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Relationship between Colonialism and Environmentalism in Canonical Texts: A postcolonial ecocritical study of *The Sea of Poppies & The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh, River *of Stories* by Orijit Sen, and *Animal's People* by Indira Sinha

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Abstract

In the foundation of colonialism, the exploitation of the environment, the extraction of nature and humans as a resource, and the resultant destruction and disruption of the climate and environment, both human and non-human, as well as both immediate and distant, have been central. Postcolonialism, and especially postcolonial environmentalism, often examines and probes the relationship between colonialism and environmentalism. South-Asian canonical literature upholds these concerns, both in traditional novels and more recent graphic novels. With the help of close reading strategies and critical theories from environmental criticism, and postcolonial environmental criticism like 'Environmentalism of the Poor', 'Slow Violence', 'Decolonial Ecocriticism', 'Postcolonial Ecocriticism', and many others, the paper attempts to explore and expose how these South Asian canonical authors stage the profound yet hidden relationship between colonialism and environment. The findings reveal a nexus of racism, speciesism, and anthropocentrism with Eurocentrism that has wreaked havoc in the past and continues to corrode the present and future of the former colonies and the whole world. The analysis also showcases that literature skillfully represents that it is actually the colonizer and his profit-making policies, with a disregard to all 'others', be them the sub-human 'others' or the non-human 'others', that set the planet on a course of unprecedented climate crisis; and in its current phase of neoliberal, neocolonial, capitalist form that the same destruction is carried out on the underdeveloped and developing world.

Keywords: Colonialism, Anthropocentrism, Slow Violence, Ecocriticism, Postcolonial Environmentalism, Graphic Novel

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Introduction

In the foundation of empire, imperialism and colonialism, the exploitation of the environment, the extraction of nature and humans as a resource, and the resultant destruction and disruption of the climate, flora and fauna, habitats and habits, ways of life and cultures, both immediate and temporally distant, have been central. The sugar and cotton plantations, the mining of gold, diamonds and other precious elements, the extraction of fossil fuels, the piracy of indigenous knowledge and wisdom, the complete disregard to the indigenous flora and fauna and introduction of exotic and non-local species into the local environment of the colonies for the purposes of the colonizer's own benefit and profit, and many similar practices were the basic factors that boosted the economies of the colonizing countries and severely impacted the environment, both natural and man-made, of the colonies. We can safely say that the empire, imperialism, and colonialism established themselves on and profited from the environmental, natural 'resource' as much as from the human 'resource' of the colonies. I argue that in the texts we discuss, we find a convergence of racism and speciesism, as well as anthropocentrism in colonialism, and unfortunately, in some of the literary and critical responses to that convergence.

When colonialism and its legacies are studied, it is observed that it has a direct, deep and often devastating relationship with the environment and environmental elements of the colonies; effects that continue to reverberate to the present and that would probably linger on in future as well. Thus, there is a great affinity in postcolonial studies that study colonization, and ecocritical studies that study environmental colonization and other forms of repression, oppression, and effect. The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Novel notes that "Edward Said famously asserted, imperialism is predicated on "an act of geographical violence," (1) and regaining sovereignty over land and natural resources has been vital to decolonization movements worldwide" (81). Postcolonial literature, especially novels, have been the best literary genre that take up the task of 'writing back' to the empire, along with a discursive depiction of colonialism and its legacies, including the impact on the environment of the colonies and postcolonial. Hence, when discussing colonialism and its relationship to the environment of the colonies it is important to analyze "how postcolonial novelists depict nature in ways that are culturally localized and globally engaged, inflected by specific colonial histories and contemporary neocolonial concerns" (Ibid, 81). Most of the postcolonial literature that deals with environment and colonialism could be considered what Huggan and

