Nature and Balance: A Comparative Analysis of Eco-critical Parallels in *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley**

**Abstract:**

The aim of this thesis is to examine and compare the literary theory of ecocriticism between the two novels *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley. It explores the intricate relationship between human life and the natural world through the lens of ecocriticism. By analyzing the environmental consciousness in these two novels *Gun Island* and *Island*, the study aims to unveil how these authors conceptualize the connection between human and nature amidst environmental crisis and utopian ideals. There are different themes such as ecological challenges, human resilience, spirituality versus science, environmental ethics and responsibility are used to compare these two novels and their approaches. The purpose of this comparative research is to emphasize the various approaches that these authors took in addressing the pressing environmental challenges of their respective eras and to provide alternative remedies that were inspired by the authors' pieces of literature. This research contributes to the broader discourse in ecocriticism and environmental humanities where it gives insights into the role of literature in shaping human perceptions and interactions with the environment to promote sustainability and ecological balance. The purpose of choosing these two novels is to show the destructive influence of dystopian society on human life and at the same time to glorify the blessings of a utopian society. However, this paper leaves scope for further studies where it can include the cross-cultural ecocritical comparison along with interdisciplinary approaches. This work is still able to promote human awareness through its narrative and approach.

**Keywords:** Eco-criticism, Nature, Ethics, Behavior, Culture, Ritual, Environmental issues, Human

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration- - - - -	-i
Approval- - - - -	-ii
Acknowledgement- - - - -	iii
Dedication- - - - -	-iv
Abstract- - - - -	-v
Chapter One- - - - -	01
1.1 Introduction- - - - -	-01
1.2 Background- - - - -	-02
1.3 Research Objectives- - - - -	05
1.4 Methodology- - - - -	05
1.5 Rationale- - - - -	-06
1.6 Limitations - - - - -	07
Chapter Two- - - - -	08
2.1 Theoretical Framework- - - - -	08
2.2 Central Theories- - - - -	10

2.2 (i) Ecocriticism-	-10
2.2 (ii) Cultural Materialism-	-15
2.2 (iii) Spatial Criticism-	-18
2.3 Primary Texts-	-19
Chapter 3-	-24
3.1 Spatial Criticism Through the Lens of The Representation of Space, Spatial Practices, Space and Power, Spatial Metaphors in <i>Gun Island</i> :	-24
3.2 Spatial Criticism Through the Lens of The Representation of Space, Spatial Practices, Space and Power, Spatial Metaphors in <i>Island</i> :	-27
Chapter 4-	-30
4.1 Environmental Challenges and Human Resilience-	-30
4.2 Spirituality and Science: Contrasting Approaches to Ecological Balance in <i>Gun Island</i> and <i>Island</i> -	-33
4.3 Environmental Ethics and Responsibility-	-36
Chapter 5-	-39
5.1 Findings-	-39
5.2 Scopes for Further Study-	-44

5.3 Conclusion-----45

Chapter Six-----47

6.1 Works Cited-----47

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Introduction:

Throughout the ages, artists and other authors from all over the world have demonstrated that nature and literature have always had a close relationship. This is evidenced by the fact that they have enjoyed a cozy liaison. At the present time, the strong contact that existed between the social world and the natural world is being broken down and stressed in all divisions of details and enhancements are provided. "Ecocriticism" refers to the study of how works of art depict nature, as well as the exploration of the connection between literature and the environment. The decade of the 1990s marked the beginning of ecocriticism, which can be understood as a distinct development or school of creative criticism. There is a unifying reason that drives the majority of ecocritical activity, and that is the unsettling realization that we have reached the era of environmental limits. This is a period when the repercussions of human actions are causing damage to the fundamental life support systems of the planet. We are present there. Either we change our ways or we will face a worldwide catastrophe, which will result in the destruction of a great deal of beauty and the extinction of a great number of other species as we drive headlong towards the end of the world.

The thesis is going to analyze two renowned novels, *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley through the lens of ecocriticism to investigate where the ecological consciousness of these two authors comes from, and how it is portrayed in the settings, characters, and plots of these two lengthy prose novels are the topics that will be discussed. Ecocriticism is a relatively

new theoretical framework that is currently in the process of being developed through its various stages. This article investigates the diverse ways in which the environment is depicted in various works of literature. Simply put, it engages in a discussion regarding the connection between human life and the natural world along with the on-going environmental issues through literature. As a result of this, it also investigates the issues that are associated with the current environmental conditions and offers potential solutions to these problems.

### **1.2 Background:**

In the current era of English literature, Amitav Ghosh is widely considered to be among the most accomplished writers. His birthday is July 11th, 1956, and he was born in Kolkata. He spent his childhood in India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh. Doon School, located in Dehradun, was the institution where he finished his education. After finishing his primary and secondary education, he went on to complete his post-secondary education at St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, and Delhi School of Economics. At St. Edmund Hall in Oxford, Ghosh was awarded the INLAKS foundation Scholarship, which allowed him to pursue a doctoral degree in social anthropology. In the beginning, he was employed by the Indian Express newspaper in Delhi. When he was younger, he worked as a professor in both a college and a university. During the year 2007, the Indian government bestowed upon him the Padam Shri recognition. The impact that he has had on Indian literature written in English is truly astounding.

Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* is drenched in the essence of folklore and modernity while exploring the scenario of climate change, migration and akin histories. There are many things that inspired him to write this novel. His personal experiences along with on-going environmental issues and his research on history pushed him to elevate this book. Though this novel was influenced by the Bengali legend of the *Bonduki Sadagar* which is known as *The Gun Merchant* which was encountered in *The Hungry Tide* by Ghosh. The story dived deeper to find its roots and its impact on various cultures and geographies like Venice, Italy and in the Sundarbans of India and Bangladesh. This is not only limited in story-telling, rather it creates awareness among the people by merging the myths with the reality of climate change.

Here it gets deeper when the writer's personal experiences with the places and communities which were affected by these issues. His extensive travels and academic experience in anthropology and history equipped him with the insights necessary to construct a story that is both an exciting adventure and a poignant analysis of important global concerns. He was able to accomplish this by combining his academic expertise with traveling extensively. Using enriched characters and settings, this novel highlights the interconnectivity of human and non-human lives among the ecological and existential threats.

On the other hand, Aldous Leonard Huxley, a British-American writer and moral philosopher who lived from July 26, 1894, to November 22, 1963, is recognized as one of the most influential figures of the 20th century in some circles. Aldous Huxley was born into one of the most well-known privileged families in England, in Godalming, Surrey. He was the grandson of Thomas

Henry Huxley, a well-known naturalist of the nineteenth century, and the son of writer and professional herbalist Leonard Huxley by his first wife, Julia Arnold. Huxley's mother was also the sister of renowned educator Thomas Arnold, whose brother was the well-known British Humanist Matthew Arnold.

In 1962, one year before he passed away, Aldous Huxley published his novel *Island*, which will continue to be his last and final work. Those who are attempting to summarize the career of a that began in 1921 with *Crome Yellow* would surely consider *Island* to be a terminal, and possibly even a climate change. (Meckier) As I argue in *Aldous Huxley: Satire and Structure*, it is nearly complete in its transition from discussion-novelist-of-ideas to basically straight-forward-essayist, a transition that began as early as *Eyeless in Gaza* in 1936. According to Huxley, the work is also the culmination of his efforts to reconcile the claims of religion and science, which were two of his obsessions. *Pala*, the island, is an attempt by the author of two dystopian novels (*Brave New World*, published in 1932, and *Ape and E*, published in 1949) to offset his earlier dire predictions by offering a prescription for the future.

