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Analysing Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* as a Climate Fiction: Transgressing 'Borders' and 'Orders' by the Humans and Nonhumans

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ABSTRACT

Amitav Ghosh has a tendency to write literary pieces focusing on climate issues. This aspiration is also manifested in his novel *Gun Island* (2019). The author allegorizes the myth of Manasa Devi, which creates a wonderful connection between humans and natural environment in this novel. *Gun Island* (2019) explores the conviction of diversified environmental issues, such as environmental injustice, migrant ecologies, and climate refugees. Although natural disasters occur more or less everywhere in the world, the poor pay the highest price. The harsh reality is that the most affected are the most marginalized regions of underprivileged countries. Developed countries can still cope with its effects, but people in poor countries are persistently being displaced. The Sundarbans is one such magnificent instance in *Gun Island*. Overall, Ghosh has shown that migration of humans and nonhumans occurs simultaneously as a result of climate change. Humans and nonhumans transgress the precincts of 'border' as well as 'order' to migrate from one place to another eco-friendly place. His perplexing story of *Gun Island* is inexplicably mythical but contextually practical because it resonates with a group of Asian and African people's own experiences, emotions and their yearning for migration to Europe due to climate change. This borderless migration cannot be stopped by any means of order.

1. Introduction

Climate disaster is a buzzword in the modern world. Human existence is under the threat of extinction due to climate change. Climate fiction (often glossed as cli-fi) is chiefly concerned with the cataclysmic environment. The production of climate fiction has exploded over the last decade. It is thought to have a beneficial 'ecopolitical' impact on the readers by convincing them of the seriousness and urgency of climate change. According to Schneider-Mayerson (2018), "cli-fi" reminds readers of the cruelty of climate change. It helps readers envision environmental futures and the effect of climate change on human and nonhuman life (p. 473). The 21st century has produced tons of different waste materials that damage the ecosystem and have affected humanity in the last few years (Šarčević-Todosijević *et al.*, 2023). Climate fictions address the effects of climate change on the ecosystem. That is why climate fiction is the focal point of discussion among the critics of the 21st century. Murugavel (2020) postulates that authors began to write about how anthropogenic activities changed the natural ecosystem in the early part of the 20th century. He further explains how challenges related to climate change are portrayed in climate fiction. An intriguing aspect of climate fiction is that it helps the authority to materialize climate policy (p.4-5). Kingsolver (2012), in her climate fiction *Flight Behaviour*,

explicates how Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) surprisingly alter their migratory path due to climate change, and the story expounds how this instance of these "displaced butterflies helps an archetypal frustrated housewife, Dellarobia Turnbow, metamorphosis into an environmentally conscious individual" (Murugavel, 2020). Likewise, *Gun Island's* human and nonhuman characters face an existential threat due to climate catastrophe. They are forced to migrate across their b/orders to save their lives, which is the main subject of this novel. The exodus of the climate refugees questions the sociopolitical and substantial constructions of geographical boundaries as the novel attempts to threaten borders as well as orders. Khan (2024) addresses *Gun Island* from the perspective of "Planetary Environmentalism". He contends that *Gun Island* signals "the possibility of, and the imperative for, multi-species as well as multi-ethnic and cross-cultural cooperation as a way of facing climate change" and "planetary environmentalism" transgresses "geographical boundary created by humans" as borders are useless while the planet is in danger (Khan, 2024). Moreover, "Planetary environmentalism" seeks environmental justice both for humans and nonhumans all over the world (Khan, 2024). Edwin Gilson also detects that *Gun Island* upholds "planetary consciousness" (274) as it does not "discriminate between geographical borders,

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nation-states, and living beings” (Samkaria, 2022). In another ecofiction, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, Ghosh (2016) portrays the limitation of humans to perceive ecological catastrophe. Ghosh claims that the world is living through a time he refers to as the ‘Great Derangement’, and future generations will be shocked to see our indifference to the environment (Fibisan, 2019). The climate issue of *Gun Island* can be linked to American writer Octavia E. Butler’s cli-fi *Parable of the Sower* (Butler, 1993), set in a post-apocalyptic Earth as it portrays the aftermath of climate change highlighting ‘corporate greed’ and ‘wealth inequality’. The sufferings of the climate refugee in *Gun Island* can be aligned with what Joan Martínez-Alier entitles the ‘Environmentalism of the Poor’. Martínez-Alier (2014) puts forward in his article “The Environmentalism of the Poor” that the consequences of ‘corporate control’ over land cause displacements (p. 239). Environmental advocates in many countries practice the notion of the “environmentalism of the poor” to fight for climate refugees.