Tiffin call 'literature of protest': a kind of literature that has 'twin demand of social and environmental justice' along with its portrayal of the formidable nexus of racism and speciesism in colonialism (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 36). This literature of protest fights against both racism in the form of decentering the 'white, Anglo-American, rich, male' perspective, and speciesism/anthropocentrism in the form of decentering the human and presenting it as marginal. Several of texts in my list have colonialism and environment in covert and overt manifestations. Works like Roy's novels, although without a major ecocritical or environmental theme, have the presence of nature prominent, mostly referring to the neo-colonial policies and repercussions of then on the environment. Ghosh's The Hungry Tide and Alexus Wright's Carpentaria also have themes of colonial settlements and how the settlements exemplify the nexus of colonialism and environmentalism. Whereas Ghosh's Sea of Poppies is set completely in colonial times, discussing the Chinese Opium Wars and the colonial practices of agricultural imperialism, indentured labor, the complicit system of local Nawabs and Zamindars, and how it all plays together in a colonial setting, Indira Sinha's Animal's People focuses on a specific industrial/environmental disaster and how it is a manifestation of the (neo)colonialism of contemporary times with capitalist multinational corporations and their impact on the indigenous population and environment. Works of poetry like Rukeyser's Book of the Dead or g'ebinyo ogbowei's marsh boy and other poems also echo colonial times of mining in America and the revolutionary struggles of the oil-rich Niger delta, however, since I am more trained towards criticism in fiction, my essay discusses only fiction.

Review of the Literature

The first novel I discuss that deals with environment and (neo-)colonialism is Indira Sinha's fictionalization of the Bhopal gas tragedy (here presented as the city of Khaufpur, literally translated to 'the city of fear/dread) that occurred on the night of December 2-3, 1984 at the Union Carbide India Limited pesticide plant in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India. Considered the worst industrial disaster in world history, this disaster affected some half million people in the small towns around the pesticide plant, who were exposed to a highly toxic gas methyl isocyanate. The immediate deaths were enumerated to be around 2500, and a total of around 8-10 thousand people died in the first two weeks of the gas leakage disaster. Around half a million people were injured with varying levels of injuries and disabilities. The effects of the disaster continue to affect the lives of those people today. This has

been fictionalized superbly by Sinha in Animals People which presents a nexus of neocolonialism, capitalism, environmental disaster, multinational corporations and their complicit, local comprador groups (government, politicians, media, security forces), as well as the plight of the affected people, in a sort of magic realistic tale with language appropriation and a unique way of narration. The novel voices "a number of issues central to the historical and environmental conditions of not just contemporary India, but of the countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America that constitute what is frequently called the postcolonial world" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 216).

Animal's People's first feature to be noticed is the novel's unique narrative technique. The story of an environmental disaster in a factory situated in a poor neighborhood of a 'third world' country, owned by a 'first world' company, and the horrific effects of that disaster, narrated by a nineteen-year-old boy bent over on all fours, on a tape recorder given to him by a journalist is in its narrative style representation of the marginal voice by the marginal himself, and not the narrative voice and gaze of a foreigner or for that matter even an outsider from the same 'third world' country. Neither a journalist nor a novelist is translating the 'consciousness' of the dispossessed, but that it is orally narrated by the 'Animal' itself. On the same plane of representation, the novel fulfills a tremendously difficult challenge with relative ease and that is what Rob Nixon calls "to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects" (Nixon, 2013, p. 3) or what Ghosh considers an issue related to our 'great derangement'. The image of a bent over child on all fours, the image of a woman draining her breasts calling their milk poisonous, the image of fetuses in jars that could have been children and people, all are such powerful, spectacular images that overcome the representational challenge Nixon talks about here.

The images of fetuses in jars might have been taken from the 'jellyfish babies' that used to born on Marshall Islands following US nuclear tests in the region (Ibid, 7) linking the themes of environmentalism of the poor across the globe. Along with the temporal distancing of "the quarter-century lag between the Union Carbide explosion and Animal People's appearance", Sinha's novel "offers a powerful instance of a writer dramatizing the occluded relationships of transnational space together with time's occlusions. Sinha's novel stands as a work of "militant particularism," yet it discloses through that radical particularity temporal and spatial webs of violence on a vast scale" (Ibid, 46).