Aldous had been making Utopian recommendations in his prose essays ever since the late *Island* became the third movement of an exercise in Utopian point. The Palanese, with their revolutionary education methods, their advanced and complementary practices in the areas of religion and sex, therefore represent a fictional summation and a dramatized integration of all of these recommendations. Not only did it offer a solution, but it also served as a contrast to the brand-new world.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The main objective of this research paper is to create a comparative analysis of two authors from different backgrounds and regional identity. The novels are *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley, these will focus on the thematic exploration of the parallel combination of humans and nature and the emergence of ecological and existential balance. This study actually explores how these authors are conceptualizing the relationship between the natural world and human life in the context of environmental crises and utopian ideals. While analyzing the characters, settings and narratives, this paper explores the ecocritical parallels and divergences that emerge, engaging these literary works to propose the solutions to ecological issues. Moreover, this paper will be shading light to the impact of these literary works proving a greater understanding and responsiveness towards current environmental challenges. This research will contribute to broader aspects of ecocriticism and environmental humanities through the role of literature by reflecting and shaping human activities among nature and sustainability.

### **1.4 Methodology:**

The research methodology for this thesis will employ a qualitative approach, specifically focusing on a comparative analysis of two selected texts: *Gun Island* and *Island*. To analyze these two texts, I will utilize the theory of ecocriticism and compare them based on their primary focus on different aspects of environmental well-being. Although both novels address environmental welfare and ecology in general, each text primarily concentrates on a specific concern related to the relationship

between humans and nature or the environment in a broader context. For example, Amitav Ghosh in *Gun Island* upholds the complex relationship between human and nature through the climate change and ecological disruptions which are the consequences of our actions on the environment whereas Aldous Huxley in *Island* shows us the rhythm of human and nature where human actions are taken to balance and create a sustainable living unlike our modern world.

### **1.5 Rationale:**

The research topic "Human, Nature and Balance: A Comparative Analysis of Eco-critical Parallels in *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh and *Island* by Aldous Huxley explores the complex relationship between human life and the natural world in two distinct literary works. The reason behind choosing this research topic actually upholds the urgency to highlight the contemporary context where ecological issues are at the forefront of global discourse. Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* and Aldous Huxley's *Island* serve as profound narratives that contain thematic aspects of environmentalism, impact on ecosystems and the rational expectations of sustainable living. By paralleling these two novels, the paper aims to discover how these two authors address the concept of ecological balance and the ethics that pushes humans to deal with the natural world differently. Here, Ghosh's concept showcases the folklore and modernity in climate change by presenting a modern confusion about global warming and displacement. On the other hand, Huxley shows the critical exploration of the relationship between human and nature where a society lives in harmony with nature while isolating the modern civilization. This comparative analysis will not only show the thematic aspects of these literary works but also the divergences and diversity in the portrayal

of ecocritical ideas while enriching our understanding of ecocritical literature to cope up with a sustainable modern world.

## 1.6 Limitations

However, this research topic presents several limitations that can impact the depth of the analysis. One can be the temporal gap because Ghosh's *Gun Island* engages us with the modern and contemporary concerns whereas Huxley's *Island* written in the early 1960s introduces us with ecological ideas from the mid twentieth century's perspective. This different temporal gap and cultural context may create limits among the direct comparability of the ecological themes. Then another limitation can be the author's different literary styles and narrative techniques may throw challenges in direct comparison of thematic approaches of human-nature relationships. Ghosh's work engages with folklore and historical data whereas Huxley's work approaches a more utopian and philosophical balance. Finally, another complexity may arrive that as ecocriticism is evolving day by day and different readers may interpret it within the texts differently and this subjectivity may create the complexity among the objectivity and reproducibility of the comparative analysis.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1 Theoretical Framework:

The theoretical framework for this research topic engages several major theoretical underpinnings that will drive the comparative analysis between these two authors and their literary works. This framework combines the aspects of ecocriticism, cultural studies and comparative literature to delve into the relationship and interconnectedness between human and nature as depicted in these works. Here ecocriticism provides the major lens to analyze these novels. This approach actually shows the portrayals of the relationship between humans and the natural world employing ecological understanding and consciousness. This will be analyzing the concept of these authors regarding ecological crisis, human activities and its impact on the natural world, also human responsibility towards nature and the expected solutions to the contemporary ecological crisis. Scholars like Greg Garrard and Lawrence Buell may be referred for the central ecocritical theories that include different aspects like apocalypse, pastoral, wilderness etc. in the literary works.

Not only that, cultural studies will unveil the cultural beliefs and practices, historical and geographical background to portray the environmental issues as these two novels belong from distinct cultural contexts as Ghosh's work portrays the Indian-Bengali and South Asian context where Huxley's work portrays the mid twentieth century's setting. So, the cultural study will explore the diverse cultural heritage and individual identity to incorporate with the ecological philosophies. In this case, Raymond Williams cultural materialism may contribute to the insights of cultural forces that shape literary representations of nature.

Also, if we talk about comparative literature then we can put the similarities and dissimilarities among the aspects of ecological themes between these two novels. This will look into the narratives along with the structure, characters and literary devices such as metaphor, symbolism, expressions etc. to convey their ecological message. This will showcase juxtaposing themes, characters or passages to highlight the ecological ideologies delivered from two different authors of different temporal ages.

Furthermore, this research will focus on the philosophical and ethical theories to understand the relationship between human and nature. Here Anthropocene concept, ecofeminism, deep ecology etc. can be conducted to understand the ethical obligations of humans towards nature and it will provide a subtle scope to work on moral and ethical questions raised in both novels.

So, the combination of these theoretical frameworks will help to explore a multidimensional analysis which will show how literature can critique and can have impact on human perceptions and interactions regarding the natural world. Using these frameworks, the thesis intends to reveal deeper insights into the ecological visions and critiques provided by Ghosh and Huxley. This will allow the thesis to contribute to broader conversations on topics such as sustainability, environmental justice, and our moral responsibility towards the Earth. This theoretical foundation will be incorporated with important articles and books of each discipline to justify the analysis in well-established academic discourse and guarantee a thorough and perceptive comparative investigation.

## 2.2 Central Theories:

### i. **Ecocriticism:**

One of the more recent revisionist trends to sweep the humanities in recent decades is ecocriticism. Environmental catastrophes are plaguing the modern world, putting our environment in jeopardy. Technology and research alone will not be sufficient to address the worldwide ecological catastrophe. Our perspective on nature needs to be altered. Literature has a function to perform since it is not an island above life. Since literary critics have long neglected ecology, ecologically conscious literature argues for a deeper comprehension of nature's broader significance. Over the past three decades, ecocriticism has grown into "a worldwide emergent movement." Its nature and breadth are still being developed by the scholars.

While there has been an increasing awareness of nature and environmental issues during the 1960s and 1970s, ecocriticism has lagged behind other ideologies such as feminism, Marxism etc. in terms of organization. The name "Ecocriticism" is said to have originated from the publishing of William Rueckert's article titled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. In his article titled "Ecocriticism," Rueckert defines it as the application of ecology and ecological themes to the study of literature (Rueckert, 107). He primarily focuses on explaining this particular school of criticism. Subsequently, ecocriticism experienced a period of dormancy, with little to no further discussion, until it began to rapidly expand in the 1990s. This development was mostly driven by the contributions of notable eco-critics such as William Howarth, Lawrence Buell, Harold Fromm, and Cheryl Glotfelty.

Sandip Kumar Mishra in his article stated that, the word ecocriticism was initially introduced by William Rueckert in his critical work "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. The term 'eco' originates from the Greek root word 'oikos', which etymologically refers to household or earth, while 'logy' is derived from 'logos', meaning logical discourse. Collectively, these terms refer to the evaluation and analysis of the physical and social surroundings of a dwelling, as depicted in literary works (Mishra 168).