The novel *Gun Island* (2019) discovers the “intersection of the nonhuman with 21st century issues pertaining to racial and ecological injustice, ethnic cleansing, environmental catastrophe and migrant ecologies by way of allegorizing the myth of Manasa Devi” (Samkaria, 2022). Manasa Devi is a goddess of snakes and other venomous creatures. Moreover, Samkaria (2022) has analyzed the text from the perspective of the postcolonial ecocritical lens to perceive how the contextualisation of the postcolonial nonhuman destabilises the constructedness of borders. Likewise, *The Nutmeg’s Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021) by Amitav Ghosh marks the massive exodus of climate refugees due to the impacts of climate-related adversities. In *The Nutmeg’s Curse*, Ghosh claims that the credence of contemporary climate change is ingrained in an antique geopolitical order fabricated by Western colonialism. He discloses that our planetary crisis is the outcome of our anthropocentric attitude. Francis (2021) postulates that *Gun Island* uses the myth of the Gun Merchant as a nexus to draw parallels between the Little Ice Age and our contemporary scenario, where droughts, floods, cyclones, wildfires and pandemics have become a part of our everyday lives. Moreover, this novel depicts people and entire communities being displaced from their native land and the radical changes in the migratory patterns of various sea creatures due to changing climates and warming waters (p.22).

In *Gun Island* (2019), the author delves into the contemporary globalized world of man-made climate metamorphoses that lead to agonizing illegal migrations from the mangrove forests of the Sundarbans. As per Bose and Satapathy (2021), it is also the story of several more undocumented migrants from developing nations who come to the West illegally in quest of a better life, only to be tragically caught up in a web of human trafficking, xenophobia, and incarceration. The study conducted by Bose and Satapathy (2021) emphasizes the

socio-economic, political, and climatological reasons for, as well as the effects of, the risky migration of climate refugees. Moslund (2024) examines Amitav Ghosh’s novel *Gun Island* to explore the queries posed by the Anthropocene in order to form a new climate change realism capable of representing larger than human realities. It is the accomplishment of a cultural struggle against climate change. Kanjirathingal and Banerjee (2021) opine that with the advent of ecocriticism, the contact of the physical environment with humans and nonhumans became a crucial point in literature. Amitav Ghosh explores the effects of human being’s extravagant use of natural elements for his/her self-centered intentions by using myth and history in his fiction. Kanjirathingal and Banerjee (2021) examine how the selfish and anthropocentric approaches of human beings cause extreme environmental mayhem and the disorientation of human beings and other living and nonliving things (p.54). The exodus of *Gun Island* can be linked to the notion of an ‘Environmental Apocalypse’ proposed by Greg Garrard. Garrard (2023) points out that the Europeans dominated the globe in the nineteenth century, which in turn caused mass emigration from poor countries. Likewise, it is also observed in *Gun Island* that this apocalyptic migration ultimately creates environmental chaos and anarchy. This study attempts to discuss how climate change forces humans and nonhumans to migrate from one place to another.

The researcher has adopted a close textual analysis approach to conduct this study. Textual analysis is used to comprehend the meaning of a text and to perceive how the text impacts, reflects or rejects a society’s traditional, moral and political opinions. Moreover, textual analysis is applied to literary texts to examine messages portrayed within the text. Data are scrutinized to understand the inner meaning found within the text deeply. Allen (2017) postulates that items that “influence the interpretation while conducting a textual analysis include (a) the analyst’s worldview, (b) cultural, historical, political, and social understanding of the environment within which the text was made, and (c) attempting to understand what the author or creator of the text intended at the time the text was written/created” (p. 1754). The researcher has considered the cultural, historical, political, and social background of *Gun Island* to critically analyze the language, symbols and imagery of the text. It is a qualitative study. Primary data have been collected from the novel *Gun Island* (2019) for thematic analysis. This study also collected required secondary data from several authentic sources, such as national and international journals, periodicals, newspapers, magazines, websites, books, etc.