Sinha's narrative technique and representational strategy is further strengthened by his "repurposing of the picaresque" which "brings into brilliant focus the environmental, epidemiological, and economic fallout of the terrors that transnational neoliberal lawlessness dispenses in cahoots with corrupt, legally immune local politicians" (Ibid, 56). Our rogue hero, Animal, is however a pun on the typical picaro who seeks upward social and financial mobility, however our bent over hero Animal first and foremost seeks to be physically upward and erect from all fours to two like a common human being (56). The physically bent figure of Animal presents "a crushing neoliberal, transnational economic relationship and also marks him as a literal "lowlife," a social and anatomical outlier whose physical form externalizes the slow violence, the unhurried metastases coursing through the community" (Slow Violence, 56). Moreover, "Animal, like most picaros, is not expressly political; he positions himself at an angle to Khaupfur's [sic] environmental justice movement" (57). Thus, "[through] his invention of the environmental picaresque, Sinha summons to the imaginative surface of the novel the underclass's underreported lives" (67). The form of the novel Sinha so cleverly constructs allows him to tie environmentalism of the poor, slow violence, subalternity, neocolonial, neoliberal imperialism and the complicit comprador locals into one. It is the environmental picaresque and the 'cracked voiced soloist' who becomes "the antivoice to the new, ornate, chivalric discourse of neoliberal "free trade" and "development"" (Ibid, 66) exposing successfully "the role of neoliberal globalization in exacerbating both uneven economic development and the uneven development of official memory" (Ibid, 66). Nixon believes that the form of picaresque also visibly wins the "battle over spectacle" as Sinha's novel 'cluster[s] the scattered micro-disasters, spread not only over space but also time, with a poignant "sensory density" to render it a spectacle for the eyes habitual to the spectacular" (Ibid, 66).

In the terrain of geopolitical presentation of the environmental and the environmentalism of the poor, Sinha's novel "raises the question of the spatial politics of environmental toxicity, about who decides to build or dump what where and how these decisions affect a disproportionate number of human and nonhuman beings who have little say in the matter" (Postcolonial Ecologies, 216-17). The fact that the factory was owned by an American multinational 'kampani', whose owners lived in America, "the tragedy raises questions about the international framework of law, justice, and rights (or lack thereof)". The very presence of a pesticide manufacturing factory, owned by American bosses, but established in a poor

neighborhood in India already presents a concrete example of 'offloading risk' and its 'cost mitigation' techniques of not following proper safety precautions and standards is also capitalist and imperialist that you reap the benefits while the hazards do not reach you. The 'kampani' is also very suggestive, since the East India Company was/is also often referred to as 'Company', evoking the colonial past and colonial nature of the capitalistic present in India and the developing world in general. Moreover, while sympathizing with the legal battle Zafar and other Khaufpurians fight against the kampani, we realize that "its progress (or the lack thereof) grimly illustrates the global realpolitik about the value of environment and human and nonhuman lives", about who are expendable humans and who earns profit from their lives. In the court proceedings we come to know that "Union Carbide argued that as an American multinational, it could neither be charged nor tried in India nor in U.S. courts since it held that American juries would not be able to comprehend the reality of the daily Indian life" (Ibid, 220). This battle "over accountability and compensation expose[s] the premises that environment, and indeed, the very concept of the human carried radically different values in the global north and south…underlin[ing] the urgent need to rethink and reframe the issue of universal rights, both of humans and nonhumans" (Ibid, 216-17). This also echoes the colonial attitudes and worldview of the entitled and prejudiced racism and speciesism that extolled binarism of human/animal/non-human, us/them, civilized/uncivilized, trying to present "an unbridgeable gap between two apparently discontinuous worlds" (Ibid, 221).

Sinha's protagonist Animal also embodies a whole range of other issues related to environment, the human and non-human, the subaltern and the colonizer, the poor and the capitalist. Animal's position is in an "underprivileged location in the hierarchy of the "new world order," [who] cannot access the minimum of the rights and privileges that are said to define humanity" (Ibid, 221). Animal also "[hovers] between the worlds of the human and nonhuman and making apparent the umbilical bonds that bind both" and his"conversations with the deformed, aborted fetuses, for example, are perfectly consistent with the logic of Sinha's vision" (Ibid, 227).

The vision of Sinha that Postcolonial Ecologies talks about is his use of 'magic realism' in the novel, in the characterization of Animal and its importance in evoking the thematic elements of the novel. Animal's ability to simply step out of his skin and understand other people's thoughts (making the first person narration

more like omniscient third person narration), his relationship with Jara the dog, his ability to understand the French of Ma Franci, his conversations with the foetus Kha in the jar and others, which Postcolonial Ecologies asserts as Sinha's 'flirtations with magic realism' "is hardly "magic realism" in the gimmicky, often misunderstood sense of the term, but realism fitted to express the horrors of a reality that threatens to escape the ordinary normative boundaries of style" (227). The novel leaves us with his reminder: "[T]omorrow there will be more of us". This seems to be "his final insurrectionary promise" against those "who wish to deny personhood to other humans and non-humans around them…This vision of transpersonality and collectivity [gives] a glimpse of redemption against the material forces of transnational capital and the apartheid philosophy of anthropocentrism it spawns". In the "manic existence of Animal" where "the boundaries between humans and nonhumans are dissolved…we begin to hear the drums of an uprising" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 230).