“According to Rueckert, ecocriticism applies ecology or ecological principles into the study of literature. Lawrence Buell defines ecocriticism "as a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist's praxis".” (Mishra 168) Furthermore, Lawrence Buell's work, *The Environmental Imagination*, is widely regarded as a significant contribution to this topic. This text primarily assists in identifying environmental literature that can be employed to support this thesis. Within this book, the author presents four distinct criteria. The author's criteria include the notion that the nonhuman environment is not just a backdrop, but rather a force that implies a connection between human history and natural history. The concept of human interest is not universally recognized as the sole valid interest... The text's ethical perspective includes the concept of human accountability towards the environment (Buell, 7).

In addition, ecocriticism goes beyond mere nature studies and sets itself apart from traditional nature writing by its ethical stance and dedication to the natural world. Additionally, it establishes a link between the human and non-human realms. Eco-critics employ the term 'nature' in a more

expansive manner. Ecocriticism encompasses more than the examination of nature's portrayal in literature. Here, the term "nature" does not refer to a mere imagination of its aesthetically pleasing elements such as flora and fauna. In this context, "nature" refers to the entirety of the physical surroundings, encompassing both human and nonhuman elements. The interdependence between the two entities establishes a relationship that serves as the foundation of ecocriticism. A balanced coexistence of living and non-living elements ensures the presence of a thriving ecosystem, benefiting both humanity and the planet.

"The modern ecological consciousness has a feeling that the balance between human and the natural world must be maintained. A perfect ecology is one in which plants, animals, birds and human beings live in such harmony that none dominates or destroys the other" (Frederick 147)

Then if we talk about the waves of ecocriticism, we can see that Lawrence Buell has identified two distinct waves of ecocriticism. The initial wave of eco-critics mostly concentrated on the analysis of literature that pertains to nature, such as nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction. (Buell 138). They formerly adhered to the philosophy of organisms. Here the term "environment" refers specifically to the natural surroundings (Buell 21). The objective of the wave was to conserve the 'biotic community' (Coupe 4).

The second wave of eco-critics focused on environmental justice concerns and embraced a 'social ecocriticism' approach that considers urban landscapes as important as natural landscapes (Buell 22). Revisionist ecocriticism refers to this particular wave of ecocriticism. Its objective is to

identify remnants of natural elements within urban areas and bring attention to acts of environmental injustice committed against the marginalized communities. An eco-critic analyses and interprets works that focus on nature and the environment. Simultaneously, they utilize them as a framework for examining the principles and concepts.

In addition, ecocriticism encompasses the clash between Biocentric and Anthropocentric perspectives. Ecologically speaking, the tragic defect of humans is in their tendency to prioritize their own interests over the interests of the natural world. (Mishra 169). However, ecocriticism challenges the notion that humans are central to the significance of every aspect of the environment.

Even this conflict is also evident in the novels that I am working with. In *Gun Island*, it is explicitly dealing with the impact of climate change and natural calamities and it is an evident aspect of the Anthropocene. In this novel, Ghosh actually portrayed the scenario of climate change and its impact on migration, weather patterns and human-animal interactions. Ghosh talked about the mythological elements with modern concerns and also the encounters between humans and animals which are pushed by climate changes. This actually shows the human impact on nature and the result of this conflict.

On the other hand, during Huxley's time, the term Anthropocene was not defined even though the writer explored the relationship between humans and their environment. The Utopian society in

this novel was designed to live with the rhythm of nature which indicates the bicentric vision where all the living and nonliving organisms get the equal importance to prove the moral and ethical value. Here Huxley's work critiques human behavior towards natural resources and the exploitation created by humans overlooking the philosophical and ethical view. Here this critique is more ideological and systemic rather than direct confrontation between humans and nature.

In addition, ecocriticism examines many conflicts, including the clash between ecosystems and ethical frameworks. It posits that the current global crises are not attributable to the ecosystems. The functioning of the ecology is not the primary cause, but rather the functioning of our ethical systems (Mishra 168). To successfully navigate the issue, it is imperative that we comprehend the extent of our influence on the natural world. One must possess comprehension of ethical frameworks that prioritize compassion and consideration for the environment's well-being, rather than seeking to exploit it. By doing so, we can strive to bring about positive change. Ecology can be better understood and studied by including ethical principles. In order to support our moral shift in favor of the natural world, proponents of environmentalism and naturalism have introduced ethical frameworks such as Leopold's land ethic and Potter's bioethics. Aldo Leopold has formulated a set of principles about land ethics, which he explores in his article titled "The Land Ethic." In this essay, Leopold advocates for individuals to adopt ethical practices in relation to land, nature, the environment, and the entire biotic community. In this essay, the author explores ethical implications, the concept of community, ecological outcomes, and conservation. The author strongly advocates against prioritizing commercial interests and using property solely as a means to serve those goals. According to him, economic determinists have strongly influenced our thinking and we must reject the idea that economic factors alone decide all land usage (Leopold,

225). On the other hand, Van Rensselaer Potter coined the term "bioethics" and authored an article titled "Real Bioethics: Biocentric or Anthropocentric?" where he asserts his conviction that he has designated Bioethics advocates for the incorporation of both anthropocentrism and biocentrism in order to promote the "common good" of both humans and the environment. Thus, he advises against attempting to foster a competition between biocentrism and anthropocentrism (Potter, 179).

These frameworks advocate for an ethical transformation towards nature and the environment, encompassing the entire biotic community, for the benefit of both anthropocentric and biocentric perspectives, and to ensure the preservation of a thriving ecosystem. Ecocriticism promotes a thoughtful examination of the connection between humans and nature. It explores the ethical and aesthetic difficulties arising from the environmental catastrophe, as well as the profound environmental consequences of language and literature in terms of value exchange.

## **ii. Cultural Materialism:**

Raymond Williams's cultural materialism creates a way to understand how cultural practices and beliefs, institutions of society and historical background influence and shape literature. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of cultural materialism, it is important to analyze each phrase individually. The term "culture" encompasses not just a collection of intellectual and artistic

creations, but also fundamentally encompasses an entire way of life (Williams 311). Then materialism is a methodology that examines the possessions that a society considers valuable. Materialism refers to the value system that governs how individuals live their lives. It considers not only the values we already possess but also the ones we aim to achieve. It pertains to the fundamental basis or underpinning the evolution of civic institutions, legal notions, the arts, and religious ideas of individuals (McRitchie 15)

“According to Williams, cultural materialism ‘is a theory of culture as a (social and material) productive process and of specific practices, of “arts”, as social uses of material meaning of production (from language as material “practical consciousness” to the specific technologies of writing and forms of writing, through to mechanical and electronic communications systems)’ (Milner 270). This actually shows that cultural forms and works are not bound within the material conditions of life rather they deeply get influenced by the socio-economic and historical contexts.

In the novel *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh embedded with myths, historical contexts and contemporary issues like climate change, migration etc. which reflects the interconnections of culture and material environment. Using William’s materialism, Ghosh’s work can be analyzed where he portrayed the Anthropocentric view to show the humans behavior towards nature and its impact on the world's geology and ecosystem based on global capitalism, colonial legacies and modern ecological issues. Amitav Ghosh's novel *Gun Island* has an implicit allusion to topics like those explored in Williams' cultural materialism, including the intricate interplay among environment, economics, and culture. “The Sundarbans are the frontier where commerce and the wilderness look each other directly in the eye; that’s exactly where the war between profit and

Nature is fought. What could be a better place to build a shrine to Manasa Devi than a forest teeming with snakes?" (Ghosh 15). Here, the text intertwines cultural narratives with environmental and economic changes, illustrating Williams' concepts regarding the tangible foundations of cultural practices and their historical transformations resulting from evolving material circumstances.

