

The Repercussions of Greed—A Reading of Amitav Ghosh’s *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times*

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Abstract

Greed and capitalism become major agents when it comes to climate crisis. In recent years, Amitav Ghosh has written extensively on the climate. Ghosh’s fiction, such as *The Hungry Tide* (2004), *Gun Island* (2019), *Jungle Nama* (2021) and *The Living Mountain* (2022), adeptly capture the urgency of the climate crisis. They demonstrate a strong link between the human and non-human world, they merge myths and legends with modern-day realities, they foreground the question of environmental justice, they highlight the effects of globalised culture and capitalism, and they put forward the dichotomy of exclusivity and migration of humans and non-humans. In the light of these issues, the paper examines the idea of greed and shows how climate crisis transcends socio-political-religious boundaries and captures our predicament. Through an analysis of Amitav Ghosh’s works, especially *The Living Mountain*, the paper questions what postcolonial means when we try to understand it through the lens of the climate crisis and the planetary discourse. The issues of race, gender, class etc. get addressed within the broader climate discourse.

Keywords: Amitav Ghosh, Greed, Climate Crisis, Postcolonialism, Capitalism.

Introduction

“There’s much to be had there, I’ll take all I can see;

honey, wax and timber, and all of it for free!” (Ghosh *JN* 10)

The idea of greed is multifaceted. Greed has been linked to sin since ancient times (mainly through religion and philosophies), and there are many debates surrounding greed and how we understand or perceive it. Eric A. Posner’s article ‘The Jurisprudence of Greed’ highlights how “greed carries with it a moral charge” (1100). Dan Ariely and Aline Gruneisen, in their article,

‘The Price of Greed’, write, “...the more students had been schooled in economics, the more positively they viewed greed” (41). There are many rationalizations of greed (linking greed to competition, growth, etc.), and the authors insist on the need to challenge that.

The repercussions of greed form the crux of Amitav Ghosh’s *Jungle Nama* (2021) and *The Living Mountain* (2022). Humans’ arrogance and greed have depleted nature and unhomed creatures. The books, which deal with an episode from a legend and a fable, respectively, connect Ghosh’s fictional works like *The Hungry Tide* (2004) and *Gun Island* (2019), and his non-fictional works *The Great Derangement* (2016) and *The Nutmeg’s Curse* (2021) in interesting ways. The issues of habitat, environment and climate crisis are captured in all these works. A common thread, the Sundarban, for instance, figures in his novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Gun Island*. *Jungle Nama* is another work where we find Ghosh drawn towards the mangrove forest, the Sundarban, an ecologically volatile zone. Amitav Ghosh has touched upon colonialism and ecological issues in his other works like *The Circle of Reason*, *The Glass Palace*, *Sea of Poppies*, *River of Smoke* and *Flood of Fire*. However, the works mentioned earlier deal with the climate crisis more intensely. The paper, through an analysis of Amitav Ghosh’s select works and focusing mainly on his fable, *The Living Mountain*, seeks to show how the narrative surrounding the repercussions of greed and ‘the great derangement’ transcends socio-political-religious boundaries and captures the crisis and the predicament of our times. The paper questions what postcolonial means in the context of the climate crisis and the planetary discourse. The link between ecological damage and Western imperialism has been well established. Colonialism and imperialism continue to manifest in varied forms in the postcolonial era, and exploitation of nature and the repercussions of greed force us to look at colonisation from a planetary perspective, as in what this means for the planet and the living beings. Among

the concerns of the postcolonial, “the recovery of a lost or ‘subaltern’ history, told from the point of view of those who have been ruled and oppressed rather than those who are members of the ruling classes” (Innes 37) is important. In this regard, climate crisis can be seen from the planetary point of view.