Such a brilliant masterpiece of environmentalism, also falls short on several accounts. Animal's insistence on being called as Animal, and Zafar, Nisha and other well-wishers and benign, good human beings' insistence on calling him human opens up a debate on the representation of evil, abnormal or ugly in the human as animal. And Animal's calling himself an animal, in his own and other character's words, to shy away from responsibility, and behavior is also representation of animals as negative. Also, curiously absent is the presence and representation of animals, and the effects of the environmental catastrophe on the animal and plant life of the city. The plants, and other animals merely serve as a backdrop, and like the dog Jara act as a sidekick of the human/human action. The poisonous gases, the poisoned land and water which is shown to have affected the human lives so drastically, surprisingly did not touch the animal life at all, or so has been presented in the novel. Rather, the gases and their effects degraded and reverted the human into the animal. With a biting critique on racism, comprador class, and class differences, the novel itself suffers speciesism.

The next novel Sea of Poppies by Amitav Ghosh deals with the compulsory cultivation of opium as a cash crop in Bihar and other parts of the Bengal around Ganga, its transport to Chinese market and the Chinese opium wars dated around 1838. The novel is a story of how colonialism and empire altered the agriculture and environment of its colony India, particularly the Gangetic plains and surrounding areas into a literal sea of poppy-plantations as cash crops to harvest opium and sell

it to the Chinese. The novel also deals with the issues of indentured labor, and how a large part of the indentured labor was forced, and some part was willing labor which was again rendered jobless due to the colonial meddling with the local agriculture and crops of the people. Relevant to this discussion is the control of economy, control of authority, appropriation, dismantling of existing forms of economic production, appropriation of land, means of production, products, dismantling of existing forms of control and authority, and often the coloniality sitting well with existing precolonial unjust systems like the Nawabs and their exploitation of the masses.

The novel, divided into three parts, Land, River and Sea, begins on Land with Deeti and her unfortunate opium addict husband working in "Sadder Opium Factory" for buying opium from the peasants, packaging it and sending it off for further processing. With Deeti's story we come to know of how the British colonialism has turned the agriculture from the cultivation major food crops like wheat, corn etc. to the compulsory cultivation of cash crops like opium which has left them completely dependent on the opium production, and the meager amount of money they receive by selling that opium. This results in great impoverishment of the peasants and already poor farming communities and households, dragging them deep into debts and dependence on the opium crop and selling it. The traditional crops and crop cycles as well as patterns of living and sustenance are irreparably altered and damaged, leaving them dumbfounded and stuck with no way out. The passage vividly presents the coercion of opium cultivation:

In the old days...a few clumps of poppy were enough to provide for a household's needs...but what sane person would want to multiply these labours when there were better, more useful crops to grow, like wheat, dal, vegetables? But those toothsome winter crops were steadily shrinking in acreage: now the factory's appetite for opium seemed never to be sated. Come the cold weather, the English sahibs would allow little else to be planted; their agents would go from home to home, forcing cash advances on the farmers, making them sign asámi contracts. It was impossible to say no to them: if you refused they would leave their silver hidden in your house, or throw it through a window. The Sea of Poppies, 28

We are further told that the judicial apparatus is tilted in favor of the gora sahibs because the judiciary itself is run by them. This clearly leaves no alternative to the farmers other than surrendering to the white sahibs' demands and working to

produce opium. Although they earn commissions from the farming of opium, it proves insufficient since the farmers have to pay the advance outlays to the white sahibs. These physical and economic dependencies are the undesirable repercussions of economic colonization, which leave the farmers at the mercy of the colonizers. Their economic subjugation is carried out just to satiate the gora sahibs' ravings and cravings for the opium trade.