On the other hand, Aldous Huxley's *Island* shows a utopian society in an island named Pala which is unlike the exploitive societies due to industrialization. Through the lens of cultural materialism, this novel can be a critique of Western industrial capitalist society. Opposing the destructive material conditions of human life, the island practices to use visionary mushrooms, integrative medicine and community-centered education. The narrative of Huxley investigates the ways in which various cultural responses to comparable material situations can result in a wide range of environmental and societal outcomes. It is promoted as a cultural adaptation that counteracts the prevalent materialist principles that are driving ecological damage in the wider world. The societal structure of Pala, which places an emphasis on sustainability and balance, is depicted as such.

These two novels *Gun Island* and *Island*, represents the critique and analysis of the relationship between the human and non-human components of the society. Here Williams's cultural materialism shows that these two authors are not only telling stories but also engaging the materialistic conditions of humans and its impact on the non-human lives of the society through cultural narratives. Also, it shows the impact of historical background, economic systems and cultural beliefs can shape the relationship between human and nature. As a result, Williams's

theory of cultural materialism enriches our understanding of how literature can critique and shape our material and cultural relations with nature. By taking this approach, the potential of literature to influence and change the cultural factors that have historically influenced human contact with the natural world is brought to light.

### **iii Spatial Criticism**

Spatial Criticism is an analytical examination of the concepts of Place and Space. Preucel and Meskell define space as the "physical environment in which all events take place". They assert that place is the result of the evaluation of space. It is a "product of the imaginary, of desire, and the primary means by which we use or articulate with space and transform it into a humanized landscape" (Preucel and Meskell). Phillip E. Wegner observes Lefebvre's theory - "Space is itself never constituted as a singularity," but "any socially produced historical space is constituted by a dialectically interwoven matrix of what he calls 'Spatial Practices', 'Representations of Space' and 'Spaces of representation', each allied with a specific cognitive mode through which we 'represent' it to ourselves: respectively, the domains of the 'perceived', the 'conceived' and the 'lived' (Lefebvre 33-46). "The spatial practice of a society secrets that society's space," writes Lefebvre, "from the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space" (Lefebvre 38). Simply put, the concept of space is the domain of representations. It pertains to the domain of cognition, of strategizing. The subject matter pertains to the construction or representation of a location. The three layers have been integrated into a cohesive ensemble. Not only that, the fifth premise of spatial criticism shows the connection between space and dominance or power. Michel Foucault in his *Questions on Geography* (1977)

announces that “our society is one of spectacle, but of surveillance” (217). In order to exert control over individuals and establish dominance, places employ a set of tools, methods, processes, levels of implementation, and objectives, which Foucault refers to as "discipline". These 'discipline' methods are used to create 'normal' subjects by which disciplines can be seen as a mechanism of control and influence. Foucault describes that place becoming a political site of domination, of control. But human-being-in-the-world reconstructing human space, creates the possibilities through resistance and spatial transgression. (Afrin 6) Here Michel Foucault's work, especially in his book *Discipline and Punish*, has played a crucial role in the development of spatial criticism. This is because he extensively examines the complex connections between space, power, and knowledge. Foucault's examination of spatial practices emphasizes the crucial role that the arrangement and layout of places play in the exertion of power and the establishment of societal frameworks, solidifying his work as a fundamental aspect of spatial criticism.

### **2.3 Primary Texts:**

Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* represents a number of ecologically significant problems which focus mostly on the connection between humans and nature. There are different themes like displacement, ecological crisis and relationship between human and nature are evident and all of these are encapsulating the key concerns of ecocriticism. To critique the anthropocentric view, the

role of literature knows no bounds because it focuses on interconnectedness between human and non-human components and the response of the environment for human actions and behavior.

In the novel, the protagonist Deen experiences personal displacement from his roots and relationships because of forced migrations due to environmental disaster which actually portrays the broader themes of ecological disaster. “In West Bengal it was the Sundarbans that absorbed the impact of the cyclone. Lusibari, the island where Nilima and her husband lived, suffered a great deal of damage: a large chunk of the island was ripped away by the storm surge, houses and all.” (Ghosh 20). Here it shows the vulnerable situation of human and nature by explaining historical displacements, mainly regarding Sundarbans’ residents which mirrors today’s climate induced migration.

Not only that, the novel unveils the coordination of life through its web of relationship, from the protagonist of this novel Deen’s connections to global issues to the native challenges due to global climate phenomena in the Sundarbans. “The Sundarbans are the frontier where commerce and the wilderness look each other directly in the eye; that’s exactly where the war between profit and Nature is fought (Ghosh 15).

In this novel, the author left scope to hide the human impact on the natural landscapes. Here he used the lens of historical and contemporary exploitations of the Sundarbans to critique the nature of human behavior. He also shows how human economic activities can disregard the ecological balance and harmony of nature. “What could be a better place to build a shrine to Manasa Devi

than a forest teeming with snakes?” (Ghosh 15) Here the author shows how cultural belief can have an impact on nature and can disregard the balance of ecology and non-human components of nature.

Ghosh combined folklore and myth to display the ecological wisdom over humans. He added the myth of the Gun Merchant which is entangled with the local beliefs and ecological wisdom that create the respect and fear for nature’s power and its protective power like Manasa Devi. “Now at last the Merchant gave in and swore that he would build a temple for the goddess if only she would help him find his way back to his native land. So, she set him free and wrought a miracle: the ship was besieged by all manner of creatures, of the sea and sky, and while the pirates were fighting them off, the captives managed to take over the ship and seize their captors’ riches” (Ghosh 24).

Apart from that, Ghosh also included the adaptability and resilience skill of humans in this changing environment and nature. It is a reflection of the broader necessity to adapt and prepare for hostile nature and climate change. “The damage to Lusibari was, however, a pale shadow of what was visited on the islands and settlements to its south. But Nilima did not learn of this until several days later. She was told about it by a young fisherman of her acquaintance, Horen Naskar: he had been out at sea, fishing, and had witnessed the devastation with his own eyes.” (Ghosh 20) Here it shows that even in severe weather, people work out putting their life in danger.

The author is able to convey the concerns that are important to ecocriticism through the use of these themes in the novel *Gun Island*. It does so by employing a story that combines myth and fact in order to investigate the existential challenges due to climate change and environmental degradation.

In ecocriticism, we can see the relationship between literature and the physical environment. The novel *Island* by Aldous Huxley underpins the ecological aspects along with its social and philosophical narratives. This novel critiques the modern industrial society and its practices. At the same time, it gives a vision and way of living in nature with harmony and rhythm.

In the novel *Island*, it presents a utopian island named Pala where advanced sciences are entangled with deep ecology which creates a sustainable and enlightened society. This boldly critiques the outside world environment which is degraded and unchecked due to industrialization. “The really extraordinary thing was that he should be here, he reflected, under the trees and not out there, at the bottom of the Pala Strait or, worse, smashed to pieces at the foot of the cliffs.” (Huxley 6), here the protagonist got surprised and relieved at the same time for being in a place which is unlike other places where ecological havoc is evident.