2. Climate Change and Its Effects: The Nonhumans Migration, the Dead Zones, and the Crop Failure

The novel *Gun Island* emphasizes how sea creatures face displacement due to environmental mayhem. One of the crucial characters is Piya, an Indian-American of

Bengali descent who works in the Sundarbans, tracking the Irrawaddy dolphins. She knows the Sundarbans well and visits the terrain frequently (Bose & Aamrita, 2021). Piya is extremely worried about the loss of marine life due to pollution and global warming. That is why she has been studying Irrawaddy dolphin named Rani and her calves as part of her research. Piya's relationship with the Irrawaddy dolphins is a shining example of environmental sagacity and legacy. Piya, the researcher and Rani (a dolphin) develop a spiritual connection with time. It is obvious that Piya's relationship with Rani is "strong enough, and durable enough, to qualify as what humans might regard as an old friendship" (Ghosh, 2019). Rani goes missing one day and Piya rescues the trapped Rani when she sees her stuck in the nylon net. Piya immediately sets Rani free, and after that, the dolphin makes "eye contact with her, in a manner quite different from other members of the pod" - a manner suggesting "something more than mere recognition" (Ghosh, 2019). Animal studies, akin to green/environmental studies, attempts to understand human-animal relations (Mishra, 2016) and tends to "focus on the violence humans perpetrate on species" taxonomically highly related to them (Buell *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, Piya's relationship with Rani is strongly bound up with notions of human-animal inalienable connections. The illusion that Piya sees in the dolphin's eyes evokes the primordial beauty of human-nonhuman relations.

Piya uses a GPS tracker to get real-time information on Rani's movements. Piya observes that as the sea level rises and freshwater inflows decrease, saltwater begins to intrude deeper upstream, making the dolphin belt more saline. As a result, dolphins and other animals migrate from one place to another. To avoid the salt water, the dolphins had to "venture further and further upriver, into populated, heavily fished areas. Inevitably some had been ensnared by fishermen's nets and some had been hit by motorboats and steamers. ...Over the last few years the pod had lost so many members that its numbers were now down to Rani and just two others" (Ghosh, 2019). But the obligatory journey of the animals from one place to another is not a happy one. Piya feels that the shifting of habitats incurs 'a huge source of stress for them' (p.103). Many animals die along the way. In *Gun Island*, Rani and her calves die due to "cetacean stranding" or "beaching" while migrating. While in Oregon, Piya receives a mail from a stranger. The message of the mail makes her heart bleed as "the message was written in the style of a news report, and it described a mass beaching of dozens of Irrawaddy dolphins at Garjontola Island in the Sundarbans" (p.82). Although no apparent reason can be found, Piya believes that "man-made sounds - from submarines and solar equipment and stuff like that - could be behind the beachings.... marine mammals use echo location to navigate so if something messed with that they could become disoriented and run themselves aground" (Ghosh, 2019).

Allusions to environmental awareness are contextualized

throughout the story of the novel. Measuring the GPS signals, Piya finds that not only rare species of dolphins, but most marine and coastal animals are direct victims of global warming and industrial waste management. Undoubtedly, global warming is also the result of human actions. Chemical fertilizers are being washed into the ocean and its chain reaction is reducing the oxygen in the water. As a result, the existence of sea creatures is disappearing. Piya tells Deen about the contamination of the waters in the Sundarbans and other parts of the world by chemical effluents, which renders many aquatic areas inhospitable for most living things and creates "oceanic dead zones." Although some special animals survive in low oxygen, many areas of the ocean are becoming "dead zones". Piya is really worried about the oceanic "dead zones" and tells the audience how she beholds:

'Have you heard of oceanic dead zones? No? Well, they're these vast stretches of water that have a very low oxygen content - too low for fish to survive. Those zones have been growing at a phenomenal pace, mostly because of residues from chemical fertilizers. When they're washed into the sea they set off a chain reaction that leads to all the oxygen being sucked out of the water. Only a few highly specialized organisms can survive in those conditions - everything else dies, which is why those patches of water are known as "dead zones". 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, 2019).

