Chapter - III

Environmental Justice Activism: Disparity in Displacement amidst Disproportionate Impact of Climate Change in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

The genre of creative fiction on climate change or climate fiction has ranged from divergent themes of utopian and dystopian fiction delving into apocalyptic endings and utopian imaginaries. The narrative and thematic approach to the catastrophe differs into utopian and declensionist story lines depending on the themes addressed. Though the creative venture of producing literature has been from out springs of collective changes and experiences, climate change in Indian fiction has not been a topic effectively dealt with. Like Rob Nixon in *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor* raises the question of "How can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention, these emergencies whose repercussions have given rise to some of the most critical challenges of our time?" (Nixon 3), Amitav Ghosh has pioneered in providing a creative reply that addresses the impact of climate change in the present with focus on the Indian scenario.

Amitav Ghosh has been one of the pioneering voices of Indian literature, who has channelized the climatic alarm by merging both the research outputs and the literary perspectives on the crisis into his range of novels. Only very few works of art dive into the profound reality of climate change, which as Ghosh puts forth, is like a nutmeg, multi-layered, interconnected and has the power to change the course of all the life-forms of the planet.

Ghosh is often identified as an author who has borne the responsibility of being a writer from the Global South, a climate hotspot, a former colony that is yet to decolonise

itself from certain aspects of life, and also from a place that has been unfairly victimised and marginalised by the brunt of the planetary crisis with no redeemable ways of sustenance or rehabilitation. He connects the issue of climate change with its inseparable counterparts of capitalism, neo colonialism, xenophobia, and globalisation with linkages that extend from the past to the future of humankind. Climate fiction though mostly framed in the declensionist set up, attempts to coerce the reality of the end of the world. The aim of the literature is to ensure that its consumption leads to climatic action. The climatic conflicts in such dystopian narratives are "those framed primarily as predictions or warnings—generally revolve around pulling "us" back from the brink or keeping the worst damage at bay" (Gibson 210). *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, Gun Island, Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis, The Living Mountain,* and so on are some of his works that describe in detail the origins, manifestations and consequences of climate change and in specific, how it affects the third world countries.

The purpose of the climate fiction writers is to warrant intervention, and to disperse climatic awareness with the hope of collective action and conservation. They "are enraged by injustices they wish to see redressed, injustices they believe they can help expose, silences they can help dismantle through testimonial protest, rhetorical inventiveness, and counterhistories in the face of formidable odds" (Nixon 6). Ghosh through his works voices out the struggles of the people living in the margins of power but are in the centre of climatic disasters in India. Ghosh explores this reversal of "the temporal order of modernity: those on the margins are now the first to experience the future that awaits all of us; it is they who confront most directly what Thoreau called 'vast, Titanic, inhuman nature'" (Ghosh 84).

He deconstructs the rising climatic conflicts to analyse the role of colonialism, globalisation and other intersectional practices in leading to the crisis as well as in preventing free and just interventions. His depiction of the Anthropocene is non-anthropocentric, species inclusive, non-discriminatory and his argument arises from a thorough comprehension of the unfolding global catastrophe that tilts the scales of time, place and intensity. His depiction of migration trajectories includes both the human and the nonhuman inhabitants and most of his works, bring to light the agency of the more than human: ecology, components of the environment and its inhabitants. Nature does not serve as a mere backdrop to human action in his novels instead the more than human: the seen and even the unseen come to life, and contribute to the course of the plot. Ghosh's literary productions have served as living testaments of his own belief put forth in *Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* that the planet will come alive only when stories "give life to all the beings, seen and unseen, that inhabit a living Earth – Gaia" (Ghosh 84).

This chapter aims to explore the literary construct of Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* and how it accommodates the planetary crisis and brings to light the systemic racism and marginalisation that are intensified due to the same. The chapter directs the voice of Ghosh, as the mouthpiece for climate activism and climate justice for the people of the climate hotspots. His comprehension of the Anthropocene and its role in producing and reproducing existing forms of racism; marginalisation and other ways of duplicating vulnerabilities will be discussed. In the novel, the crisis of climate justice and displacement "takes on a coloring that sets it apart from "justice" in general; and "climate migration" takes on a hue that makes it seem different from other, more familiar forms of displacement. It becomes tempting to imagine that this new era is suffused with phenomena that are waiting to be identified as unprecedented and utterly novel" (Ghosh 153).

"Stories we tell about the end of the world: (Post) Apocalyptic Climate Fiction Working Towards Climate Justice" by Gibson analyses the role of climate fiction and how it functions as a mirror in reflecting the climatic crisis. The work proceeds to elaborate on the purpose of such literature to not only mirror but also to "imaginatively mirror" and "(re)imaginative mirror" (221-222) reality. Such imagination transcends the page or the screen with the intention of dislodging the mind. The author mirrors as well as explores other creative or anthropogenic imaginaries in works of fiction. Such depictions often feature the author's intention "for the fictional world and the "real" world to clash in certain ways in order to get at nonfictional elements that cannot be approached straight on" (221-222). Ghosh's *Gun Island* can be viewed as a coalition of the processes of mirroring as well as (re)imaginative mirroring as there is an intertwined web of myths, visions, predictions, spectacles, metaphysical elements as well as refugee crisis, mobility, migration trajectories, climate change manifestations and so on.

The careful juxtaposition of the real and the imaginative, tangible and the intangible, and conceptual and substantial sequencing of events in the plot shape the magnitude of the global crisis and how it must be perceived as a whole in a planetary scale and not as parts in national or regional scales. Ghosh explores the phenomena of "biopossibility" (Baldwin and Bettini 223) in the novel as he "opens a space for thinking nature culturally not only about friendship, community and/or our coevolution with nonhuman animals but also about human relationships to "things"—both abstract and material" (qtd in Baldwin and Bettini 223). The human and the more than human community are expressed with agency and the power to determine their movement and responses through the phenomena of 'biopossibility'.

*Gun Island'*s pivotal focus lies in the region of the Sundarbans, the world's largest delta formed "from the sediments brought down by three great rivers, the Ganges,

Brahmaputra and Meghna" (Sen 5). In *The Politics of Climate Change and Uncertainty in India*, the section titled "'Sundarbans' migratory rivers and mobile people" brings to light the constantly moving deltaic terrain that often witnesses yearly floods and deluge as it "overlaps both Bangladesh and India, has a unique ecology that is hedged in by mangroves, littered with mudflats and cut into innumerable islands by streams and channels" (66). The Sundarbans being embedded in water bodies, waterbeds, flooding, cyclones, and other disastrous consequences makes the eco-region vulnerable. This often leads to the region spiralling towards doom as its recurring flooding coupled with anthropogenic submergence leads to disappearance and displacement of life forms.