The novel also emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life forms in nature which portrays the thought of ecology. The people of the Pala Island entangled their life with nature and at the same time their respect and activities like using renewable resources and preserving the island's biodiversity shows the ethics of those people. “This tree, for example, under which (for no known reason) he found himself lying, this column of gray bark with the groining, high up, of sun speckled branches, this ought by rights to be a beech tree.” (Huxley 4). It shows the disorientation of the

protagonist but at the same time, it shows his gradual realization of Pala's ecological balance, as they used this type of tree to store the biodiversity. "The primary function of bark is to safeguard the tree. However, upon closer examination, it becomes evident that every surface, crevice, and corner in the forests offers sustenance and refuge for a multitude of organisms. Thus, bark also contributes to the enhancement of biodiversity inside a forest." (Tree For Life)

Apart from that, the locals of Pala created a great balance and sustainable manner which will easily attract modern people. They use unique agricultural practices, usage of energy and their norms and ethics, all of these are maintained to create an ecological balance. It is evident in the conversation of Will Farnaby and the islanders. Not only that, this novel glorifies an education system that teaches the children to cope up with nature without harming its other components and yet use it for their own betterment. "Floating, floating, just living completely in the present, the boy watched the fish and the prawns; watched the tiny crabs and the swift, inexplicable flashes of light" (Huxley 27). It shows how a child plunges in nature while glorifying an alert and respectful engagement in the environment.

The novel *Island* by Aldous Huxley shows the diagram to create an ecological civilization avoiding the exploitation of the environment. This work actually works like a critique of our modern industrialized world and also it shows the path of solution to avoid the destruction created by humans. The story inspires readers to contemplate a heightened ecological consciousness and adopt more sustainable lifestyles, rendering it a noteworthy piece for ecocriticism.

## Chapter Three

### 3.1 Spatial Criticism Through the Lens of The Representation of Space, Spatial Practices, Space and Power, Spatial Metaphors in *Gun Island*:

In the novel *Gun Island*, Ghosh represents a complex scenario of migration, climate change and mythology through the variety of spatial dynamics. It combines a variety of spatial aspects to explore the human experiences and historical narratives which provides a wide scope for spatial criticism. Here Ghosh represents practices based on space, power, and spatial metaphors which strengthen the hidden messages of this novel.

In *Gun Island*, the importance of space is represented through both mythical and real while blending it with the boundaries of legend and contemporary issues. Here the writer frequently used spatial descriptions to ground his narrative. No wonder, his own background and experiences influenced his writing to explore the specific locales to enhance the readers' understanding of the characters' journeys and struggles. For example, Venice and Sundarbans are juxtaposed to serve the historical and modern essence of the story. In this novel, Venice is described as "an island within an island" which embodies a historical and cultural enclave that echoes with the protagonists' quest on Gun Merchant. (Ghosh 157) The ghetto in Venice with its narrow entrances and desolated squares, represents a place flooded in history and isolation which can relate with the myth of Gun Merchant. "But there is one important difference: the Ghetto of Venice really is an island within an island, surrounded by water on all sides." (Ghosh, p.157)

This quote emphasizes the complex spatial dynamics, where the physical geography reflects the psychological and cultural isolation experienced by the characters. In addition, it is also noticeable in another sentence where the protagonist said, “The phrase ‘island within an island’ startled me. Where had I heard it before? A couple of minutes went by before I recalled the curious symbol I had seen on the walls of the Gun Merchant’s shrine, of two concentric circles. ‘Dwiper bhorey dwip,’ Rafi had said, ‘an island within an island.....’” (Ghosh, 142-143) It shows how spatial elements helped the writer to connect two different aspects at the same time. Then spatial practices are also noticed in this novel through the characters’ movements and interactions within their environments. The migration of people, whether forced or not, symbolizes the impact and response of human activities to change the geographies. For example, the journey of Deen from Kolkata to Venice shows the historical voyages for trading and exploring which reinforces the cyclical nature of human movement. Not only that, the portrayal of the Sundarbans shifting its landscapes of dense mangroves indicates the precarious existence of inhabitants. “The Sundarbans had always attracted traffickers, because of its poverty, but never in such numbers as after Aila; they had descended in swarms, spirited women off to distant brothels and transporting able-bodied men to work sites in faraway cities or even abroad.” (Ghosh 56) This quotation shows that the effect of environmental disasters and socio-economic hardship influence spatial practices which can lead to forced migrations and the transformation of spaces into hubs of human trafficking.

After that, the interplay of power and space can be a central theme of this novel where it portrays the control over spaces both in myths and real life. In the myth of Gun Merchant, the portrayal of power struggles which bound the merchant to flee from the wrath of the goddess Manasa Devi is significant in the interaction of power and space. Whereas in the contemporary scenario, Ghosh

portrays how space are controlled by political and economic power in the Sundarbans where the locals' traditional way of livelihood is interfered by external powers. "Making a life in the Sundarbans had become so hard that the exodus of the young was accelerating every year: boys and girls were borrowing and stealing to pay agents to find them work elsewhere." (Ghosh 56) This quotation highlights how power dynamics compel the younger generation to forsake their native area in pursuit of more favorable prospects, resulting in a transformation of the region's demographic and spatial structure.

Moreover, spatial metaphors are often utilized in this novel to portray intricate themes and emotions. Here, the concept of "an island within an island" portrays a powerful metaphor for isolation and refuge. The story also utilizes analogies that symbolize confinement and liberation, specifically in the narrative of the Gun Merchant's expedition. In addition, the mythical land of Bonduk dwip represents a place of refuge from the wrath where it highlights the duality of spaces as both protective and confining. "There is no Land of Palm Sugar Candy or a Gun Island. It's just a fairy tale. No one can rule over snakes." (Ghosh 82) Here, it symbolizes imaginative realms or mental states, implying idealized or legendary ideas that are impossible to achieve in real. So, the imagination of utopia or utopian dreams are working as an escapism here.

To conclude, *Gun Island* by Amitav Ghosh is remarkable for using spatial elements to create a timeless yet modern story. Through the lens of representation of space, practices, power and metaphors, this novel portrays the concept of dystopia where people and environment are facing a vulnerable relationship due to human activities and behavior towards nature.

### **3.2 Spatial Criticism Through the Lens of The Representation of Space, Spatial Practices, Space and Power, Spatial Metaphors in *Island*:**

In the novel *Island*, Huxley explores various aspects of space and its representation. The novel portrays a rich canvas for analyzing spatial concepts through its unique setting and narrative. Here this criticism delves into the aspects of representation of space, spatial practices, power and space and spatial metaphors, highlighting the profound way of using space to convey deeper philosophical ideas.

The representation of space in *Island* shows the intense connection to nature and environment and the relationship between the people and nature. The physical setting of Pala is portrayed with great detail which emphasizes the natural beauty and harmony between its inhabitants and their surroundings. The peace observed here is a manifestation of the Palanese philosophy of life, which encompasses the integration of spiritual, bodily, and social well-being. For example, the vivid description of the landscape as viewed from a high vantage point highlights how human settlement and the natural world are integrated. “Rising to the line of the horizon, like a solid wall of jade and lapis, was the sea. Below them, after a sheer fall of a thousand feet, lay the green of the jungle.....Seen from this high vantage point in its shining completeness, it looked like the tiny, meticulous painting of a city in a medieval book of hours. (Huxley 156) This description not only depicts Pala's physical features but also represents the harmonious blending of human actions with the environment, a fundamental principle of Palanese civilization.

Spatial practices in the novel *Island* are deeply connected in the daily lives and cultural rituals of the Palanese people. These rituals show their values and beliefs which emphasizes sustainability,

community and mindfulness. The portrayal of spaces used and arranged in Pala is a direct representation of these values. An exemplary illustration can be found in the integration of physical exertion with spiritual awareness, as observed in agricultural and communal endeavors: “We train the Muscle Men to be aware and sensitive, we teach them to enjoy the commonplaces of everyday existence. This means that they always have an alternative—innumerable alternatives—to the pleasure of being the boss. And finally, we work directly on the love of power and domination that goes with this kind of physique in almost all its variations.” (Huxley 149)

This spatial practice method assures that physical activities are not simply jobs to be finished, but rather possibilities for individual development and the creation of a sense of community. The spatial organization of Pala society promotes a balanced lifestyle where work, play and meditation coexist harmoniously.