The decolonial turn emphasises, among other aspects, on indigenous wisdom and how modern societies can reclaim it. However, Ramachandra Guha highlights how this idea can be problematic as it assumes a dichotomy between tradition (always respectful towards nature) and modernity (always exploitative). It also assumes traditional (non-Western) societies as unchanging which can lead to generalisations. Also, the problems of living in a modern world are not adequately addressed (Guha 320). Despite these issues, unearthing indigenous ways can be in many ways enlightening. One has to go beyond the imposed ideas of marginalisation and societal prejudices. While discussing the origins of Indian environmentalism, Guha emphasises how early Indian environmentalists (like Tagore, Gandhi, among others) advocated for respect for nature along with human dignity. Environmental justice is as important as social justice. The depiction of climate crisis frequently takes on a fantastical dimension in both movies and literature, potentially functioning as an emotional defence mechanism, catharsis or neglect. Wallace-Wells states that “a form of emotional prophylaxis is also at work: in fictional stories of climate catastrophe, we may also be looking for catharsis, and collectively trying to persuade ourselves we might survive it” (144). A prevailing sense of blindness characterises society’s approach to the climate crisis. Recent years have seen an acceleration of globalization and capitalism. We have also seen a global pandemic recently. Dipesh Chakrabarty, in *The Climate of History in a Planetary Age*, offers a poignant perspective on the global ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic. He posits that this crisis starkly illustrates how the accelerated processes

of globalisation can prompt transformative shifts in the planet's broader historical narrative (Chakrabarty 1). Chakrabarty's work urges a shift in perspective, advocating for a planetary viewpoint that transcends human-centric constructs in favour of a more encompassing understanding of the Earth system (Chakrabarty 4).

The indigenous or local knowledge systems are invaluable treasures to return to. Remarkably sophisticated in their understanding of terraforming and harmonising with the environment, these age-old systems possess insights from which even modern techno-futurists glean. As Amitav Ghosh aptly notes, "...it is becoming increasingly clear that Indigenous understandings of terraforming were, in fact, far more sophisticated than those of today's techno-futurists" (Ghosh *NC* 71). A revival of oral traditions, songs, dances, poetry, music, literature, and drama is essential. These artistic forms offer a unique avenue for engaging with our world from a planetary and ecological standpoint. Pieter Vermeulen in *Literature and the Anthropocene* (2020) emphasises the significance of literature and literary studies as tools for delving into the Anthropocene. He illuminates how literature can render the complex and often overwhelming scientific theories surrounding climate change more engaging and accessible. As emphasised by writers like Dipesh Chakrabarty and Amitav Ghosh, storytelling can go a long way in addressing the environmental crisis. Ghosh suggests that storytelling links us to our primal connections with nature and that listening to the stories of all living creatures, including trees, can foster empathy and understanding. Such points of view firmly establish the need to study climate change narratives via literature.

Writers like Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy have focused mainly on climate crisis in recent years. Arundhati Roy's activism in addressing issues related to climate change is deeply intertwined with her fiction. In her novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017), Roy delves

into gender, caste, communalism, and nationalism within the context of specific local and state development policies and examines how these forces exacerbate climate change vulnerabilities and inequalities. Here, one can also mention Orijit Sen's graphic novel *River of Stories* (1994), about the 'Narmada Bachao Andolan' (on which Arundhati Roy has spoken and written extensively).

In the last two decades, fiction like Ruchir Joshi's *The Last Jet-Engine Laugh* (2002), Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* (2008), Temsula Ao's *Laburnum for My Head* (2009), Shovon Chowdhury's *The Competent Authority* (2013), Pankaj Sekhsaria's *The Last Wave—An Island Novel* (2014), Sarnath Banerjee's graphic novel *All Quiet in Vikaspuri* (2015), Easterine Kire's *Son of the Thundercloud* (2016), Prayaag Akbar's *Leila* (2017), Rajat Chaudhuri's *The Butterfly Effect* (2018), Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* (2018), Varun Thomas Mathew's *The Black Dwarves of the Good Little Bay* (2019), Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's *Funeral Nights* (2021), Janice Pariat's *Everything that Light Touches*, Mamang Dai's *Escaping the Land* (2021), and Bijal Vachharajani's children's fiction *Savi and the Memory Keeper* (2021) have received enough attention in the field of cli-fi.