The next part, River, presents Zacharey Reid, a person with mixed parentage, black and white, who is the target of racism on the ship Ibis. It is in this ship that Ghosh gathers all of his major characters and their stories together, and they all sail towards indentured labor, till at the end some of them break free of the ship due to certain circumstances. It is in what happens on the ship that we see the remarkable skill of language appropriation by Ghosh. This Rajah of Raskhali, the local comprador Nawab Neel, serves as an important element in colonialism, opium trade, and ecological destruction, and his complicity with the English officials, especially the owner of Ibis, and trade through Ibis. We are told that "his family's fortunes having long been dependent on the firm founded by Benjamin Burnham" (Ghosh, 2008, p. 38) and the Pilot, Mr. Doughty narrates in detail the luxurious life Neel's father lead, telling Zachary that "the Rascallys call themselves Rogers, but they're just Ryes with an honorary title – bucksheesh for loyalty to the Crown.'" (Page 43). The true source of their wealth, as Doughty tells Zachary, is their loyalty to the British Crown.

Also, note the language, a mixed-up of Hindi/Urdu/Bengali and English, as the Lascars speak, and the pilots of the ship. The word 'bucksheesh' is exemplary of the appropriation of language and the development of a new English or a new Hinglish, which postcolonial literature from India usually presents. It is the skill of Ghosh to bind feminism, romance, colonialism, environmentalism, history, and the life of some specific naval groups like lascars and their particular adaptation of English with Hindi in one. The writers, talking about the need for convergence between ecocriticism and postcolonial studies that an ecological view and concern are vital for explicating the geographic impact of colonialism, just as we see the landscape, agriculture, and geography were changed and impacted by colonialism in the novel. This "ecological frame is vital to understanding how geography has been and still is radically altered by colonialism, including resource use, stewardship, and sovereignty—issues that have been crucial to independence movements and their constitutive literatures" (DeLoughrey & Handley, 2011, p. 24).

Ghosh's novel, in its elaborate plot and appropriated language depicts, what Lazarus elaborates as the "systems and institutions designed to enable and facilitate the consolidation, extension, and reproduction of capitalist production and capitalist class relations" which seriously undermine, destroy and reconfigure the "existing social relations and modes of existence", and in their place "new social relations and modes of existence were brought into being". In the colonization and the opium trade in India, we find that "existing circuits of production, distributions of power, constellations of value and meaning, were disturbed, appropriated, reoriented". We also clearly find that "peasantries were destroyed, along with subsistence, tributary, and market economies… to be replaced by capitalised agriculture in one location, proletarianisation in another, with waves of migratory labour… in between. Ruling elites were made, unmade, and remade, the basis of their power thoroughly transformed" (Lazarus, 2012, p. 38). We cannot agree more to Lazarus and Ghosh on their characterization of how colonialism impacted the local structures of authority, structures of society, the environment, and agricultural practices. The substitution of wheat, dal, and rice, etc., with poppy, and the initial complicity and later incarceration of the local nawab and zamindar Neel Halder, is exactly what Lazarus describes colonialism does in a colony.

Analysis

All accounts and analyses of colonization point to the same "massive appropriation of land and massive exploitation of labor…oriented to produce commodities for a global market" that we find in Ghosh's novel (Hawley & Krishnaswamy, 2008, p. 111). Ibis itself, a former slave ship from the African slave trade, is also very symbolic of colonization and oppression. This time, Ibis is taking indentured labor, which is not better than slavery. Neel Halder and his Zamindari is usurped by the owner of Ibis for being unable to pay the debts, so we see everyone, from the Zamindar to the peasant, in debt and being forced out of their traditional world and roles and positions, and all are bent and molded into the same indentured labor. However, the escape of several of the characters from Ibis and the death of some oppressive characters present a somewhat optimistic picture, although we know that it is not the end, and two more books continue the story further.

Orijit Sen's graphic novel, arguably the first from India, probably set in the 1980s, is a brilliant representation of indigenous environmental movements against neocolonial, capitalist organizations and their complicit local governments referred

generally as environmentalism of the poor (Martinez Alier), with the 'twin demand of social and environmental justice' in a neocolonial India (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015, p. 36). The novel fictionalizes the social movement of Adivasis and tribals with social activists in the Narmada valley of India to stop the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the 1980s. After a strong and long protest, agitation, activism, and hunger strikes, the World Bank, which was funding the project, got out of it. However, the Indian government started its construction in 1999, and the Dam was inaugurated by Narendra Modi's government in 2017. In the fictionalization of this issue, River of Stories vividly sketches the plight and oppression of the tribals and adivasis from times even before the colonization of the subcontinent. The Narmada Bachao Andolan that the novel presents in spearheaded by Medha Patkar in real life, supported by activists like Arundhati Roy, and has now converted from a protest against the construction of the dam to justified rehabilitation, and distribution of relief to the displaced people.