The Sundarbans has been a deposit of rich history, commerce, wildlife, and rightly described by Ghosh as a region, "where the war between profit and Nature is fought" (Sen 8). *The Sundarbans: A Disaster Prone Eco- Region* traces how the islands have transitioned from being a rich deposit of resources into a prey of anthropocentric and capitalist ventures. The land is said to have offered a deluge of ecological services and resources for the welfare of the community "But unbridled and naive anthropogenic avarice is taking a heavy toll of the Sundarbans' resources in both the countries ripping people of the region off their precious livelihoods" (5).

The Sundarbans, the heart of the novel is situated in a moment of transition from the Holocene to the Anthropocene, on the verge of passively unbecoming in the Holocene to actively becoming the changes it wants to reckon in the Anthropocene, and is in the cusp of life and death. Ghosh chooses the slowly eroding land of the Sundarbans as a testament of the diffusing chances of life and the erosions of justice for its life forms, as "the islands of the Sundarbans are constantly being swallowed up by the sea; they're disappearing before our eyes" (18). The disappearance has several parallel undercurrents of vanishing human and more than human communities. The place is as unique and as

diverse, which serves as the perfect interlocutor to Venice, Los Angeles, and a few places of Europe which are featured in the novel.

The novel sketches the plight of the inhabitants of the Sundarbans who are unfairly victimised: firstly, by the process of displacement without movement as the region has transformed beyond measure making it uninhabitable and lately by the process of displacement as life forms have now become refugees. The former kind of displacement was proposed by Nixon in *Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor*, wherein he delved into a notion of displacement without physical movement, wherein the environment is completely altered to the extent of turning the region uninhabitable. He attaches significance "to the movement of people from their places of belonging, refers rather to the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable" (Nixon 19). This radical notion of considering displacement without physical movement as a tangible loss holds relevance in comprehending the loss of lives of the people of the Sundarbans. The novel outlines the tragedy wrecked in the lives of the inhabitants as Moyna says how it was "as though both land and water were turning against those who lived in the Sundarbans" (49).

Jonathan Bate "suggested that ecocriticism's most valuable aim is 'to make claims for the historical continuity of a tradition of environmental consciousness'" (qtd in Maughan 25). Ghosh attempts to enable this aspect of environmental consciousness in his approach to the deltaic region as he has given the historical accounts of the events of displacement, cyclones and other disastrous consequences. Such sequencing of events from the past with the present enables the readers to comprehend the near future of the fast paced transformation of the Sundarbans. The novel traces the movement and displacement of the ancestors of the Sundarbans as Ghosh mentions in many of his works that his

ancestors were originally refugees from the Sundarbans and juxtaposes it with the current migratory crisis.

Ghosh's *Gun Island* presents a realistic portrayal of the climatic shifts and anthropogenic crisis ranging from the Sundarbans to Venice, Los Angeles and so on. It traces the illegal and unsafe migratory pathways taken up by the human and nonhuman climate refugees to escape the impacts of climate change. The human refugees are persecuted due to climate racism, xenophobia and other forms of discrimination whereas the nonhuman refugees are persecuted due to destructive human action that threatens their survival. The novel weaves the legend of the gun merchant through which the contemporary reality of the climate crisis is interwoven to call for climate justice that is inclusive of all species and all communities.

The novel undertakes an exploration of two parallel realities: of the past through the displacement of the Gun Merchant, and the present through the displacement of migrants from the Sundarbans and other developing countries. The myth of the Banduki Sadagar has historical significance as the legend can be traced back to the Little Ice Age, and by bringing the legend to life in the present, Ghosh tries to depict the transition from the Little Ice Age to the Anthropocene or the age of the great derangement by emphasising on the role of humankind as Chakrabarty puts forth, the "Earth's alleged graduation from the Holocene to the Anthropocene is therefore a statement that humankind has become a powerful force in Earth evolution" (Gibson 157). The two realities run parallel to each other with intertwined semblances and glaring contrasts to depict the gruesome impacts of climate cataclysms and to propel humans to undertake collective action. The parallel timescales of climatic fluctuations are overshadowed by the legend of the Manasa Devi, which unlike the tale of the gun merchant remains unchanged and timeless even in the present period. Manasa Devi functions as a regulator of the climatic irregularities, shift in

timescales and intensities and assumes the role of the communicator of the multispecies communities. *Gun Island* is a depiction of the manifestations of the Anthropocene in the Global South and it does not "overwhelmingly represent, center, and cater to white, male, and/or environmentally privileged perspectives" (209). It deconstructs the privileged perspectives in climate scenario in terms of mobility, economic situations and political intrusion.

The transition of the world from the Holocene to the Anthropocene has been one of the greatest challenges to be countered by humankind as the environment is ridden with disasters. Dipesh Chakrabarty in *The Climate of history in a Planetary Age* opens up an intellectual perception about the vivid distinction of the 'global' and the 'planetary', where the latter he believes decentres the human and reflects the crux of the magnitude of global warming. The disastrous consequences of climate change surpass national and global divisions by becoming planetary: "ours is not just a global age; we live on the cusp of the global and what may be called the "planetary"" (2). He also stimulates an investigation of how the present age can be interpreted as a period of "historical processes that bring together the globe and the planet both as projected entities and as theoretical categories and thus mix the limited timescale over which modern humans and humanist historians contemplate history with the inhumanly vast timescales of deep history" (4). The works by Ghosh address this inquiry in detail as the narratives accommodate the unpredictability of the emergency and its potential to tilt the geographic, anthropocentric, and ecological scales of impact.

The Anthropogenic crisis depicted in the novel is not presented in isolation but is closely intertwined to various timescales, dimensions, species and places. Ghosh labels the Anthropocene as the Age of the great derangement as he recognises that "we are now in an era that will be defined precisely by events that appear, by our current standards of

normality, highly improbable: flash floods, hundred-year storms, persistent droughts, spells of unprecedented heat, sudden landslides, raging torrents pouring down from breached glacial lakes, and yes, freakish tornadoes" (Ghosh 32). Such unpredictable consequences of the anthropogenic crisis amplify the process of victimisation of all inhabitants of the planet. It has been causing a wide range of displacement as the places of residence have been turned uninhabitable, thereby meddling with the migration trajectories and ways of life of plant, animal and human species. Timothy Morton in *Hyperobjects* equates the impact of global warming with "phonological asynchrony" (67), wherein the life events of plants and animals have gone out of sync. The global crisis reiterates the role of the humans as the geological force responsible for the climatic shift, rightly termed the 'Anthropocene' and calls for just intervention to counter the same.