A Fable for Our Times

Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* is described as "a fable for our times". The book can be read as a modern parable that teaches or explains the most vital aspects of living on this planet. The book narrates the story of a Mahaparbat, a living Mountain. That the mountain is alive and has a pulse of its own is a lesson for human beings blinded by materialism and the capitalist mindset. There is no denying that colonialism and capitalism led to this anthropogenic climate

crisis—“the latest science finds that *all* of the warming since 1970 is due to human causes” (Rohm 7). The *Living Mountain* explores the repercussions of greed and mindless invasion and exploitation. It is a cautionary tale that warns humans about the dangers that beset them when they mock positive traditions and replace old ways of life to fulfil their unsaturated appetites. It depicts a dystopic world, the plight that surrounds us as we lose reverence and gratitude for mountains, rivers, trees, stories or songs. Ghosh’s *Jungle Nama* is also a cautionary tale. It is a free-verse adaptation of a legend from the Sundarban. An episode from the legend of Bon Bibi (the benign goddess of the forest) is adapted. The legend of Bon Bibi also finds a place in Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, set in the Sundarban. These legends and fables are stories that have a powerful role in shaping our understanding of the world. They make us question greed and the fictional identities we have created by attaching ourselves to worldly pursuits. The Great Mountain in Ghosh’s *The Living Mountain* is a guardian who looks after the valley. The ancestors of the valley laid down one condition for the villagers: they should not go near or set foot on the mountain—that their greed should not overwhelm them into doing something forbidden. They are allowed to tell stories about the mountain, they are allowed to sing songs and dance for it, “but always from a distance” (Ghosh *LM* 7). The invasion of the valley by colonisers brings greed in its stead and, along with it, disintegration of the land and its people. In Ghosh’s *Jungle Nama*, on the other hand, the greed of both the human world and the animal world is projected. The narrative emphasizes that balance is possible only when there is a check on greed. The man and animal world, the fear and the conflict linked with their encounters are highlighted here. What stands out is that the non-human voice finds prominence along with the human voice in *Jungle Nama*, as in *The Living Mountain*.

In the Valley that is depicted in *The Living Mountain*, “dances were always led by women, and the most skilled of them were known as Adepts; sometimes, when dancing, they would go into a trance and afterwards they would tell us that they had felt the Mountain speaking to them through the soles of their feet” (9-10). The Mountain is a living entity that can communicate; women, in particular, have a powerful role. They can listen to the Mountain. Similarly, in *Jungle Nama*—which is a story about Bon Bibi, her warrior brother Shah Jongoli, Dokkhin Rai (a powerful spirit who appears to humans as a tiger), Dhona (a rich merchant), Mona (Dhona’s brother), Dukhey (a poor boy) and Dukhey’s mother—the mothers in the narrative, Dukhey’s mother and Bon Bibi, are projected as protectors. They are averse to greed. They are the custodians of knowledge and wisdom.

The fact that one has to stay within limits or will be meted with harsh punishment is an essential part of the narratives. In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh writes, “insofar as the idea of the limitlessness of human freedom is central to the arts of our time, this is also where global warming will most obdurately resist them” (213). In Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, we find that the encroachment into the animal terrain makes people victims of the natural forces as hundreds of people are killed by tigers, crocodiles and snakes. The legend of Bon Bibi, which pervades the narrative, states—

...she decided that one half of the tide country would remain in wilderness; this part of the forest she left to Dokkhin Rai and his demon hordes. The rest she claimed for herself, and under her rule this once-forested domain was soon made safe for human settlement. Thus order was brought to the land of eighteen tides, with its two halves, the wild and the sown, being held in careful balance. All was well until human greed intruded to upset this order (Ghosh *HT* 103).

In Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*, the Valley people fought amongst themselves and over many things, but they all agreed on one thing— "strangers would never be allowed to enter our Valley" (Ghosh *LM* 8). Will Kymlicka, in *Politics in the Vernacular*, analyses minority nationalisms and shows how it is not always illiberal, pre-modern or xenophobic (277). The valley people wanted to protect their land from encroachment. They wanted to protect their sacred Mountain, who provided them with a Magic Tree "a tree that grew along the streams that descended from its slopes" (Ghosh *LM* 8), from defilement. The tree, which was unique to their Valley, provided them with miraculous things (leaves, wood, mushrooms, flowers, fruits, nuts), and they were filled with gratitude for the Mountain and the tree.

Things were fine until one day when their Elderpeople (elders of the valley) met a stranger from a faraway land during Trading Week outside the Valley. The stranger showed interest in their Valley and its resources. The stranger told them that his people were called "the Anthropoi" (10). Seeing the wares comprising of mushrooms, herbs, nuts, and honey did not whet his appetite; he wanted more—"he wanted to come into the Valley and see it with his own eyes" (10). The Elderpeople became troubled. They told him that "the Great Mountain did not wish it" (11). The elders told him about the Mahaparbat, their sacred Mountain which "cannot be traded" (12). The stranger took notes, writing down the information he gathered about the Valley and secretly nurtured a hope of seeing the Valley. The elders were concerned, but as years passed, the elders heaved a sigh of relief until one morning when the Great Mountain spoke to them—the Mountain "began to shake and heave; avalanches came roaring down its slopes and rifts opened up in the Valley" (12-13). The wise women, the Adeptes, listened to the Mountain and told the villagers that strangers were coming from a far-off land with terrible weapons and that a new cycle of time would begin, the Cycle of Tribulation (13). The Anthropoi came to the

Valley to conquer the Great Mountain, believing that they could extract hidden resources like minerals and metals. They made the people of the Valley work for them and help them in their mission. An era of subjugation began. Walter D. Mignolo in ‘Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality’ highlights that “...we should not forget that the colonial matrix of power organizing the exploitation of labor and underlying capitalism was based initially on the appropriation of lands with serfdom and slavery as the primary form of labor and *racism* as the fundamental argument justifying exploitation” (486). The villagers fought but were defeated—“some of our villagers were defeated in battle, some were tricked into attacking their neighbours, and others were reduced to quiescence with drugs that sent them into dream-like trances” (15). The order in the Valley was upset irrecoverably.

In Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide*, Daniel Hamilton’s vision of a utopian society where there would be no division between people based on caste, creed, religion, community or gender was realised when people from different places moved in together to build homes in the Sundarban—“And this land here was in their own country, not far from Calcutta: they didn’t need to take a boat to Burma or Malaya or Fiji or Trinidad. And what was more, it was free” (51). The vision was that “this place could be a model for all of India; it could be a new kind of country” (Ghosh *HT* 52) where no divisions or discriminations would exist. However, no such utopia is visible in the Valley depicted in *The Living Mountain*. The Anthropoi and their most ferocious soldiers, the Kraani, created “illusions of omnipotence” (16). They made the villagers think that “they were a different species of being” (16). They dismantled any semblance of equality or respect. They dismissed the Valley’s Elderpeople and appointed new ones. They removed the women who were there among the Elderpeople and never allowed women to be Elders. The new Elderpeople

were all autocratic men. The Anthropoi imprisoned the Adepts and “forbade all our ceremonies and songs, stories and dances” (16). They considered them to be worthless. They did not only mock the traditions but also mocked the people, saying that:

Our bodies were not suited to the climb, we were not strong enough, our diets were enfeebling, our habits degenerate, our beliefs perverse, our minds weak, and our hearts lacking in courage. We were nothing but Varvaroi (which is what they called us). (17)

Changes were brought about in their secluded Valley through invasion and exploitation. The history of colonisation had seen such rampant changes and had witnessed the consequences of such changes. Along with human exploitation, the natural world was also exploited. Mountains and trees—the living spirits, were subjugated—their voices were suppressed. The Mahaparbat, who communicated with the Adepts of the Valley, was rendered mute. The subjugation of nature often goes hand in hand with the subjugation of women, as Ghosh’s fable laments:

In our valley wisdom had always resided with the women, and since they no longer had any place amongst our Elders, our leadership passed into the hands of those who least understood our Mountain—strong, covetous men who were ruthless in enforcing their will. (19)

War, deception and exploitation became a rage in this age of “Tribulation”. The Anthropoi also fought amongst themselves, and the rebels were hurled off the slopes of the Mountain. This also rings true about the climate warriors, “the rebels”, whose voices are suppressed by the capitalists. The capitalist enterprise in the Valley turned into a spectacle—“and all these dramatic and murderous episodes made the spectacle even more compelling” (18).

There had been a shift in the worldview of the people of the Valley. They forgot about their reverence for the Mountain and attached their awe and admiration to the spectacle and the enterprise of the Anthropoi. They began to covet it. They wanted to do what the Anthropoi were doing.

The Anthropoi had gathered enough riches (more than is required) through exploitation, and gradually, the need for toilers also diminished for them. The Valley people realised it was time for them to rise against the Anthropoi— “we learnt that we could seriously hinder the climbers by putting down our tools and refusing to do what was expected of us” (20). The Valley people now dreamt of achieving what the Anthropoi had achieved. However, they also realised that the upward climb would be impossible if they all started the endeavour together. Some could begin the climb while others toiled in the Valley. This gave rise to conflict— “A great orgy of bloodletting filled our Valley, bringing slaughter and destruction on a scale far beyond that which the Anthropoi had inflicted on us in the past” (21)— and later subjugation of a large number of inhabitants. All the “progress” only brought more violence and degradation. The neo-colonial regime began with “the Kraani of the Varvaroi” (21), the most ferocious soldiers among the valley people. The subjugated nurtured the hope of unsettling that hierarchy. They, too, hoped to join the ascent one day. The ‘post’ of ‘postcolonial’ is often questioned with the popularisation of the concept of ‘neo-imperialism’.

The malady of imitation— the onward, upward climb— put more pressure on the Great Mountain. The Anthropoi, who considered themselves powerful, also understood the impossibility of holding on to the illusion of supremacy in the face of disintegration and degeneration. The climb was harder for the Valley people because of the degradation and pollution— “the Anthropoi had dirtied the slopes and covered them with trash” (21). However,

they realised they were not unequal; they, too, had the skill, strength and courage. They were also faster than the Anthropoi in their ascent, and they dreamed of achieving what the Anthropoi could not achieve yet, “to set foot on the summit of our once-sacred Mountain” (23).

The book could be seen as making a symbolic commentary on the idea of nation and nationalism and how nations compete with one another to reach the summit. Neha Sinha, in her review of the book for *The Hindu* (12 May 2022), highlights how this book “seems to fit right into India’s chequered 2022 growth story”— “wanting to grow larger, faster, and bigger”. However, as the Valley people continued their ascent and felt accomplished, the Anthropoi desperately signalled to them. The Anthropoi urged them to look at the foot of the Mountain. To their astonishment, they saw that their combined weight “had unsettled the snow on the lower slopes of the Mountain” (24). Landslides and avalanches had killed a large number of villagers. However, what was done could not be undone. They could not turn back. Similar to the predicament of the Anthropoi and Valley people in *The Living Mountain*, in Amitav Ghosh’s *Gun Island*, the protagonist, Deen, realised that the Gun Merchant had not just been a victim but his misfortunes “were due to his own arrogance, and his conviction that he was rich enough and clever enough, to avoid paying deference to the forces represented by the goddess of snakes” (Ghosh *GI* 55-56).