Both the novel and the Andolan of people in the novel is an activism against the "imaginative and physical eviction" of the community for building the 'iconic structures of monumental modernity, megadams that serve to concretize the idea that developing nations are "catching up," as evidenced by spectacular, televisable, soaring feats of world-class engineering" (Nixon, 2013, p. 151). As the novel demonstrates, the people such constructions displace often are "ecosystem people, dependent for their survival on the seasonal cycles of adjoining ecosystems and therefore often living in circumstances of necessarily adaptable mobility. In many instances, their relationship to the land is historically deep but legally informal.

Thus, their imaginative expulsion from narratives of national development is facilitated by the frequent lack of official title deeds to the ecosystems that have sustained them for centuries or, in some cases, millennia" (Ibid, 151-52) The beginning of the graphic novel with references to the creation mythology of those people and the rivers, not only serves to render them sacred, and their degradation and setting up dams on them sacrilege, just like other traditional folk resistance tactics of appealing to the sacred nature of forests, land, rivers etc, but it also serves to show how 'historically deep' and 'centuries or in some cases, millenia' old is their relationship to that land, river, forests and the overall environment and habitat. The absence of 'legally formal' ownership of land is suppressed by the overt portrayal of the mythic, sacred, and millenial deep relationship, rather than a relationship since the beginning of the creation of the world, between those local communities and

their immediate natural environments. Interestingly, the Narmada valley that Sen represents is "the only valley in India, according to archaeologists, that contains an uninterrupted record of human occupation from the Stone Age" (Ibid., 156).

The story begins with our narrator-journalist-activist, Vishnubhai, interviewing Relku, an Adivasi and migrant female worker in the city, about migrant workers. Relku tells us there are many adivasi migrant workers in the town, revealing that many indigenous people have been displaced, ripped off of their traditional ways of life and livelihood, forced to migrate and find menial jobs in the cities. Relku further narrates that she comes from Jamli, a small village near Ballanpur, where she and her likes had fulfilling lives till the government decides that "the very existence of people living in such a primitive way is an obstacle for modernizing the country" and for that matter "no development can happen till the road is made and good communication set up" (Sen, 1994, p. 8). Very soon, the child Relku and we find that 'sarkari people from Ballanpur' warn them against "cultivating land, grazing cattle, taking wood and hunting on forest land which belongs to the sarkar…[which] the government declared…a reserve forest several years ago" (Ibid, 9). Against this official narrative, the villagers respond that "these hills and forests are our home! We were all born here-our ancestors have lived here and after us our children…" (9). The response of the villagers presents the concept of land or nature as a mother, as well as a common resource as they assert that "Sahib, this land is our Mata. She gives us food and shelter. She takes care of our needs. We worship the trees, the river, the hills…." (9). We find the 'wilderness' and 'preservation' model of the West being unwittingly thrust upon the indigenous lands and people by the government, hiding the actual agenda of profit-making by the complicit local governments and elite with the help of neocolonial, capitalist corporations that fund such projects with their own agendas. Thus, forests are felled and a 'big snake' like road is constructed "from whose belly emerged the caravans and motors of traders from the bazar" (12). The snake of modernism, the snake of so-called 'progress' and 'development' as the Rangersaab boasts, is symbolized by the road, causing deforestation, resettling people from their native lands, and a sort of sacrilege of their sacred forest in the name of progress and development.

We find the capitalists, the rich, the 'thekedars', and the complicit government authorities, responsible for all this in the name of 'improvement' of the 'backward' people (14). We come to know in the novel that the dam, which is the major cause of destruction of the natural environment, forest, and the destruction of the land,

culture, life, and displacement of the local population, is funded by international organizations. We are told that "the government is taking international aid to the tune of $600 million for it! It's so gigantic, it boggles the mind!" and that "this dam will generate 1450 megawatts of power, the canals will carry irrigation and drinking water to drought-prone people, benefitting the millions of people en route" (27).

