

**The Changing Landscape and The Climate's Fury In Amitav Ghosh's Gun Island****Deepikadevi.D**, Department of English, PPG College of Arts and Science, Coimbatore.

2

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9958-2025>DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.16789636](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16789636)**Abstract**

Ghosh reflects the connection between today's climate crisis and the Gun Merchant to highlight the ties between the past and the present to identify the origin of the crisis. The novel encounters the war between profit and nature that defines the modern world. Deen comes to know about the merchant from Nilam Bose, an elderly woman who had a trust and once visited the Shrine herself. The novel explains the extraordinary event in an ordinary human experience. Initially, Deen faces a challenge in learning to cope up with the experience and to connect with the human and nonhuman. Ghosh connects the Sundarbans forest scene with Salman Rushdie's 'Midnight Children' where the protagonist Saleem Sinai takes refuge among the nonhumans. The novel reflects the scientific perspectives of climate change through the character Piya, a Bengali American marine biologist. When Nilima is in the Sundarbans, Piya visits the place from Kolkata to look over her research project. Deen meets Piya at Nilima's lace before he visits to the Sundarbans. Piya acts as a center point to Deen long term friend Cinta, an Italian academic and renowned scholar of Venetian history, represents the spirit of science to explain the effect of climate change.

**Keywords:** Climate Change, Non – Humans, Present Day Global Capitalism, Climate Crisis**Introduction**

In the novel *Gun Island*, Amitav Ghosh addresses the planetary crisis caused by climate change that completely affects the life of humans and nonhumans across the planet. The novel extends its deepest thoughts about the geographical boundary created by humans and it loses its meaning when the planet is threatened by climate change. The novel undergounds a question of multispecies justice and it encounters especially of the Global South. The novel concerns with social, racial and historical injustices, draws a clear attention to the role of European colonization and present-day global capitalism in the climate crisis. *Gun Island* connects the most influential and eco critical call for a planetary consciousness. The novel's planetary environmentalism reaches the climax at the final scene and the idea presents throughout the novel. The plot in the novel unfolds the concepts across multiple continents and environmental issues. In this article, I have attempted to demonstrate how the novel *Gun Island* presents the climate crisis as a planetary crisis.

## The Mysterious Journey Begins

The narrative in the novel moves from Kolkata to the Sundarbans, the Sundarbans to Brooklyn, then Brooklyn to the Los Angeles and then Los Angeles to Brooklyn again, Brooklyn to Venice and finally to the Mediterranean Sea near Sicily. The novel covers the range of locations that emphasizes the planetary scale of the climate crisis. Gilson observes that

“place functions as a portal to the planetary in *Gun Island*, as Ghosh endeavours to convey Earth – wide environmental flux through his localized spatial descriptions” (270)

Gilson views that the local and the global have become inseparable in the Anthropocene. Ghosh shows off that the poor of Sundarbans or whether the rich of Los Angeles, nobody will escape from the adversary effects of the climate change. The narrator Deen works as an important person to connect all the disparate climate phenomena of the distant places in the novel. Deen, a short name of Dinanath Datta is an Indian American dealer in rare books and Asian antiquities. His business is in Brooklyn, but he frequently visits Kolkata for both personal and professional reasons. On one such visit, he was takes into an eventful journey to know deeply about Sundarbans, the largest mangrove forest in the world. Deen’s visit to Sundarbans triggers the plot of the novel from one end of the planet to the other end in relation to climate change. As in Ghosh’s novel, ‘The Hungry Tide’, the Sundarbans becomes a site for *Gun Island* to explore the effects of climate change. Deen is motivated to visit the place Sundarbans to see a beautiful shrine built by a legendary figure of Bengal called Bonduki Sadagar, Deen wrongly translates his

‘The merchant has supposedly built the shrine to appease Manasa Devi, the snake goddess of Bengali folklore, who rules over snakes and all other poisonous creatures’ (Ghosh, 6)

Ghosh reflects the connection between today’s climate crisis and the Gun Merchant to highlight the ties between the past and the present to identify the origin of the crisis. The novel encounters the war between profit and nature that defines the modern world. Deen comes to know about the merchant from Nilam Bose, an elderly woman who had a trust and once visited the Shrine herself.

“the gun merchant was said to have been a rich trader who had angered Manasa Devi by refusing to become her devotee. Plagued by snakes and pursued by the droughts, famines, storms and other calamities, he had fled overseas to escape the goddess’s wrath finally taking refuge in a land where there were no serpents, a place called ‘Gun Island’” – Bonduki dwip (Ghosh, 17).