Similarly, as per the narrative of *Gun Island*, the dead zones start "appearing in rivers too, especially where they meet the sea, as in the estuaries of the Mississippi and Pearl Rivers" (p.102). The novelist portrays this reality with great compassion. A quote from Moyna, who lost her husband in a severe cyclone, illustrates how a region is becoming uninhabitable. Moyna states, "Both land and water is going against the people of Sundarbans" (p.56). The emergence of the "dead zones" is relevant to the "stories about end of the world", which is strongly bound up with notions of 'apocalypse' proposed by Greg Garrard. Furthermore, Murphy (2012) notes, "the world is going to be destroyed by the wrath of nature" (n.p.).

Apart from the Sundarbans, the island of Venice, which is about eight and a half thousand kilometers away from India, has also been directly affected by global warming. In *Gun Island*, Deen's friend, the historian Cinta, is a native of Venice. The ground floor of his house is also flooded with tidal water. Too often, the centuries-old city of Venice, standing on the soft mud of the lagoon, goes underwater. Poorly educated Rafi has migrated from Sundarbans to Venice. He finds the Sundarbans mysteriously similar to the Fondamente Nove barrage on the northern edge of the city. Rafi says,

'I know that place well. On flood days we sometimes spend the night there. I've been on those jetties. I've heard them.' 'Heard what?' 'The worms. It's just like the Sundarbans. There, if you put your ear to the embankments you can hear the crabs burrowing inside. My grandfather

showed me how to listen to them. Sometimes, if you listen carefully, you can tell if an embankment is going to collapse. It's the same over here' (Ghosh, 2019).

The noise Rafi hears in *Fondamente Nove* is actually caused by a type of insect called shipworm, which is slowly changing its habitat due to climate change. Likewise, filmmaker Gisa's dog, Leola, dies of the venomous yellow-bellied snake bite on the Venice beach though the snakes are not supposed to be there. However, the distribution of the snakes "was changing with the warming of the oceans and they were migrating northwards" (p.141).

Piya briefs the journalists on the long-term impacts of the refinery, such as 'shoals of dead fish, the decline of crab populations, and so on' (p.184). Moreover, refineries are polluting the Sundarbans. As a result, many fish are dying. All over the world we see that river water is being polluted by toxic chemicals. The narrator's words are relevant here: "The culprit here is a refinery..... we can't just let them get away with poisoning the Sundarbans.....they've been dumping effluents into the rivers...What's a fish kill?' 'It's when you find thousands of dead fish floating on the surface or washed up ashore...We've been seeing things we'd never seen in these waters before –massive fish kills, for example.....It's happening all round the world with more and more chemicals flowing into rivers. But here I'm pretty sure that it's the refinery that's responsible'" (p.102-103).

In *Gun Island*, entomologist Lisa observes that bark beetles eat up trees from the inside. It is alarming that the bark beetles have been expanding their territory as the mountains warm up rapidly. Moreover, the insects have taken over almost the woodlands surrounding her village. Lisa asks the mayor to take steps to demolish the growth of the bark beetles. Furthermore, severe heat and drought due to climate change cause wildfires in the village. Nevertheless, nobody gives it any thought promptly. Rather, a story goes around that Lisa fired the woodlands herself to get more funding for her research. The repercussions were devastating:

"this year there was a long drought and a couple of weeks ago a huge wildfire broke out, just as Lisa had warned. The state had to declare an emergency and send in helicopters and stuff. Two people died and dozens of houses were burnt down" (p.116).

It is obvious that the setting of the novel *Gun Island* is controlled by climate. The effects of greenhouse gas emissions are being widely observed around the world. Global warming is causing the sea level to rise. The Sundarbans on the coast of the Bay of Bengal is not immune to this disaster. Day by day, the sea is consuming the Sundarbans. The flora and fauna of the Sundarbans are the victims of global warming. An elderly trust manager named Nilima Bose notifies Deen, the protagonist of the novel, that the "islands of the Sundarbans are constantly being swallowed up by the sea" (p.19). Ghosh also expresses his concern about climate issues in his nonfiction *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables*

for a Planet in Crisis that:

"Bangladesh, and the Bengal Delta more generally, is exceptionally vulnerable to climate change.....Much of the country lies less than one meter above sea level, and it has already lost a good deal of land to the rising waters" (p.155).