The relationship between power and space in Island is explored through the contrast between Pala and the outside world. Inside the Pala, power is decentralized and distributed among the community to prevent the rise of autocracy. The spatial allocation of power in Pala is evident in both its physical and social systems, which prioritize community areas and shared responsibilities.

This arrangement of power is working as a contrast with the power structures of the space outside of Pala where hierarchical structures and oppressive systems exist. This is noticeable in the discussions about power dynamics and their effect on individuals and the entire society. “Our political arrangements make it practically impossible for them to dominate on any larger scale.”

(Huxley 149) Not only that, the portrayal of space and power was intensely evident when the outside power captured Pala to dominate and use their space and resources. “For an instant only, and then the beam moved on. And here was the Tathagata for the second time, the third, the fourth, the fifth. The last of the cars passed by. Disregarded in the darkness, the fact of enlightenment remained.” (Huxley 281) Here it shows how Pala’s space is seized away by the external power. Pala's design incorporates principles that prevent the accumulation of power, reflecting a social philosophy that values equality, cooperation, and mutual respect. At the same time, it also serves as a demonstration of how power can unlawfully invade and exploit an individual's personal space for personal gain.

Then Huxley employs spatial metaphors throughout the novel to convey abstract ideas and philosophical concepts where he explores themes like enlightenment, freedom and human condition through the use of space. For example, the dance of Shiva-Nataraja is one of the most compelling spatial metaphors to symbolize the cosmic cycles of creation and destruction. “In his upper right hand, as you've already seen, he holds the drum that calls the world into existence and in his upper left hand he carries the destroying fire. Life and death, order and disintegration, impartially.” (Huxley 163) This metaphor encapsulates the inherent duality of existence and the embracing of the transient aspect of life, which is a fundamental principle of Palanese philosophy. The physical portrayal of Shiva’s dance within the temple space works as a reminder of these universal truths.

In conclusion, Huxley adeptly employs spatial concepts to enhance the storyline and delve into intricate philosophical themes, creating a vivid and engaging world that compels readers to reassess their own understanding of space and its influence on human existence.

## Chapter Four

### 4.1 Environmental Challenges and Human Resilience:

Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* and Aldous Huxley's *Island* both delve into the intricate relationship of human and nature through the themes of resilience, adaptation and environmental degradation. This analysis will explore these themes and the strategies used by these two authors to build up their stories.

Ghosh in his novel portrays the ecological destruction caused by humans mainly pointing out the incident of creating dead zones in the ocean. It has created the runoff of chemical fertilizers. Hence these areas are facing a lack of oxygen which is threatening to marine lives. It shows the irresponsible and negligent behavior of humans towards nature. This incident is evident in a conversation of Piya who is a marine biologist where she pointed out the expansion of dead zones and the severe situation of nature.

“And those zones have now spread over tens of thousands of square miles of ocean – some of them are as large as middle sized countries.” (Ghosh 102). Here Piya's observations show the vulnerable situation of nature due to environmental destruction and its impact on nature.

Whereas Huxley's *Island* presents an ideal image of an environment where humans create a sustainable and balanced livelihood for the betterment of the society. The relationship between the island and the people of Pala is symbiotic which promotes a sustainable condition through various

practices like controlling population growth along with harmonious agricultural methods. However, they are being threatened by the external capitalist society who wants to exploit Pala's natural resources. This breakdown is symbolized by the foreign investors which indicates the sense of destruction of Pala's natural and ecological environment. "Pala, unfortunately, is in nobody's good books. We don't want the Communists; but neither do we want the capitalists. Least of all do we want the wholesale industrialization that both parties are so anxious to impose on us—for different reasons, of course." (Huxley 102) here it shows the upcoming danger for Pala's environment where it can be harmed by the arrival of foreign investors.

Then if we talk about the adaptation strategies of these two novels; we can see that Ghosh portrayed characters in *Gun Island* who are forced to adapt to the changing environmental conditions. Here we get an example of resilience in Piya's urgency of protecting nature despite the looming threat of industrial pollution. Piya and her colleagues defend the blasting of dead zones by employing strict environmental rules and regulations and taking direct action against the harmful behavior towards nature. "We'd been fighting it for years – I mean the trust and an alliance of environmental groups –" (Ghosh 102) This actually shows that no matter what the situation is, we need to take necessary steps to fight against the environmental degradation and create resilience by resisting the illegal activities which is responsible for the destruction of the nature.

In *Island*, adaptation is more philosophical, intertwined with the practice of mindfulness and acceptance. The Palanese people's approach to life, focusing on education, mental health, and communal living, equips them with the tools to face both internal and external crises. Their holistic

approach to education, which includes teachings on the impermanence of life and the importance of ecological stewardship, prepares the community to handle the sociopolitical upheavals they face towards the novel's end.

Then in *Island*, adaptation is more philosophical and scientific which is maintained through the practice of mindfulness and acceptance. Here people balance their life by focusing on education, mental health, way of their communal living, the equipment they use in their everyday life to face and resist both internal and external issues. "That was the beginning of the long educational process that turned us at last into bilingual people. We speak Palanese when we're cooking, when we're telling funny stories, when we're talking about love or making it. But when it comes to business, or science, or speculative philosophy, we generally speak English." (Huxley 125); this is how they are coping up with the modern world and maintain their own tradition and norms. Even their overall health is also integrated carefully. "So, whether it's prevention or whether it's cured, we attack on all fronts at once. All the fronts," she insisted, "from diet to autosuggestion, from negative ions to meditation." (Huxley 161). Their comprehensive approach to education, encompassing lessons on the transitory nature of existence and the significance of environmental responsibility, equips the community to navigate the sociopolitical disruptions they encounter towards the conclusion of the novel.

To sum up, both of these novels portray the scenario of resilience and adaptation by maintaining different approaches. While Ghosh gives a realistic scenario of the modern world and their process

of resisting the destruction of the environment, Huxley portrays an idealized vision of what could be created if humans lived in true harmony of nature.

#### **4.2 Spirituality and Science: Contrasting Approaches to Ecological Balance in *Gun Island* and *Island***

There are distinct characteristics in these two novels where Ghosh and Huxley contrasted the narratives on the interplay between spirituality and science to pursue the ecological view. These novels actually portray that different geographical and cultural backgrounds have different beliefs and approaches to influence the behavior and activities of ecological changes.

In the novel *Gun Island*, the author engaged spirituality with the environmental themes throughout the narrative. Through the protagonist Deen, Ghosh portrays a world where ancient myths and modern crises collide where it shows that human interference is responsible for the ecological disaster. “But some stories, like certain life forms, possess a special streak of vitality that allow them to outlive others of their kind – and since the story of the Merchant and Manasa Devi is very old it must, I suppose, possess enough of this quality to ensure that it can survive extended periods of dormancy.” (Ghosh 13) The tale of the Bonduki Sadagar; a central myth of this novel; symbolically indicates the interconnectedness between the past activities and its impact on the

present. Not only that, another passage; “The story’s appeal is, I suppose, not unlike that of the Odyssey.....the Merchant’s son, Lakhindar, is killed by a cobra on the night of his wedding and it is the boy’s virtuous bride, Behula, who reclaims his soul from the underworld and brings the struggle between the Merchant and Manasa Devi to a fragile resolution.” (Ghosh 13) The ultimate spirituality is showing the divine as protector and punisher at the same time where it can have impact on both human and natural life.