In *The Living Mountain*, catastrophes came in the form of melting of ice or flood. The setting of the Valley completely got altered and catastrophe touched everyone, as that became the only setting. David Wallace-Wells highlights how people will be shaken out of complacency “as climate change expands across the horizon— as it begins to seem inescapable, total— it may cease to be a story and become, instead, an all-encompassing setting” (145). The people of the Valley became alienated from their location. A sense of alienation can be seen as part and parcel

of postcolonial literature, and the estrangement inflicted by the climate crisis gives a new meaning to ‘alienation’ in the planetary discourse. Postcolonial literature is sometimes roughly sketched into several phases— “literature of resistance; literature of national consolidation; literature of disillusion and/or neo-colonialism; post-postcolonial literature; and diaspora literature” (Innes 17) but postcolonial also carries a different meaning when we study the impact of human greed on the planet.

The way people in the Valley were impacted varied in accordance with their position of privilege. There was exploitation in times of crisis as those with the means thought of saving themselves at any cost. However, even they could not escape the catastrophe; at least some of them could not. The “poor” were sacrificed— “We put our dead kin out of our minds— they were poor anyway, and there were so many of them that a few would not be missed” (Ghosh *LM* 25). The Anthropoi became friendly with the Valley people, sharing the Mountain’s riches and their knowledge about the Mountain that the Mountain “could support only a small number of climbers” (26). The Valley people realised their folly. They realised that they were wrong to follow the Anthropoi. They realised that their Mountain was sacred. The Anthropoi also started blaming the Valley people for the catastrophe. They wanted them to leave the Mountain and return to the Valley. The Anthropoi insisted that they were superior and were learning new ways. They believed that this was the “Age of the Anthropoi” (28), and they were learning to tread lightly on the Mountain and asked the Valley people to learn their ways. The Valley people realised they were doomed, that even if the Anthropoi trod lightly, they would be setting off avalanches. But the Anthropoi continued to blame them for following their old ways, for not climbing the Mountain earlier. The Anthropoi were egotistical and could not bear to admit that they were wrong. Their ego would not allow them to forsake their vain mission, to acknowledge

that mountains and trees were living beings, that the climb was an act of irreverence. The Anthropoi considered themselves as the custodian of knowledge. The Varvaroi were rendered mute and were given no place in the distribution of knowledge.

The poorer nations and the economically dispossessed were destined to suffer more. The fable highlighted that in an unjust society, the underprivileged in terms of caste, class, or gender would be the worst hit. In the Valley, the people who were in the race of toppling one another could not stop themselves because climbing was like “a drug” (30). It was impossible to turn back because their bodies got used to the drug and “to all the excitement that accompanied our ascent” (31). The kinsfolk down in the Valley also wanted them to keep climbing so that they, too, could follow suit. But now, there was an awareness of the impending doom. To the amazement of the Valley people, as they continued to climb, they saw that most of the Anthropoi had stopped climbing, and some of them were forced to dig up more riches for the benefit of a few who planned to build machines that would “carry them away” (33). It is a fact that “at present the world’s wealthy possess the lion’s share of guilt— the richest 10 percent producing half of all emissions” (Wallace-Wells 148). A general sense of despair and doom brought the Anthropoi and the Valley people together— “...no longer were we Anthropoi and Varvaroi— we were one” (Ghosh *LM* 33).

The book stresses the need to revive old ways and wisdom. The Anthropoi (who were at a loss) asked the Valley people to show them their dance, to tell them their stories. They could not afford to be blind anymore. The politics of power that functions from the top down has to be changed; as Mignolo highlights, the grammar of de-coloniality has to work from the bottom up (492). But the sad fact was that the Valley people had forgotten their stories, songs and dance. They started a desperate search for someone who knew them or remembered them. They finally

found an Adept, an old woman. She kept her wisdom a secret, scared as she was of the people in power. She finally agreed to perform, and the Mountain responded to her dance. They looked at her in amazement. The Anthropoi finally had to believe that the Mountain was alive. They said, “...we must look after the poor, dear mountain” (35). Hearing this, the Adept stopped her whirling and cried out in anger. The Mountain needed to be treated with reverence and gratitude. Human beings were not masters, and it was time they understood that.