While visiting the shrine in the Sundarbans, Deen came up with an experience of encountering a King cobra, which opens a new world of mystery and supernatural elements to him. The novel explains this extraordinary event in an ordinary human experience. Initially, Deen faces a challenge in learning to cope up with the experience and to connect with the human and nonhuman. Ghosh connects the Sundarbans forest scene with Salman Rushdie’s ‘Midnight

*Children' where the protagonist Saleem Sinai takes refuge among the non-humans.*

There are several examples that relates the nonhuman environment in *Gun Island*. The incident like bite of King Cobra that leads the character Tipu to have mystical visions as a point. Apart from the myth of the climate crisis, the novel represents the scientific interpretation of climate change that offer insights in the planetary environmentalism. The novel reflects this scientific perspective of climate change through the character Piya, a Bengali American marine biologist. When Nilima is in the Sundarbans, Piya visits the place from Kolkata to look over her research project. Deen meets Piya at Nilima's lace before he visits to the Sundarbans. Piya acts as a center point to Deen long term friend Cinta, an Italian academic and renowned scholar of Venetian history, represents the spirit of science to explain the effect of climate change.

The novel's planetary environmentalism reaches its climax in the final scene and the idea has been presented throughout the novel. The plot unfolds across multiple continents and encompasses multitudinous environmental issues. *Gun Island* has been described as "an unmistakably global novel" (Gilson, 270), and "an emphatically global text" (Kluwick, 71). As discussed in Ghosh's earlier work, *The Hungry Tide*, the Sundarbans becomes a site for *Gun Island* to encompass the effects of climate change on the mangrove forest and the Bengal Delta.

Ghosh reflects the connection between today's climate crisis and the legend of *Gun Merchant* to highlight the tie knot between the past and the present, and identifies the of the crisis. The novel details about how the legend encapsulates the war between profit and Nature that defines the modern world, as Deen comes to know about the merchant from Nilima Bose, an elderly woman who runs a trust and who once visited the shrine herself.

"The *Gun Merchant* was said to have been a rich trader who had angered Manasa Devi by refusing to become her devotee. Plagued by snakes and pursued by droughts, famines, storms, and other calamities, he had fled overseas to escape the goddess's wrath, finally taking refuge in a land where there were no serpents, a place called "Gun Island" – Bonduk-dwip. (Ghosh, 17)

Ghosh explores the myth of Manasa to highlight the issue of multispecies justice, and they suggest that humans' hubristic tendency to dominate nonhumans, and the lack of communication between humans and other species, have led to today's climate crisis.

Ghosh explains how the climate-related suffering and struggles of the people of the Sundarbans are inseparable from the social and economic injustice. Further, the environmental and socio - economic effects of climate change on the Sundarbans epitomizes the predicament of the entire region of the Bengal Delta that encompasses Bangladesh and West Bengal of India. Both humans and nonhumans attempt to migrate to climate change, but their attempts were not succeeded, and often end in disappointment or may even death. In *Gun Island*, the death of Rani and her calves is a case in point. The novel describes their deaths with a focus on characters' – particularly on the emotional responses of Piya.

*The Blue Boat is a symbolic representation of the precarity of those seeking refuge in the*

West, and through this boat and its refugee passengers, the novel's planetary environmentalism reaches its culmination. Regarding the boat, a Bangladeshi migrant named Palash shares the news with Deen. He offers a picture of the entire situation.

"Across the planet everyone's eyes are on the Blue Boat now: it has become a symbol of everything that's going wrong with the world – inequality, climate change, capitalism, corruption, the arms trade, the oil industry. There's a lot of hope that this will be a historic moment. Maybe now, while there's still time to make changes, people will wake up and see what's going on." (Ghosh, 218)

The novel positively ends with Ghosh's faith in the collective force of humans and nonhumans, and their offerings of planetary environmentalism in facing the challenges of the climate crisis. Ghosh's focus on the environmental crisis moves from the regional effects of climate change to a broader planetary crisis, undergone the question of justice for climate migrants. The climate migrants whom the novel represents the climate migrants as those at the margins of their societies. The despair that leads those migrants to risk their lives and to leave behind their possessions highlights the imminent dangers of climate change and social inequality.

Ghosh shows how the climate relates the suffering and struggles of the people of the Sundarbans and these two are inseparable from social and economic injustices. In her reading of *Gun Island*, Ashwarya Samkaria notes that,

'Located on the periphery are voices of those who are not only experiencing climate change's spectacularly visible instant havoc but also its slow violence at an alarming rate that is wrecking their livelihoods' (27).

### **Conclusion**

The novel positively ends with Ghosh's faith in the collective force of humans and nonhumans, offers a solution to change the climate crisis. The novel engages with the victim people of Global south and their struggles to find refugee in the Global North. The novel also concerns about the social, racial and historical injustices connected the refugee into the western world. It draws attention to the European Colonization and the present-day global capitalism in the climate crisis. Ghosh indicates the migrants as climate refugees, but the novel focuses on how nonhumans are displaced as result of climate change. Ghosh demonstrates that, the tightening borders will not be the solution for this crisis. Through the vision of multispecies, multi-ethnic unity, connectivity, and cooperation, the novel depicts the harmonious relationship between the former colonizers and the colonized and of those about the Global South and to survive on a planet facing potential apocalypse.

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