River of Gods by Ian McDonald can be considered a futuristic depiction of the prolonged ecological ravages portrayed in *Gun Island*. It presents a futuristic India of 2047 that is intensely affected by the consequences of climate change. It depicts a world that is an indication of the cascading implications of a "capitalist anthropocene" (Braun and Nelson 253) that "is replete with assumptions about Homo sapiens as agent of catastrophe and source of salvation" (253). It is among the very few novels that focus on portraying the Indian subcontinent as a transforming climate hotspot. The novel revolves around the brooding threat of war caused due to droughts and water shortage as the River Ganges is drying up. The novel can be analysed as a successor of the climatic catastrophe portrayed in *Gun Island*, which in the absence of proper climatic action will push India towards a violent and chaotic climate future in 2047. Ghosh unlike most climate fiction novelists tries to narrow down his focus on the present scenario, ridden with climatic conflicts and irregularities rather than viewing climate change as an issue that needs to be tackled in the distant future.

Ghosh's depiction of the climatic hostility and conflicts replicates Nixon's concept of "slow violence" and how he describes it as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Nixon 2).The novel registers such recounting of climatic events that is disproportionate and unjust in its victimisation. Nixon in his critical work also addresses the marginalisation and exclusion of the vulnerable communities from decisions that determine their survival. Though the poor are the majority in number, they are persecuted twofold: with "invisibility and amnesia" (Nixon 65). They remain on the margins of official memory and records as it favours the elite's preference of their welfare over others'. Nixon believes that this marginality is perpetuated by what Davis terms the "dialectic of ordinary disaster", "whereby a calamity is incorporated into history and rendered forgettable and ordinary precisely because the burden of risk falls unequally on the unsheltered poor" (Nixon 65). Kevin Bales has called such marginalised people as "disposable people" (Bales 14) as they are treated as cargo and are denied human rights.

The people of the Sundarbans, "the principal casualties of slow violence" (Ghosh 4) fall under the radar of oppression as no aid has been extended to the region that is witnessing the forging array of climatic disturbances. The ill treatment witnessed by the climate victims of the Sundarbans is a result of not only recent political, economic, and ecological events but is rather out spurts of "the wider histories of imperialism and capitalism that have shaped the world" (13). Ghosh has been focussing on the exploration of the Indian terrain and in specific the region of the Sundarbans in the novel partly because of his heritage and mostly because of the anomaly of issues that need to be addressed to conserve its inhabitants.

Unlike the mainstream climate literature, Ghosh's understanding of the casualties of slow violence is inclusive to accommodate Judith Butler's definition of "devalued and ungrievable lives" (Bladow and Ladino 214), which includes "both those of plant and animal bodies lost to extinction as well as racialized human lives like those who are losing their homes in the Pacific Islands, those who have experienced climate-intensified storms like Hurricane Katrina, and those who will most likely be forced to flee their homes in the Ganges River delta" (214). She challenges the logic of determination of ecological grief and the choice of how the disappearance of certain species is neglected while some are not. Her idea of climate justice arises from the foundation of this disproportionality as climate change has "become a crisis borne overwhelmingly by the poor and nonhuman, while the privileged – those considered most fully "human" – protect themselves at the expense of abandoning the rest" (Bladow and Ladino 214). The people of the Global South stand in the frontline to such abandonment as the Global North refuses to aid, shelter or rectify the damage it has caused to the shared lands, the result of which is unfairly borne by the people of the developing nations.

Dipesh Chakrabarty in *Climate of History of a Planetary Age* advocates for just treatment of people from the Global South and other marginalised communities who are victims of unwarranted consequences. He places his argument for climate justice that is species inclusive, equitable, and plausible. He elaborates on the age of the Anthropocene and how radically altered it is from the past. He quotes Braudel and Stalin, who viewed the environment as a mere backdrop to human actions and viewed it as timeless. But now, the Anthropocene has brought out the plausibility of "a tipping point at which these slow and apparently timeless backdrop for human actions transforms itself with a speed that can only spell disaster for human beings" (29). The momentum of the climatic episodes calls for accountability of the first world nations for the ravages caused, and to ease the burden

borne unjustly by the residents of climate hotspots. The notion of climate justice has been deployed by climate vulnerable states as a way

> of holding affluent countries accountable for the impacts of their historic and current greenhouse emissions. From the colonial era to the present, the Global North achieved economic prosperity by exploiting the resources of the Global South and by emitting prodigious amounts of greenhouse gases…While the North reaped the economic benefits of a consumption-driven, fossil fuel-based economic development model, the consequences are being borne disproportionately by Southern states and poor and racialized communities in both the North and the South who reside in vulnerable geographic locations and lack the resources for climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and disaster response. (Gonzalez 119)

The issue of climate injustice arises from the distributive injustice in terms of victimisation and persecution. *The New Threats to Human Security 2022 special report* takes into account the issues in the forefront of humankind that need to be addressed with immediate action in order to promote survival and sustenance. It analyses the threat of climate change as one of the major issues that need to be tackled as it aggravates the already existing inequalities as rightly voiced by Mehnert, "climate change is likely to aggravate environmental injustices experienced by minority communities or by marginalized individuals within nation-state boundaries, and thus intensifies rather than simply adding to structural inequalities" (Mehnert 186). The major issue that climate change creates geographically is in the formation of climate hotspots and climate refugees. As the *Routledge Handbook of Climate Justice* registers: "The face of this climate injustice have often been those who are in the frontline of climate-related impacts- the poorest and most marginalised in both the Global North and the Global South, who

frequently lack access to the economic, social and political structures necessary to ensure that their views are recognised, their interests represented and their needs addressed" (Jafry 2). To discount such neglect, prevent discard of agency and mobility, and to ensure that justice is inclusive, free and non-discriminatory are the major tenets of climate justice in a world moving towards destruction.

The transformation of regions into climate hotspots is biased and discriminatory as the countries that have led to the tipping of the scales of global warming are left scot free whereas the countries that have not contributed to the crisis are placed in the frontline. The report also brings out the "glaring inequalities in contributions to planetary pressures – now and historically – and in power between those over extracting and those bearing the consequences" (UNDP 14).