The historical prejudice, oppression and exploitation of the adivasis by the Mughals, the Rajputs, the Marathas, is also expressed and exposed by the novelist, hinting towards the idea that the adivasis might have been the true natives and all others settlers or colonizers, as Vishnu learns that "over the years, they managed to drive the adivasis into the hilly and forested tracts, and settled themselves on the more fertile valleys ad plains... similar to what white settlers did in the Americas and Australia" (35), and that "the same process continued, but the significant thing the British administration did was to introduce the concept of 'reserved forests'.

That created the justification for taking over the forests of the tribals as well..." "and now Indian government, aided by these international banks, is planning to flood some of their last remaining villages out of existence". Anand the activist engineer considers the building of the dam as a part of the historical process of displacement of tribal communities" and that the adivasis have always been putting up resistance against their historical marginalization and oppression.

Here Anand brings Malgu Gayan, the legendary singer, into the conversation, making the singer the voice of the resistance and voice influencing people to join the 'andolan' the association to save the river, the land and the forest, as well as the people, linking traditional mythology to the resistance practices of the dispossessed and to their efforts to spectacularize and gather global support and audience for their local circumstance. The earlier colonizers drove the adivasis to hills and forests, but the British colonizers went a step ahead and created the idea of 'reserved forests', which dispossessed the adivasis of even the forests and left them landless, homeless, working on petty jobs and whatever they could lay their hands on to make ends meet. This colonization destroyed the native culture, civilization, and everything it had been.

The ideas of the sacrilege of earth or land in the name of development to protect it from greed and unrestrained lust for riches and wealth also evoke colonization and its aftermath in the whole world. Thus, the andolan vows that it "shall never allow

the forces of greed and self-interest to wrongfully exploit her wealth [and] oppose all those who, in the name of development, commit crimes against humanity by tearing apart this earth for their short-term gains…." (37).

The novel asserts that rather than shoving people, land, forests, rivers, etc. into the ravaging fire of greed, and materialism in the name of development and progress, we need to rethink and redefine our development models, and look for alternative, peaceful, less materialistic, neocolonial, capitalistic, lustful ways of progress which are production and consumption and more production and more consumption with utter disregard to the repercussions and damage to nature, environment, people, the planet and the future of everyone. The characters, though extremely poor, marginalized, and dispossessed, yet extremely educated and aware in the sense that they understand the agents of their marginalization and advocate a planetary and 'global' view and activism. A female speaker of the Rewa Andolan's protest echoes that they have gathered "not just to stop the building of a dam, but to assert the need in our country and the world for an alternative development model".

She is aware that the "planet is seriously endangered, yet development continues to be based on an economic system which regards all forms of human and natural resources as goods which can be… bought and sold by anyone who can pay the price". This model, she argues "seeks to continually transfer natural resources from the poor to the rich, thus widening the gap between them, instead of narrowing it down" (39). Basing their activism on Gandhian philosophy of non-violence and stringent living, the speaker continues that "to be ecologically sustainable, we must ensure an equal and fair share of resources for everybody" (39). In another scene at night, where Vishnu and a group of adivasis gathered around a fire to discuss what the female speaker said and what their protest and movement was all about, they express the idea that their indigenous knowledge is better than what the government has been doing, claiming that their indigenous ways of irrigation and water management were better than the government's way of creating dams and destroying them in the process.

They express that all that money that would go into building the dam infrastructure could have been utilized for the true development of the adivasis by providing them facilities of education, health, medicine, tree planting, water harvesting etc. and "that would truly have been development, because it would have meant a flow of resources and knowledge back to the people from whom it has always been taken

away" (40). But they know that in the current situation, it is almost impossible because "then no contractor would stand to make huge profits, no corrupt politician would manage to line his pockets!" (40). Thus, they know what 'progress' and 'development' mean in their current situation and how they could have been planned.

Another influential novel from Ghosh's oeuvre, The Hungry Tide, also presents colonialism, neocolonialism, and environment, and includes themes like indigenous knowledge, biopiracy, and environmentalism of the poor. From the very outset, we come to know of the colonial history of the islands in the Sundarbans. The very island Lusibari and several others, named Annpur, Jamespur, and Emilybari all were bought and populated by a Scottish colonialist named Sir Daniel Hamilton for his 'dream' and 'experiment'. With Piya's research efforts and her encounters with the government officials, we come to know how the Indian government goes about the wildlife and nature the country possesses. The government's complete disregard towards the environment in general and of the Sundarbans and the people who lived there in particular, as well as the government's complicity in neocolonial, capitalist forces and organizations are exhibited by the conservationist environmentalism, for the loans and funds received by the government from those organizations, and the mass murder and violence on people, mostly Dalits, taking refuge in the Morichjhapi island. The event, debated by Piya and Kanai, exemplifies the plight of developing nations in choosing between 'conservation', 'development', and caring for the indigenous people.