The plot of *Gun Island* tells us that climate change is causing more and more natural disasters, resulting in "long-term" dire consequences for the inhabitants of the Sundarbans (p.55). Forests act as protectors during natural calamities. A prime example of this is found in *Gun Island*. For example, a category 4 cyclone had torn through West Bengal and East Pakistan on November 12, 1970, and it is the Sundarbans that "absorbed the impact of the cyclone" (p.20). The novel depicts the picture of the long-term crop failure on the coasts of the Sundarbans due to Cyclone Aila in 2009. As a result, the existence of people dependent on the forests and fisheries is threatened. Moyna shares with Deen his concern that the soil and water of the Sundarbans are becoming uninhabitable. The water has become contaminated with arsenic. As the height of tidal water increases, the dam cannot be constructed. As a result, salt water is making life more and more miserable. Fishermen cast their nets and cannot catch fish like before (p.56) as the number of "dead zones" is increasing day by day in the sea. Wildfire also causes natural disasters in Los Angeles as Deen observes that "massive wildfires had been raging around Los Angeles for several days. Thousands of acres of land had been incinerated and tens of thousands of people had been moved to safety" (p.126). The Los Angeles wildfires highlight the gap between rich and poor. Deen gets an aerial view from the plane and describes the fire from a safe distance. But the underdogs get burned in the fire. Deen's depiction of wildfires is a case in point:

"It was my good luck (or so I thought at the time) to be seated on the left side of the plane. Leaning forward, I scanned the horizon with my nose against the window. It wasn't long before dark smudges appeared in the distance. They quickly grew into dense masses of smoke..... Even more striking was the landscape that lay beneath our flightpath – a charred, smouldering stretch of forested hillside that had already been laid waste by the fires" (p.123).

3. Migration of the Humans: The Representation of Climate Refugees

Garrard (2023) explains in the trope of 'Environmental Apocalypse' that ecological catastrophe is inevitable due to climate change. He further opines that "rapid growth in the number of Europeans in the nineteenth century provided troops, colonists and industrial workers that made temporary global dominance possible, which in turn allowed for mass emigration from overcrowded nations" (p.105). Likewise, to emphasize the "planetary scale of the climate crisis" (Khan, 2024), the narrative of *Gun Island* moves from Kolkata to the Sundarbans, the Sundarbans to Brooklyn, Brooklyn to Los Angeles, Los

Angeles to Brooklyn again, Brooklyn to Venice, and finally to the Mediterranean Sea, near Sicily. Deen, the narrator of the novel, serves as a crucial conduit for connecting all the climatic spectacles. Deen's travel companion, Moyna, brings out the story of the indescribable hardships of the people of the Sundarbans through which we learn about "climate refugees". People lean towards industry in the neoliberal capitalist system. People make more and more industries in the name of development. Sunita Narain wrote about the 'environmentalism of the poor' in Business Standard that "They know they are poor..... what we call development will only make them poorer. This is what I have called the environmentalism of the poor" (Martinez-Alier, 2014). The poor are on the side of the conservation of the environment against business organizations. Moreover, in *The Great Derangement* (2016), Ghosh also depicts capitalism as 'one of the principal drivers of climate change' (Fibisan, 2019). The *Gun Island* sheds light on how industries continue to emit a lot of refinery, which is polluting the environment. As a result, people are forced to expurgate the fruitful relationship with the natural environment, and they have no choice but to move to another country for a better life. *Gun Island*'s environmental issues are first triggered during Deen's trip to the Sundarbans as soon as he discovers how climate change is disrupting the ecosystem of the mangrove forest by affecting its flora and fauna. The Sundarbans dwellers maintain a harmonious relationship with nature. However, due to ecological disasters, they migrate to other countries. Ghosh portrays those migrants as "climate refugees" (Khan, 2024). Moyna's words reveal the predicaments of the climate refugees:

"the exodus of the young was accelerating every year: boys and girls were borrowing and stealing to pay agents to find them work elsewhere. Some were slipping over the border into Bangladesh, to join labour gangs headed for the Gulf. And if that failed they would pay traffickers to smuggle them to Malaysia or Indonesia, on boats" (Ghosh, 2019).