The Global North has been hoarding power and resources by embarking on development trajectories by depositing the residues on the Global South, which have manifested the ramifications of global warming. Harnett in "Climate Imperialism: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism, and Global Climate Change" identifies that "the rise of indigenous resistance to the global climate crisis and the fact that climate change and imperialism are inextricably linked demonstrate that the only way to provide a stable, lasting solution is through anti-colonial climate studies" (151). The global crisis has unbreakable ties with the colonialism and the institutions that duplicate its dominance even to the present day. The transformation of climate hotspot is not only determined by the factors of the present but also due to historical continuities of power irregularities like colonialism, militant dominance, and other institutions and power hierarchies. The transition of a place from a climatically secure region to a climate hotspot is enabled due to the power gap between the Global North and the Global South, the latter being in the receiving end of "environmental hazards through its profligate emission of greenhouse

gases. It impoverished the South and created the social and economic conditions for mass displacement through genocide, slavery, colonialism, and a variety of post-World War II military, political, and economic interventions" (Gonzalez 122-123). Despite the contribution of the Global North, "the South" is perceived as "an object of charity rather than a victim of injustice" (122-123).

Most of the countries of the Global South were former colonies and are yet to be decolonised from certain aspects of functioning. The impact of colonial power dynamics in the past intrudes the present day especially with respect to migration and climate change. The colonial administration of the past had ruled on the basis of sectioning people and dividing them into levels of material value. The hierarchies exist even in the present and assign the borders the power to determine the survival of the climate refugees. Gonzalez in "Climate Change, Race and Migration" brings to light the abyssal line that operates on a global scale between centers and peripheries, divides the North and the South, and also operates within nations. He talks about how people from the Global South and other marginalised communities are discriminated in the Global North and also how westernized elites of the Global South indulge in internal racism by further discriminating marginalised people from their own region.The question of climate justice hence transgresses the particular or any other form of subjectivity by becoming more collective, interlinked and its impact felt through the contours of the political domain.The regulation placed on migration has its practices reproduced from the colonial period, wherein the mobility of white people was not restricted but the non-whites were. As most climate hotspots are situated in the continents of non-white majority population, the stringent migration policies tend to reproduce similar form of colonial racism and oppression. Such vigilant migration policies are considered to be "among the most consistently racialized practices of most contemporary states" (qtd in Gonzalez 114).

Gonzalez scrutinizes such aspects of coloniality and neo coloniality that continue to shape the irregularities and uncertainties that surround the issue of climate injustice as colonial "hierarchies persist long after the departure of the colonial administration and continue to structure economic and social relations." (113) Such dynamics of power "encompasses interlocking systems of oppression, including those that privilege core (North) over periphery (South), men over women, Christians over non-Christians, Europeans over non-Europeans, heterosexuals over homosexuals, and Western knowledge over non-Western knowledge." (113)

The burden cannot be shouldered by the least developed and developing nations as they are not prepared to deal with the magnitude of the crisis economically, politically or with respect to other resources.Wallace Wells explores the inequities borne by the Global South, "the impacts will be greatest in the world's least developed, most impoverished, and therefore least resilient nations—almost literally a story of the world's rich drowning the world's poor with their waste" (Wells). Climate hotspots are majorly situated in the Global South wherein the impacts of slow onset and sudden onset events victimise the people who lack the necessary resources, power and aid to overcome it. India is turning into a climate hotspot as the "majority of India's population remains dependent on climate-sensitive livelihoods such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry and allied activities. Besides, widespread poverty and growing social, economic and political inequalities in both rural and urban areas adversely affect adaptive capacities of local populations" (Mehta 4).

Climate change ramifications and disasters have been biased in offering no means of rescue to the marginalised communities. For instance, the post-Katrina disaster and devastation "weighed more heavily upon racial minorities and the poor" (Robinson). Mary Robinson in the chapter "The Accidental Activist" talks about how climatic disasters and

the impact of climatic changes are most likely to intensify or reiterate the past racist tendencies and oppression. During, Hurricane Katrina, the dwelling of African Americans in New Orleans were affected the most as the patterns of residential segregation during the time of the civil war has its impact even in the present day as lower income residents live near the waterfronts prone to flooding and other disastrous consequences. Likewise, "Islanders in the Sundarbans region have had to contend with shocks such as cyclones and floods, and variations in deltaic ecology as well as socioeconomic marginalisation since the first settlements were established" (Mehta et al. 109).

The Sundarabans is one of the major climate hotspots in India and the people are doubly victimised both by the climatic disasters as well as by the country as they are among "those with less power and opportunity to shape policy and decision making. And the lack of agency diminishes the prospects of breaking this vicious cycle through deliberation and collective action" (UNDP 46). Ghosh brings to the centre the neglected agency and voice of the inhabitants of the Sundarbans.

Ghosh in *Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* has equated the climate hotspots with "sacrifice zones", "where the inhabitants were forced, as their ancestors had been, to deal with massively disrupted environments" (Ghosh 69). Climate change and "the accelerating impacts of global warming have begun to threaten the very existence of low-lying areas like the Sundarbans" (8). The Sundarbans can thus be called a sacrifice zone as the inhabitants of the Sundarbans, the ancestors as well as the present generation are victimised by the ecological devastation. The aftermath of cyclone has discounted any trace of resilience in the community as Lubna says about the consequences of the cyclone: "Everything's gone now; the house, the people – the water's taken it all" (13) and scope for rehabilitation is scarce. The ancestors fled the Sundarbans as climate refugees due to cyclones and the present generation, due to climate induced disasters like the Bhola

cyclone, which in terms of casualties "was the greatest natural disaster of the twentieth century" (13) and the Alia cyclone were victimised and turned refugees. The Alia cyclone's aftermath led to permanent displacement of residents of the Sundarbans and caused a major shift in their ways of life. *Gun Island* takes into account the impact of cyclone Alia and the evacuation which had profound effects on the residents: "Communities had been destroyed and families dispersed; the young had drifted to cities, swelling already-swollen slums; among the elderly many had given up trying to eke out a living and had taken to begging on the streets." (48-49)

Mobility is the only way of escape offered to the residents of the Sundarbans and it is "currently experiencing permanent out-migration as well as seasonal out-migration." (Mehta et al. 125) Better education, globalisation and opportunities act as pull factors of migration whereas climate related disasters and poverty function as push factors. One of the residents of the Sundarbans expresses agony by saying "It has now become a land of fury, cyclones, floods, no facilities. I do not want my daughter to be here anymore" (qtd in 125).