In contrast, *Island* by Aldous Huxley shows a rhythmic life of people where spirituality is controlled by science and both are maintained to get a sustainable environment and livelihood. Here the island Pala is a blueprint of environmental stewardship grounded in scientific rationality and enriched by spiritual beliefs. The people of Pala organize an integrated approach towards nature where they respect and maintain their activities in terms of getting a sustain in their natural surroundings and life. ““We all belong,” Susila explained, “to an MAC—a Mutual Adoption Club. Every MAC consists of anything from fifteen to twenty-five assorted couples. Newly elected brides and bridegrooms, old-timers with growing children, grandparents and great-grandparents—..... deputy babies and toddlers and teen-agers.” (Huxley 84). This proves the communal living aspect of Pala which indicates social cohesion and cultural beliefs to create bonds for a better society and environment. Not only that, the Pala people also prepared them through education to cope up with the modern world. “That was the beginning of the long educational process that turned us at last into bilingual people” (Huxley 125). Here education includes the skill

of these people in learning about the ecosystem which is essential for their way of life. This holistic approach integrates ecological science where people learn to use the environment without harming its natural inhabitants.

The contrasting approaches of these two novels shows us the different path of human and nature relationship which shows that human behavior can be the savior for nature at the same time it can be destructive for nature if it is not maintained properly. In the novel *Gun Island*, the author engaged spiritual aspects intertwined with history and myths which serve as a narrative mechanism to show the effect of global warming and unethical behavior of humans. The spiritual journey of Deen showcases an urgent awareness to take necessary steps to fight against environmental degradation. However, in the novel *Island*, the author employs an idealistic and proactive approach where the combination of spirituality and science are not at odds but both of these concepts are unified in the way to achieve a biodiverse environment. All of these processes are maintained to get ecological balance in the environment. To sum, each novel provides insightful perspectives on the ways in which various belief systems and knowledge frameworks might contribute to the formation of sustainable behaviors in response to the difficulties that are faced by the global community.

### **4.3 Environmental Ethics and Responsibility:**

Ecocriticism encompasses the examination of ethical considerations pertaining to the environment. Environmentalists and eco-critics argue that the harm caused to ecosystems is a result of flaws in our ethical systems. They feel that the functioning of ecosystems is closely tied to how we operate our ethical system and make decisions on the use and treatment of our environment.

Environmental ethics and responsibility portray the intricate relationship between human and nature where it is based on the respected behavior of humans towards nature. The novel *Gun Island* is a work of fiction where it embeds within the narrative with various elements that reflect the application and negligence of environmental ethics. In the novel, the Sundarbans are a unique mangrove forest region which is spread across the part of Bangladesh and India. It works as a backdrop of this novel. This area upholds a vast indication of past and present where human activities are playing vitally for their own betterment. Here the anthropocentric view is present because the way humans are exploiting this area, it leads to downfall day by day. "The Sundarbans are the frontier where commerce and the wilderness look each other directly in the eye; that's exactly where the war between profit and Nature is fought. What could be a better place to build a shrine to Manasa Devi than a forest teeming with snakes?" (Ghosh 15), this actually underscores the perennial conflict between economic development and environmental balance where humans' profits are more important than the balance of environment. Here the practices of exploiting nature are not merely of present time. Though it has been a long time that even in folklore and myths, it is evident like modern days.

However, continuous global warming is also fueling nature which results in natural disasters or natural calamities. This actually can have an impact on human lives and cultural heritage. This is evident when Deen contemplates the disappearing islands of the Sundarbans due to sea rising levels. "The islands of the Sundarbans are constantly being swallowed up by the sea; they're disappearing before our eyes. That's why I feel that some record should be made of it; for all I know that temple might be an important historical monument." (Ghosh 26), here the passage is highlighting the urgent need of responsibility towards nature because it is high time to preserve it along with the cultural artifacts that are part of human history. It is indicating the vulnerable situation of nature due to climate change which is extending beyond ecological damage to the loss of culture and history.

The novel does not shy away from exploring the socio-economic aspects of environmental ethics, and it does so effectively. All of these exploitations actually happen for the lack of knowledge and economic crisis of the general people. A nuanced and sensitive portrayal is given to the relationships that take place between the local populace and their environment, which are frequently mediated by the economic demands of the people. An example of this might be the protagonist contemplating the profound connection that the local communities have with their surroundings. "You really do not care for ordinary people, do you?... They had every regard for the bellies and bodies of poor people – but not, I think, for what is in their heads." (Ghosh 41), it is actually criticizing the external perceptions that sometimes ignore the connection that local people have with their surroundings. It is hard to consider the ethical implications of conservation efforts that ignore the needs, beliefs and practices for the people who live near the environment. To sum, through his work "Gun Island," Amitav Ghosh weaves a compelling tale that investigates

the intersections of mythology, environmental change, and cultural legacy. He also encourages a reevaluation of our ethical obligations towards the world.

Conversely, Aldous Huxley shows the ultimate environmental ethics through his work *Island*. It works as a philosophical counterpart to Ghosh's work, where the people's ethics and morality is in the favor of the environment. "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 dangerous, 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." (Leopold 225), in this context, it is suggested that people should adopt his ethical concept of land, which states that we, as humans, should work to maintain the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. The fictional island of Pala is determined to maintain this concept as it is depicted as a utopia where sustainable practices are maintained to get a better life. It is evident in their every step of daily life whether it is education, medicine or agriculture. "Here we use our sciences and technologies to cooperate with Nature's intensities ...", here it shows the rhythm of human behavior and nature to employ environmental ethics.

## Chapter Five

### 5.1 Findings:

The thesis delved into the comparison of the ecocritical elements in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* and Aldous Huxley's *Island*, through the concept of relationship between human and nature amidst environmental crises and utopian ideals.

Here it shows that Ghosh highlights the ecological destruction through incidents like the creation of dead zones in oceans due to chemical fertilizers which are harmful for marine life. It is demonstrating human negligence towards nature. The novel also portrays the characters who are concerned about environmental changes and shows the urgency for strict environmental regulations and direct actions against ecological damage. For example, Piya is one of them. Her concern is evident when she talks about the dolphins and their natural habitats. "There she is, perfectly adapted to her environment, perfectly at home in it – and then things begin to change, so that all those years of learning become useless, the places you know best can't sustain you anymore and you've got to find new hunting grounds." (Ghosh 103-104) Not only Piya, Moyna also talks about the ecological imbalance and response of the environment towards humans that is getting hostile due to human behavior. "Sometimes, said Moyna, it seemed as though both land and water were turning against those who lived in the Sundarbans. When people tried to dig wells, an arsenic-laced brew gushed out of the soil; when they tried to shore up embankments the tides rose higher and pulled them down again. Even fishermen could barely get by; where once their boats would

come back loaded with catch, now they counted themselves lucky if they netted a handful of fry” (Ghosh 56) These instances show how the people in *Gun Island* react to changes in the environment and support more stringent laws to safeguard their houses and the ecosystems they rely on.

On the other hand, Huxley presents a utopian society where the ecological balance and sustainability is maintained properly. The people of Pala practice sustainable living, contrasting the harmful external capitalist society. The novel stresses population management, ecological science and spiritual beliefs integrated into a community living structure. For example, “The novel discusses the benefits of birth control methods and their acceptance by the Buddhist community in Pala. It combines metaphysical and socio-economic rationales to maintain a stable population to prevent famine and social issues.” (77) Not only that, the people of Pala maintain a communal living system where MAC or Mutual Adoption Club is maintained to demonstrate a communal approach to child-rearing and family life. Each club consists of multiple families who share their responsibilities to create a supportive system for all members. This system fosters healthier relationships among the society. (83-84) Again their harmonious agricultural method is also significant where the development of the Experimental station also referred to as “New Rothamsted” illustrates the success in growing new strains of crops and better agricultural practices. This method works for the response to a famine and to ensure a moderate food supply for the community. (77) These instances show how ecological science and communal values are integrated throughout the novel to emphasize sustainable and harmonious living practices.