The novel *Gun Island* makes a connection between "the refugee influx into the Western world" and "the environmental crisis outside the West" (Khan, 2024). The rich can save themselves from climate disasters, but the poor are helpless. Grewe-Volpp (2013) puts forward that the rich can protect themselves from the "disturbing and disorientating" climate pollution (Garrard, 2023, p.13) whereas, "the majority of the poor,... have no possibilities to escape, but suffer from disease, crime, drugs, and violence" (Grewe-Volpp, 2013). Garrard (2023) postulates that the emissions from the rich nations cause global warming, whilst the victims are the poor. He further states that "in 2020, the UK, with the longest record of historical emissions, was 11th least vulnerable to climate change in the world, whilst the most vulnerable was Chad, a country that has and is making a negligible contribution to the crisis" (p.120). The poor are forced to migrate, unable to survive the adverse environment caused by climate change. Many become victims of

human trafficking while migrating. The issue of illegal migration is brilliantly portrayed in the novel *Gun Island*. In this novel, we see the procession of thousands of migrants to Europe via Italy using the Mediterranean Sea. Gilson's (2022) view of "Anthropocene" (p. 270-271) is relevant here in *Gun Island* as humans have to suffer from climate change, whether they are the local poor of the Sundarbans or the global rich of Los Angeles. Too often, with the help of traffickers from different countries, the young people of South Asia and Africa float in the Mediterranean Sea to fulfill their dreams. This journey has a brutal and breathtaking story. International agencies such as BBC, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Reuters, The Guardian, Arab News, and AL Jazeera often highlight the perilous circumstances faced by migrants travelling from the South to Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. The "most active and hazardous route" into the European countries is the Mediterranean Sea, and since 2017, this route has been frequently used by migrants from Asia and Africa (Cuddy, 2023). BBC news reporter Alice Cuddy (2023) also assumes that the number of migrant deaths is increasing day by day as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has noted more than 1,800 deaths in the central Mediterranean in 2023, in comparison to 1,400 for the entire 2022. According to the report of UN refugee agency, over 2,500 people have lost their lives or vanished while attempting to cross the Mediterranean into Europe in 2023, while roughly 186,000 people have arrived in European nations during the same time frame ("More than 2,500 dead", 2023). Notably, the issues like "passports, visas, permits, green cards and the like" (Ghosh, 2019) regulate human migration. As a result, climate refugees are easily victims of human trafficking. In *Gun Island*, Rafi and Tipu cross the borders of different countries like India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary and Austria with the help of human traffickers. They finally reach Venice, Italy, risking their lives. Along the way, they met refugees from different countries such as Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Pakistan and others (p. 247). Both Khokon of *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* and Bilal of *Gun Island* take shelter in Italy as migrant workers. Their origin is Bangladesh. Similarly, Bangladeshi climate refugee Lubna runs a business in Venice. There is a market place next to Lubna's office in Italy where every migrant is Bengali, as the narrator utters: "Yet, the men behind the counters were almost all Bengali" (Ghosh, 2019). Ghosh can understand that these people are "climate refugees" whether they see it or not (Ghosh, 2021).

In *Gun Island*, one of the finest examples of climate refugees is Gun Merchant. In search of fortune, he left Bengal and took refuge in Venice. Moreover, we can know the reason for his migration when Cinta tells an apocryphal story: "The protagonist is a merchant, whose homeland, in eastern India, is struck by drought and floods brought on by the climatic disturbances of the Little Ice Age; he loses everything including his family,

and decides to go overseas to recoup his fortune” (p.148). Furthermore, according to boatmen Horen Naskar, the Gun Merchant was affected by a drought which was “so terrible that the streams, rivers and ponds had dried up and the stench of rotting fish and dead livestock had hung heavy in the air. Half the people had died of starvation; parents had sold their children and people had been reduced to eating carcasses and cadavers” (p.60).