The residents of climate hotspots like the Sundarbans are stuck in a negative feedback loop of slow onset and sudden onset events that have made their residence "the end of living and the beginning of survival?" (Ghosh 71). Bruce Holsinger in *The Displacements* resonates the same narrowing down of human existence into a beastly existence: "Shelter, food, safety. Right now she cares more about finding a secure place for her children to sleep than whether Brantley is safe, or even alive. The animal realization chills her" (Holsinger). The people of the Sundarbans were forced towards a similar mind set as the deltaic region no longer promoted necessary standards of living which led them "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 49)

As in most cases of flight from the place of residence, youth found the means to emigrate even through illegal means but the women and the older generation were left behind. Tipu and Rafi, the young boys of the Sundarbans embarked on unsafe journeys and sought illegal ways of emigrating, whereas women like Moyna were left behind. This brings to light the factor of mobility, which can be equated with agency as it dictates the refugees' demand for better quality of life that is restricted to women and the older generation. But the youth risked their lives for not only survival but also for a country that has the resources to provide them the life of their dreams.

Vandhana Shiva in *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* brings out an in-depth analysis of the interconnected patterns of power and oppression within the domains of ecology and gender. She juxtaposes the domination of men over women with the domination of man over nature. Most development programmes have caused both ecological degradation as well as marginalisation of women, as women were excluded "from participation as partners in both science and development" (Shiva xv).Though the same can be traced in third world countries, India has witnessed a difference as women have been predecessors of ecological protection and conservation as in the case of the Chipko movement, Narmada Bachao Andolan and so on. Vandhana Shiva also elaborates on how the ecological struggle of Indian women is "aimed simultaneously at liberating nature from ceaseless exploitation and themselves from limitless marginalisation." (xv) By "creating a feminist ideology that transcends gender and a political practice that is humanly inclusive; they are challenging patriarchy's ideological claim to universalism" and are challenging the conception of violence as power "with the alternative concept of non-violence as power." (xv)

Ghosh in the novel functions as a torch bearer of the same ideology as his narrative representation of the crisis of the Sundarbans is highlighted through the participation of Piya, and the crisis of Venice through the partnership of Cinta. He has stepped out of the trope of man unravelling the mysteries of nature, a stereotypical patriarchal construct by being inclusive of women's agency, women's scientific potential and intellect in comprehending the uncanny ways of climate change. Ghosh has not only included women in the forefront as participants but has also brought to light the reality of unempowered women in the Sundarbans like Moyna, who are left behind by people who have the means to migrate from the submerging lands and are not offered opportunities for sustenance or long term survival.

The residents of the Sundarbans are internally marginalised as well as excluded in the global level. *The Politics of Climate Change and Uncertainty in India* brings to light how vulnerabilities of the local populations are produced by an intersection of the global and the local domains through political, economic and ecological processes. To arrive at a solution, it is advised to go beyond the "schematic of external climatic threats and internal social exposures" (qtd in Mehta 113). The following statement made by a resident in the novel reflects how the people from the Sundarbans were discriminated and degraded by others: "One day a classmate had said to him that only servants and whores came from the Sundarbans" (Ghosh 51). The geographical region's incapability of providing the resources for sustenance of communities, forces the residents to undertake jobs that other people employ as an excuse to generalise and stigmatise the population. In the novel, the characterisations of people from the Sundarbans like Deen, Piya, Tipu, Rafi and Moyna are performed with narrative nuances that the characters through the course of events "develop critical orientations toward the structural and cultural drivers of climate change as well as the institutional schema which distribute its consequences unequally" (Cole 15).

The powerful representation of climate refugees from the Global South and their unravelling of the dynamics of displacement and rehabilitation intensify the need for climate justice and urgency for climate action.

Mary Robinson in the chapter "Migrating with Dignity" in *Climate Justice: A Man-Made Problem With a Feminist Solution,* analyses the situation of the island country of Kribiati and the process of climate induced displacement and the need to make it a painless process. The youth of Kribiati believe in the urgency of migration and as a member reiterates the responsibility of making it a "painless process, even a happy process, for those who choose to go. They will go on merit. We will prepare them." (128) Gonzalez in "Climate Change, Race and Migration", also echoes the idea of migrating with dignity wherein climate vulnerable states and people reject the stigmatizing label of being a climate refugee and are "demanding reconstitution of their states outside the confines of their territories if their lands become uninhabitable due to climate change—a concept known as "ex situ sovereignty" or "deterritorialized nationhood"" (128). The young climate refugees of the Sundarbans also expect the same treatment and aid from the nation, the host countries as well as from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The layering of the crisis of climate injustice is aggravated due to xenophobic tendencies and anti-immigrant policies. Climate refugees from the Global South are not welcomed by the European host countries as they view them as objects of threat. Sonia Shah in the *Next Great Migration: The Beauty and Terror of Life on the Move* traces the process of migration and how the identity of a migrant is framed and repeatedly reconstructed as per the societal institutions. She traces the issue of migration including climatic displacements as well as non-climatic displacements like the Arab Spring and the Syrian war. The notion of viewing climate migrants as objects of threat is explored based

on the political scenario that circumcises it. The rise to power of antimigrant politicians also led to the reinforcement of urgency "and necessity of the antimigrant policies they touted became a political necessity. Like any regime, they and their supporters would have to continuously justify their political stances. Emphasizing the mayhem caused by migrants would be key to that project" (Shah). She further adds on in the section titled 'Panic' about the emptiness of anti-immigrant policies, which lack rationale, and logic that even with "the lightest scratch to their surfaces, they dematerialized into a cloud of smoke." (Shah) Throughout the novel, Ghosh criticises such political practices that exclude a few to prioritise the livelihood of the others.The novelist criticises the xenophobic aspects of political policies especially of the Global North that threaten the survival and livelihood of climate refugees.

The comparison of the climate induced displacement and climatic refugee crisis in *The Displacements* by Bruce Holsinger and Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* is necessary to comprehend how the victimisation of similar ecological devastation varies according to race and privilege. The former work highlights how the racial minorities turned out to be the primary casualties of climate change, displacement and extremism. Holsinger also calls out the misrepresentation of the crisis, wherein the white bodies were placed in the centre of it all, by a thorough exclusion of racial minorities. Such an approach makes the crisis a "catastrophe of whiteness. You want the world to pay attention to your story, you make it all about white people in peril. Works every time" (Holsinger). The greatest disadvantage faced by the refugees of the Sundarbans is the lack of attention and representation which is due to their lack of whiteness and the lack of climate justice in a world that is continuously dominated by the Global North. Ghosh in *The Great Derangement* also resonates the same inequality of representation as "the discourse on global warming remains largely Eurocentric" (118).