Another discovery made in this thesis pertains to the intersection of spirituality and science where Ghosh intertwines spirituality with environmental themes employing ancient myths to highlight the connection between past human activities and the result of those in the present ecological crises. Here the story of Bonduki Sadagar works as a metaphor for the impact of human interference on nature. For example, the legend Gun Merchant who tried to escape from the wrath of Manasa Devi by moving to a land without serpents, symbolizes the humans' attempt to outrun the ecological consequences of their actions. However, the merchant could not deal with it and was forced to acknowledge the power of nature and build a shrine to obey the goddess which represents a return to a more harmonious relationship with the environment. The resurgences of the mythology at periods of turmoil and disturbance highlight even more how these environmental catastrophes are recurrent and how sustainable actions are essential.

Whereas *Island* demonstrates a society where spirituality and science are harmonized to achieve ecological balance. The people of Pala combine scientific rationality with spiritual beliefs to create sustainability. "In theological terms," said Vijaya, "the moksha-medicine prepares one for the reception of gratuitous graces—pre mystical visions or the full-blown mystical experiences. Meditation is one of the ways in which one cooperates with those gratuitous graces." (Huxley 179) A bridge between scientific investigation and spiritual experiences is shown in the usage of the psychoactive drug moksha-medicine for spiritual enlightenment and personal development. The medicine helps people to have intense insights to create harmony in their physical and spiritual requirements. The Palanese people combine spirituality and science from their childhood and they admire Buddhist ideology to organize their life full of kindness. "Since Palanese children are

raised on Buddhist tales and legends, the teachers use the morals of these stories as illustrations of complicated notions.” (WARCHAŁ 179) Not only their medication or education system but also their holistic approach towards their livelihood integrates scientific principles with spiritual practices to create an ideal society where ecological balance is in main focus.

Another finding uncovered in this thesis is the field of environmental Ethics and responsibility. It shows the anthropocentric view in Ghosh’s novel by exploring the conflict between economic development and environmental balance. The novel shows how human activities are exploiting nature which lead to ecological degradation and cultural loss. The Sundarbans’ portrayal highlights the urgent need for environmental ethics and responsibility. It is evident in Piya’s statement when she said, “But the trust is so well known in the Sundarbans that I feel safe when I’m here. And anyway, someone has to do the work – we can’t just let them get away with poisoning the Sundarbans.” (Ghosh 103) While working in the Sundarbans, workers like Piya also get hatred and life-threatening approaches, still they are not afraid because they are determined to save the forest at any cost.

On the other hand, the novel *Island* presents a utopian society where environmental ethics and biocentric ideology are paramount. This novel highlights the word “Attention” which is the first and the last word in the novel which symbolizes the wakeup call from a distraction which can make people aware about the destruction of nature. It reminds people of the Buddhist concept Sati which means mindfulness and profound awareness. It is reminding the people to be aware and mindful of what is going on around in the present. (Jayathirtha) Even the protagonist also noticed

this word "Attention" and got curious why the Mynah birds are uttering this word. Then the Palanese girl explained. "Her explanation is this: "That's what you always forget, isn't it? I mean, you forget to pay attention to what's happening. And that's the same as not being here and now." Then Pala's founding father explains. "Concentration, abstract thinking, spiritual exercises," the latter had argued, are "systematic exclusions in the realm of thought"; whereas "Good Being is in the knowledge of who in fact one is in relation to all experiences." "So be aware," he concluded, "aware in every context. . . ." (CONNER 282) So this attention pushes the environmental ethics and makes people aware to be responsive if there is any illegal intervention happening in the ecological balance.

Spatial critique in these two novels is the thesis paper's final finding. In Ghosh's work, he uses spatial elements to blend myths with contemporary issues. It creates an intricate narrative of migration and climate change. Spatial metaphors like "an island within an island" portray the picture of isolation and refuge, while the interplay of power and space highlights the domination over nature by political and economic forces. On the contrary, Huxley focuses on the idealized vision of Pala as a blueprint for environmental stewardship. The narrative highlights the interdependence of all living organisms and the need to utilize natural resources in a manner that may be maintained over time, while also criticizing the exploitative methods employed by contemporary industrial society.

In conclusion, the comparative examination of *Gun Island* and *Island* demonstrates distinct ways in ecological balance and human nature relationship. This study makes a valuable contribution to

the broader discussion in the field of ecocriticism. Thus, it showcases the capacity of literature which can make people aware about the environmental issues and have an impact on environmental consciousness.

## **5.2 Scopes for Further Study:**

However, this study spares some scope for further studies where cross cultural ecocritical comparisons can be included. Different cultural backgrounds and time periods can be conducted based on the writers and their work. By doing this, it can give a comprehensive understanding of global ecological concepts and concerns based on place and time. After that, this study can employ insights from other disciplines like environmental science, anthropology or sociology which can give holistic understanding of ecological themes and the people living in the environment. It will also help to provide practical solutions to contemporary ecological issues. Furthermore, investigating the influence of literary works on environmental policy and activism has the capacity to generate significant insights which is absent in this paper. Here researchers can highlight the tangible impact of literary criticism by working with the case studies where literature fueled environmental movements or policy changes. Not only that, researchers can conduct different types of society to compare and contrast like utopia versus heterotopia society to understand the actual idea of idealized society. Therefore, future research might build upon the foundation laid by this thesis, further developing the field of ecocriticism and deepening our understanding of the relationships between literature, nature, and human behavior.

### 5.3 Conclusion:

In conclusion, I have examined the growing literary theory of ecocriticism throughout the entirety of this thesis. In addition, I have reviewed the selected existing literary works on this theory, as well as the two novels that I have chosen, and I have also explained the methodologies that I have employed in terms of doing their analysis. Throughout the analysis of the two primary texts, I have discussed environmental challenges and human resilience; spirituality and science: contrasting approaches to ecological balance in *Gun Island* and *Island*; environmental ethics and responsibility. And by doing so, I have demonstrated a contrast of how both of the novels depict the environmental challenges, and I have encouraged us to change bioethics and rethink about nature in a different manner. Environmentalism, in particular the environmental ethics emphasizes the importance of maintaining a harmonious relationship between the two perspectives of anthropocentrism and biocentrism. Additionally, it emphasizes the importance of having environmental ethics, and it advocates for an idealistic combination of both biocentrism and anthropocentrism for the sake of the "common good." The goal is to encourage us to "think" about nature and the environment in a different way, which is the objective of this endeavor. Questions such as whether or not we truly require materialistic progress, economic development, and industrialization over the wellbeing of our environment are raised by both the environmental ethics and the two novels. Are we truly achieving "true happiness" by completely destroying the natural world and causing damage to the environment? Both of these publications demonstrate to us that the majority of the errors that occur in environmental concerns, mostly due to the fact that our ethical systems are the ones that are responsible for the functioning of the ecosystems. If we want to discover happiness through the splendor and treasures that nature has to offer, we need to tend to, cherish, and work for the welfare of nature. In the event that we do not change our behavior

and continue to mistreat nature in the same manner that we have been doing up to this point, then nature will stop bestowing her benefits upon us and will retaliate in a more severe manner. In light of this, it is high time that we adopt environmental ethics in order to reevaluate our current practices and begin working towards the improvement of our environment.

## Chapter Six

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