It was only through reverence and gratitude for the natural world that human beings could become one, as Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* underlined that merging— “the tide country’s faith is something like one of its great mohonas, a meeting not just of many rivers, but a circular roundabout people can use to pass in many directions— from country to country and even between faiths and religions” (247). In *The Living Mountain*, the Anthropoi and the Valley people came together towards the end of the fable, and the boundaries between class, race or religion collapsed. The climate crisis has brought and will bring perturbations in our society where artificial boundaries would fall apart. Ghosh in *The Great Derangement* says:

The trouble, however, is that the contagion has already occurred, everywhere: the ongoing changes in the climate, and the perturbations that they will cause *within* nations, cannot be held at bay by reinforcing man-made boundaries. We are in an era when the body of the nation can no longer be conceived of as consisting only of a territorialized human population: its very sinews are now revealed to be intertwined with forces that cannot be confined by boundaries (193)

Ghosh's *Jungle Nama*, too, transcended fixed identities, which could be seen as symbolic of the unifying force of the book. It transcended socio-political-religious-artistic boundaries and spoke to humanity.

Conclusion

Amitav Ghosh, in his works, shows how capitalism, war and colonialism go together. History is manipulated as is the idea of 'progress'. A history from the marginalized, from the suppressed, can throw light on what postcolonial means in this era of climate crisis. Ghosh in *Smoke and Ashes: A Writer's Journey through Opium's Hidden Histories* (2023) underlines:

The idea of history as a purposive journey is so deeply entrenched in the contemporary imagination that it would probably have remained unshaken long into the future, if not for ongoing contemporary disasters, like America's current opioid crisis, and, even more significantly, the catastrophic impacts of climate change. It is as if history has itself intervened to expose the contradictions of the teleology of Progress.

Ghosh's aim appears to be able to capture the crisis and the predicament of our times through different literary/ artistic forms. The goal is to reach the masses; to sensitise people through images, verse, fable, artwork or prose, which are meant to be seen, heard and read, both individually and collectively. The potential of stories is emphasized through the verse narrative *Jungle Nama*, as is emphasized by *The Living Mountain*. The folk tradition of storytelling has a potential role in giving voice to the non-human world, and it helps one to transcend boundaries between the human and the non-human world, between societal divisions and between nations.

Stories have a powerful role in shaping our understanding of the world, as Cinta in *Gun Island* puts it:

...only through stories was it possible to enter the most inward mysteries of our existence where nothing that is really important can be proven to exist – like love, or loyalty, or even the faculty that makes us turn around when we feel the gaze of a stranger or an animal. Only through stories can invisible or inarticulate or silent beings speak to us; it is they who allow the past to reach out to us... (Ghosh *GI* 127)

During the recent pandemic, millions of lives have been lost. Each day has been a battle to survive. Along with this health crisis, climate crisis looms large— threatening to dismantle the world we inhabit. Both are interlinked as both ensue from our inadequate understanding of the natural world. Worldviews, cultures and inherent cultural practices are vital while considering the climate crisis and means to preserve the environment. The world can learn from societies that worship nature or preserve their forests as sacred entities. Ghosh’s works are definitely filling up the gap in the fictional depiction of climate change, especially in South Asia. *The Living Mountain* is a cautionary tale, and Ghosh’s prose is metaphorical and symbolic. The fable is for our times and for our planet. An interesting fact about the story is that the story unfolds in a dream of a girl named Maansi. She has a nightmare. Although it is a dream, the past and present merge together in this climate narrative, as she says, “...I don’t even know whether it’s my own dream, or a memory of a story that I heard from my grandmother” (5). This highlights continuity and places the readers in the midst of a climate crisis that can no longer be avoided. The dream could also have ensued from ecophobia, and Maansi’s visit to her therapist also hints at eco grief, the psychological warnings of the climate crisis. However, “fear can motivate too” (Wallace-Wells 157) and bring about change.

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