Like the climate victim in *Gun Island* says climate justice would be free and accessible "if people knew more about our lives. Perhaps they would learn to see us as ordinary human beings, with the same needs and desires as anyone else'" (Ghosh 162). The lack of such an ecologically inclusive and humanist thought behind the anti-immigrant policies corrupt the chances of survival and pollute the minds of people through racial segregations. The climatic crisis as in Holsinger's depiction has "generated a climate induced diaspora that has reshaped the demographic and cultural contours of the nation in fundamental ways" (Holsinger). Ghosh's exploration of the Indian climatic crisis has identified the ties it has with the global and planetary realms too.

The peripheries of distinction between the Global South and the Global North arise from the colonialist tendencies as well as from 'the polluter pays' argument that forces the Global North to take accountability for their actions and provide refuge to the climate refugees of the Global South. The acts of border crossing through illegal means can be viewed as acts of activism that is framed around the same argument of owning up the mistakes committed as Tipu questions Deen "So I guess you believe in passports and visas and shit like that?" (Ghosh 59). Tipu's approach to a legal document that was important to Deen but to him, "these weren't just pieces of paper or plastic; they possessed a certain kind of sacredness that attached also to the institutions that issued them" (59). But Tipu viewing it as a notion one can choose to believe or discard is a sign of activism against the crisis that they did not create but are forced to deal with, so any way of escape is viewed to be righteous. "The people-moving industry" (60) as he calls it in the novel is led by a group of people with activist and rebellious tendencies where they indulge in border defying mechanisms and illegal measures to immigrate into host countries.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had also reflected the attitude of the Global North in the past as it did not accept climate change as a cause for

displacement or immigration and also refrained from granting climate refugees, the refugee status. Though there is no direct mention of the UNHCR, Tipu makes an indirect attack in the novel as he says that the commission or the host country does not care about starvation, and climate induced disasters but "Politics, religion and sex is what they're looking for – you've gotta have a story of persecution if you want them to listen to you. So that's what I help my clients with; I give them those kinds of stories" (Ghosh 62). Tipu helps the climate refugees of the Sundarbans with the process of immigration and by providing help to gain the refugee status from the UNHCR.

The Global North though aware of its share of contribution to the climatic instability, denies its responsibility by viewing climate refugees as the problem instead of the global crisis that they majorly produced. The figure of the climate refugee has been layered with stigmatising labels that consider them as objects of threat as "the climate-change migrant is imagined to be a figure capable of destabilising a set of values or, indeed, a presumed stable social order, upon which white power and privilege are sustained" (Baldwin 1477). Global North expresses the fear of climate refugees capable of reproducing the climatic crisis of climate hotspots though it was the development pathways undertaken by the developed countries that have contributed to the crisis. So, the issue of climate racism is a matter of colonialist, capitalist and racial hierarchies rather than geographical differences.

The climate refugee is still viewed as a colonial subject or a product of slavery as climate apartheid views climate change as an excuse to reproduce the colonialist tendencies of the past. Bhabha views the colonial subject as "a "partial presence" (Baldwin 1485) by which he means "both incomplete and virtual". In the climate change scenario, the colonial subject is both "resemblance and menace" – an ambiguous figure for which we find a contemporary analogue in the indeterminate, undecidable, and complex

figure of the climate-change migrant" (1485). The host countries are threatened by the intrusion of the climate refugees as they are considered to be a "menace" and are also discarded based on the former status of being the "colonised". For instance, the documentary film *Climate Refugees* (2010) also brings out the structural binary of white and non-white migrants. White people are portrayed with agency, whereas non-white climate migrants are portrayed from the White supremist's viewpoint of being a threat as well a victim (qtd in Baldwin 1479).

The climate change migrant is racialised and is "marked as different, by virtue of its perceived distance from various forms of normalised whiteness" (Baldwin 1478). Andrew Baldwin in the essay titled "Racialisation and the Figure of the Climate-Change Migrant" analyses the racialization of the climate migrant. He deconstructs the process of racialization by juxtaposing the contrasting terms of 'racialisation' and 'racism'.The former refers to a process by which race comes into existence and the latter uses race to justify violence and exclusion. The events of the novel and most climate fiction bring to light the rampant climate racism or apartheid and its impact on the refugees as it multiplies acts of violence and exclusion. In his works, "Ghosh further contextualizes the standoff within the broader political and historical relationship between Europe and the inhabitants of its former colonies" (Cole 13). The climax of the plot occurs in such a binary of Europe and the inhabitants of its former colonies in a blue boat to bring out the colonial continuities that determine their futures.

The Blue Boat incident of the novel is a pivotal point which reflects both the European politics as in Europe "the question of immigration is now the single most important issue in politics and this boat – the Blue Boat, as it is being called – could bring it all to a head." (Ghosh 174), and is also an indication of the Global North and South differences. It is also a reflection of the height of climate racism wherein the blue boat of

climate refugees from the Global South is refused entry into the European nations due to their stringent anti-immigrant policies. Most of the blue boat refugees are Eritreans, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Sudanese, and some Bengalese. The boat is spotted in the eastern Mediterranean and has been seeking entry into Italy. As the interior minister is a right-wing leader who had campaigned anti-immigration platform, has been threatening the activism of the blue boat if it does not leave for its home countries. The minister has been vigilant and stringent as "This was the first refugee boat to head towards Italy in a long time and the minister was determined to stop it – he had even threatened to deploy the navy if necessary" (173). Like Italy's anti-immigrant policy in the novel, most of the countries of the Global North like "the United States, Europe, and Australia are increasingly criminalizing migration and erecting greater barriers to entry, including enhanced sea, air, and land patrols; drone surveillance; and President Trump's infamous border wall." (Gonzalez 122) Due to such military surveillance, thousands of migrants from the Global South like Africa and the Middle East "have perished trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe" or "are frequently locked up in detention facilities, denied legal representation, and required to prove their eligibility for political asylum by documenting their well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin" (122).

The sealing of borders and shutting down entry of climate refugees into host countries is the zenith of nonhumanistic practices as it determines the survival of the communities. The European Union also had "shut down most of the usual migration routes – through Greece, Turkey, Morocco and even Libya. But the traffickers were nothing if not inventive and they always managed to find new launching points. Currently Egypt was their preferred point of departure – the Sinai Peninsula to be exact" (Ghosh 173). The routes and the launching points involved were not safe and have been major places of illegal activities like refugee smuggling, drugs, violence, organ trade, illegal border

crossing and violence. Not only was the blue boat stopped from entry into Italy but also "every other country in the Mediterranean has sent coastguard vessels to make sure that they can't land anywhere else either" (188).