Other issues that present a convergence of colonialism and piracy of indigenous environmental knowledge are Piya's dependence on Fokir and other local fishermen's knowledge of the presence and movement of the orcaella dolphins. Piya, like cultural naturalists, seems to be translating the oral knowledge into new forms of knowledge, exemplified by how the local knowledge of Fokir is noted in her electronic tablet connected with satellite, the trajectory taken by Fokir's boat recorded as a map, "something that was modern, scientific, highly technical, addressed to an educated elite and disseminated in books" (Cooke & Denney, 2021, p. 113).

This bears great affinity to how colonial translations of the nature of colonies were practiced. However, although in colonial times "evidence of the role that Indigenous people played in the production of these texts was progressively removed", we see

Piya acknowledging local knowledge by setting up a research institute named after Fokir. "Colonial natural history books played a major role in promoting this 'great silence" (Ibid, 114). Piya's act is definitely an act to break this 'great silence' and the 'cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale' that Allan Bewell notes. Still, the indigenous knowledge of Fokir becomes knowledge and acknowledged only when documented in the form of a recorded trajectory on Piya's tablet by the satellite.

Conclusion

To conclude, colonialism and its current form of neocolonialism, as presented by various novels I discussed, have always been pivoted on policies and actions that were based on the extraction of resources from the colonies, and in those extractive practices, colonialism severely damaged as well as altered the face of land, air, water, flora and fauna. Coupled with the industrial revolution, 'discovery' of new worlds, slavery, plantations, transatlantic slave trade, mining of minerals, oil, and other resources, all kinds of oceanic trade and killing of animals, offloading of industrial risks by transferring industries to the 'third world', piracy of indigenous knowledge and wisdom, baptizing the world with colonial classification and naming, are some of the issues arising out of the convergence of colonialism and environment. Several of these issues are presented in the novels I have discussed above, which fix all kinds of environmental destruction and colonialism as phenomena irrevocably linked together.

The novels, through their peculiar use of language, narrative structure, and form, highlight the thematic elements so as to register them more poignantly and effectively. Animal's People's picaresque with Animal's oral narration and different point of view, its magic realistic elements as well as spectacularization of the uncanny, slow violence; Sea of Poppies' skillful exposition of colonial exploitation with an intricate plot reminiscing the Middle Passage in the slave ship's new life, with the appropriated, new variety of English; Orijit Sen's masterly use of the graphic form to represent the neoimperial, corporate world and its destruction of the environment, forest, and Adivasis, and its advocacy for alternative models of development based on indigenous knowledge; and The Hungry Tide's decentering the human in the intricate depiction of the Sundarbans, highlighting the agency of nature and piracy of colonialism; all present an intricate intertwining of the texts' structure and linguistic elements to foreground their thematic concerns.

The conclusions we draw from the texts could be extended to challenge the idea of 'Anthropocene' that charges all human beings with the burden of altering the fate of the planet. Presenting how it is actually the colonizer and his profit-making policies, with a disregard to all 'others', be them the sub-human others or the non-human others, that set the planet on a course of unprecedented climate crisis; and in its current phase of neoliberal, neocolonial, capitalist form that the same destruction is carried out on the underdeveloped and developing world.

We do not see the global north contributing in any effective way to the destruction of the environment and nature, thus making the generalization of 'Anthropocene' yet another Eurocentric idea, hiding the destructive impact the 'developed' world has caused, thrust upon the whole world. In short, colonialism turns out as a malicious nexus of racism, speciesism, and anthropocentrism that not only wreaked havoc in the past but continues to corrode the present and future of the colonies and the whole world in the form of neocolonialism, as well as the slow violence of global warming and global climate change. The novels I discussed not only represent this nexus but are also sensitive towards the mainstream environmentalism of the 'developed' world, and the generalization it proposes in the form of the concept of 'Anthropocene'.

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