As the narrative of the novel progresses, a trendy young historian is found to be concerned with the environmental apocalypse. He delivers a speech at a conference on ‘Climate and Apocalypse in the Seventeenth Century’. As per the historian, the seventeenth century “was a period of such severe climatic disruption that it was sometimes described as the ‘Little Ice Age’. During this time temperatures across the globe had dropped sharply, maybe because of fluctuations in solar activity.... earthquakes had torn down cities and volcanoes.... millions had died: in some parts of the world the population had declined by a third. And everywhere there was talk of apocalypse: the comets that were streaking through the heavens were thought to be portents of the destruction of the universe; even the creatures of the earth were believed to be conveying warnings of catastrophe” (p.29). In the seventeenth century, many people died from “famines, droughts and epidemics”. The speaker’s primary claim is that the current climatic problem began in the “Little Ice Age” of the seventeenth century because it was then that Londoners began to use coal as fossil fuels on a large scale. The speaker points out that the emergence of today’s “climate refugee” is a direct outcome of human activity during the last four centuries (Khan, 2024).

4. The Torture Suffered by the Environmental Groups

The notion of ‘environmentalism of the poor’ incurs ‘social justice’ (Schlosberg, 2007) and promises that the battles for human rights and the environment are closely attached (Martinez-Alier, 2014). The environmentalists form social movements against environmental disasters. For example, the first social environmental movements in the USA were carried out by the poor communities against disparate environmental policy implementation in the early 1980s. The movement was about a rapport between pollution and poverty. Bullard (1993) further asserts that the underdog groups experience the highest threats of environmental calamity (p.167). Likewise, in *Gun Island*, an alliance of environmental groups is formed to diminish the pollution. Piya leads the environmental groups. This Piya becomes the eyesore of the factory authorities in the northern part of Sundarbans and Calcutta. Unfortunately, some powerful people stand against the environmentalists with the help of unscrupulous politicians as eminent ecocritic Greg Garrad (2023), in his trope of “apocalypse”, opines that the world is affected by ‘violence’ as well as extreme ‘moral dualism’ (p.98). A giant conglomerate of devious people calls environmentalists “foreign agents”. Moreover, funds for environmentalists drop. Many of the

environmentalists have to go to jail in false cases. They are victims of prison oppression. Many of them fall prey to personal assaults. They are tortured by paid goons and policemen. Environmentalists have to face “death threats, hate mail, constant trolling” (Ghosh, 2019). It is very worrying that an entire community is facing environmental degradation for the economic benefit of a few people.

5. Conclusion

The ecoconsciousness of the novel ‘*Gun Island*’ is outstanding. Amitav Ghosh is widely known as a quintessentially environmentalist. The plot of *Gun Island* conveys innumerable environmental issues. He is predominantly remembered for his depiction of human and nonhuman sufferings due to climate disaster. The *Gun Island* explicates that the climate refugee of the “Global South” migrate to “Global North” to take shelters. The occurrences of Los Angeles fires, Dolphin observation by GIS tracking, Venice tornadoes, cetaceans beaching, tidal waves, yellow-bellied poisonous snakes beaching on the West American coast, bark beetles, shipworms, poisonous spider outbreaks, etc., have cleverly reminded industrialized countries that if there is a fire in the city, the temple is not spared. So, it can be said that the capitalist societies should take immediate steps to reduce the emissions. Overall, Ghosh portrays the plights of “disturbing and disorientating” environmental pollution in *Gun Island*. To ensure environmental justice, an innocuous atmosphere is a need for all humans and nonhumans rather than a luxury equipment (Martinez-Alier, 2014).

The migration of humans and nonhumans does not follow any border or order. There are many tragic stories behind the migration of climate refugees. Many become victims of human trafficking. Many drown in the deep sea. On the other hand, diversified nonhumans, such as dolphins, crocodiles, fishes, crabs are victims of beaching. The environment is being polluted due to continuous emissions from rich countries. It affects poor countries either directly or indirectly. Unable to survive in the hostile environment, the people of poor countries are forced to migrate to rich countries in the hope of a better life. The migration of climate refugees has again become a headache for the rich as they have to face the refugee crisis. The rich have to suffer the consequences of the mass migration as they are responsible for climate change.

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