The climate refugees in the blue boat have faced acts of violence, oppression and discrimination throughout their journey of seeking admission into a host country.Though the cause of migration is evident, the blue boat refugees are "made to occupy an indeterminate space of either/or, an anachronistic space at the threshold of known and unknown worlds" (Baldwin 1484). They occupy an indeterminate and vague space of rights, survival, and protection. This places the host country, a former coloniser in a higher position of power which determines if it wants to save them or not, a direct duplication of the colonial past.

Such climate injustice narratives are also called "eco-colonial narratives" "as it "casts the Global North as the savior of the world's downtrodden while ignoring the North's current and historic contribution to poverty and environmental degradation" (Gonzalez 123).This ideology of approaching the Global North as the global savior can be conceived from the colonial master's complex as well as from the white savior complex.The privilege of a white man's burden is passed down to the present and the dominion is cherished by the Global North.This attitude or God complex can be perceived as a metamorphosis of the Noah's Ark event, wherein the Ark is in the possession of the Global North and they dictate the lives that are worthy of rescue.The retelling of the myth is provided in *Life Adrift*, wherein the event is analysed in comparison to the climatic crisis: "When Noah saves humanity and animals from the planetwide deluge, his ark is like an incubator for saving the select few from creation to restart the true civilization once the earth has been destroyed…Obviously, in an age of rising sea levels and populations on the move, the ark phantasm starts to have particular resonance" (Baldwin and Bettini 164).

The European countries or the host countries are marked as an ark that refuses to accommodate people from the Global South and are partial in selecting who gets to live. The blue boat is severely marked for exclusion as Gisa, Deen and Piya witness how the blue boat is greeted with xenophobic slogans and derogatory messages like: "Return to Sender!, No room here; go home, No human is illegal, We are indigenous, the only Owners of this Continent, Climate migration= invasion, Refugees are not your enemies, Immigrants are all God's children, Enough is ENOUGH, Send them back with birth control", "Go back where you came from…! Not needed here…! Europe for Europeans!" (Ghosh 276) and realise how it is a reflection of the right-wing nationalist tendencies. She clarifies that the new right-wing movement rose to power mainly "because they promised to be tough on migration" (146).

The blue boat is used by Ghosh as "a symbol of everything that's going wrong with the world – inequality, climate change, capitalism, corruption, the arms trade, the oil industry. There's a lot of hope that this will be a historic moment. Maybe now, while there's still time to make changes, people will wake up and see what's going on" (199). Ghosh connects various channels of issues to the blue boat like the crisis of the Sundarbans as "Bangladeshis were the second largest group coming into Italy" (146) in the previous month, the plight of climate refugees of the Global South, the dominance of the Global North, climate apartheid deployed, and also criminal under workings as rightly brought to light by Gisa,

> that these rifugiati may have in their possession a huge amount of data on human trafficking. Everybody knows that the traffickers have connections everywhere – not just in the criminal underworld but in the highest places, among the police, and even inside European governments. All these networks could be exposed. It's

> being said that this is the reason why so many governments don't want to accept the Blue Boat. This group of refugees may know too much. (263)

Ghosh in the novel addresses the issue of climate change like most climate critics do: to view it "as a consequence of uneven capitalist development inflected by class, gender, and race and look suspiciously even on the topic of planetary climate change as an attempt to deny the less developed nations the "carbon space" they might need in order to industrialize" (Chakrabarty 4). Ghosh comprehends the reality of the climatic catastrophe and how all its manifestations will be influenced by the dominion of the West. He admits the difficulty of even picturing "the end of the absolute geopolitical dominance of the West. Yet it is precisely this prospect that now looms, adding a further dimension of uncertainty to the planetary crisis" (Ghosh 120). Climate justice can be viewed as a phenomenon that must emerge within such discourses between the west and the non-west, ideologies of power and historical continuities. The following passage from the novel brings out how privilege, colonial past, and race continues to dominate the distribution and accessibility of climate justice and also explains the reason behind the fear of the citizens about the blue boat event:

> This was why those angry young men were so afraid of that little blue fishing boat: through the prism of this vessel they could glimpse the unravelling of a centuries-old project that had conferred vast privilege on them in relation to the rest of the world. In their hearts they knew that their privileges could no longer be assured by the people and institutions they had once trusted to provide for them. (Ghosh 280)

The blue boat of refugees also holds testimonies of discrimination and violence by those in possession of power. Hierarchies in the society are formulated not only for the concept of order but also to promote domination. Gender hierarchies have pushed women to taking up underpaid and even undesirable jobs and in the same way racial hierarchies

"shape the national and international division of labor, consigning those constructed as non-white to the most precarious, dirty, dangerous, and least desirable forms of employment" (Gonzalez 113).This can be traced in the novel as migrants from the Global South work as daily wage labourers in Venice under undesirable conditions because of the prevalent racism.The people from the Sundarbans were internally marginalised in India and in spite of moving abroad are still victimised due to poor working conditions and are excluded. The reproduction of power structures and hierarchies exist not only through the process of displacement but also through the process of settlement. The characters were able to escape the ecological devastation but were not able to escape oppression as it emerges from the colonial discourse that also dictates all exchanges between the Global North and the Global South.This continuity of discriminatory actions lead to the broad spectrum of climatic injustice that has the potential of determining the futures of the displaced: internally and externally. The novel brings out the contradiction of how even in a world that did not obey the anthropocentric conventions, is still dominated by the same: "The world had changed too much, too fast; the systems that were in control now did not obey any human master; they followed their own imperatives, inscrutable as demons" (Ghosh 280).

The prominent difference between *Gun Island* and other works of climate fiction is its portrayal of the more than human world without exclusion, reduction, or discrimination. Ghosh depicts the nonhuman inhabitants with agency and like an environmental critic he presents "nonhuman things as actors in ecosystems, politics, and novels, while maintaining the sense of their categorical hybridity" (Trexler 23). Ghosh assumes the role of an environmental and literary critic in his works of non-fiction on the anthropogenic crisis and in his works of fiction, channelizes his creative response in tune with the expectations of the critic to provide an approach that is not entirely at odds.

The more than human participants are not portrayed as passive objects controlled by men but he frames the characters from the mythological approach emerging from Indian discourses that have prioritised and worshipped the nonhuman inhabitants.The legend of the Manasa Devi itself assigns power to snakes, spiders and other reptiles. Ghosh diverges from the mainstream climate fiction which is Eurocentric as "the absolute distinction between the natural and the human that is so central to Western ways of thinking leaves no room for other-than-human beings to figure as protagonists in history or politics; at best, they can be treated as inert elements in particular ecological settings" (Ghosh 58). In *Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis*, Ghosh indulges in a detailed evaluation of the hierarchies and intersectional practices and their impact in determining the lives of the displaced. He is bewildered by the spectrum of anthropocentric attitudes that have not only led to the climatic crisis but also continue to exert its influence in dismissing the nonhuman inhabitants. He wonders about the rationale behind the idea of how humans have "come to believe that other beings, including the majority of their own species, were incapable of articulation and agency? How were they able to establish the idea that nonhumans are mute, and without minds, as the dominant wisdom of the time?" (Ghosh 201).

Ghosh presents the turmoil undergone by the human and the more than human characters in the novel as he believes that into the hands of writers "falls the task of imaginatively restoring agency and voice to nonhumans. As with all the most important artistic endeavors in human history, this is a task that is at once aesthetic and political – and because of the magnitude of the crisis that besets the planet, it is now freighted with the most pressing moral urgency" (Ghosh 204). His works on climate change: works of fiction as well as nonfiction bring out the responsibility of artists to depict the more than human with the agency and the power that they hold sans anthropomorphism as "the

nonhuman should be able to make itself heard without having to be anthropomorphized or without having to speak the language of humans" (Chakrabarty 48). In the novel, the animals are not anthropomorphised but are depicted true to their characteristics with power and agency.

Ghosh depicts the disproportionate impact of climate change throughout the novel by simultaneously bringing out the uniformity of the crisis that leaves no life unaffected, wherein lies the primary contradiction of the crisis of global warming.The major effect of global warming is considered to be "phonological asynchrony: the way plant and animal life events have gone out of sync. When the time that one entity emits intersects with the time another entity emits, we get an interference pattern…This interference pattern is known as *phasing*. Humans are caught in intersecting phases of time" (Morton 67-68). This can be traced in the novel as there is an overlapping of migration trajectories and phasing that affects the lives of both the human and the animal inhabitants.The asynchrony can be traced throughout the novel through the chaotic migration pathways undertaken by the climate refugees. Like Piya says, "We're in a new world now. No one knows where they belong any more, neither humans nor animals" (97) which causes such phasing and chaotic migratory processes. All the inhabitants of the Sundarbans: human and the nonhuman are victimised by the crisis and have begun embarking on migration routes that are uncanny, and complicated for the sake of survival. In the novel, the need for mobility and displacement is voiced out as an emergency and not as an option:

> But now the fish catch is down, the land's turning salty, and you can't go into the jungle without bribing the forest guards. On top of that every year you get hit by a storm that blows everything to pieces. So what are people supposed to do? What would anyone do? If you're young you can't just sit on your butt till you starve to

> death. Even the animals are moving…If you've got any sense you'll move and to do that you need someone who can help you find a way out. (Morton 60-61)

The issue of climate racism not only applies to the preference of one race's survival over the other but also can be widened to accommodate the prioritising of one species' survival over the other. Climate justice has been largely Eurocentric and anthropocentric as it excludes not only the vulnerable human communities but also the animal inhabitants. As Chakrabarty says, "the planetary environmental crisis calls on us to extend ideas of politics and justice to the nonhuman, including both the living and the nonliving" (13). This has led to critics opting for the usage of the term multispecies justice as it is inclusive and unbiased. The phrase 'multispecies justice' was coined by Donna Haraway and in *The Promise of Multispecies Justice,* the concept is discussed to find answers to questions such as "Who are the subjects of justice in our shared worlds? What is at stake when they are captured by juridical-legal systems and social movements? Who has claimed a monopoly over justice in the past, and in the present, and how might we contest their sense of propriety in the future?" (2) The human systems have enjoyed mastery over all other natural systems as anthropocentric thought has led to the belief that the nonhuman world was created for providing humankind with the resources that would materialise their dreams rather than celebrate coexistence.The expression of the nonhuman to the climatic apocalypse in the novel and in most climate fiction that features the same are termed "uncanny because it marks the end of the idea that the nonhuman world is a God-given space for human mastery populated with Cartesian objects" (Anderson 860). The subversion of this ideology occurs in the novel as Ghosh digresses from Cartesian ideology and into an all-inclusive ecological thought that includes a range of aquatic creatures belonging to the Sundarbans and other reptiles from various regions as well.

The plight of the aquatic climate refugees of the Sundarbans are brought out through the character Piya, a researcher who has also played a major role in the *Hungry Tide*. By extending the role of Piya from another novel based on displacement, Ghosh enables the characterisation with ease as the readers' comprehension opens up to an analysis of both the novels with respect to Piya's role. Piya had focused her research on the patterns of movement of aquatic organisms and the changes they undergo due to pollution, and life threatening activities of the human inhabitants. Her research activity not only provides scientific evidence about the climatic crisis discussed but also weaves gullibility and familiarity in the readers. Her research brings to light the change in lifestyle patterns of the aquatic organisms as reflected in the following passage from the novel:

> During the early years of Piya's research these patterns of movement had been regular and predictable. But then the tracks had begun to vary, becoming increasingly erratic; this was due, Piya believed, to changes in the composition of the waters of the Sundarbans. As sea levels rose, and the flow of fresh water diminished, salt water had begun to intrude deeper upstream, making certain stretches too saline for the dolphins. They had started to avoid some of the waterways they had frequented before; they had also, slowly, begun 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 93)

Piya's interest in exploring the life forms and patterns of existence is due to the diversity of the deltaic region as she calls each of the rivers "a moving forest, populated by an incredible variety of life forms" (Ghosh 95).With the keen eye of a scientist coupled with her empathy towards the aquatic organisms and the struggles they undergo, she puts

forth the magnitude of the strife they go through. She "was able to spot pools, whirlpools, braids, striations and many sorts of ripples" (94) in the river stream which she later identified to be threatening the lives of the dolphins and fishes. She also brings to the forefront the major factor affecting the breeding, migration, and existence of the aquatic life forms: oceanic dead zones. Oceanic dead zones are "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." (95) The oceanic dead zones are the reason behind the fish kills, beaching of the dolphins and the reduction of population as they "have now spread over ten thousands of square miles of ocean – some of them are as large as middle- sized countires" (95).

Ghosh pictures the destruction and corruption of the landscape that forces its nonhuman inhabitants to no longer stay passive but to express themselves through slow onset and sudden onset events. He puts in narrative the expectations of Chakrabarty, of the need to "see the landscape itself as being in movement—often cataclysmic—in deep and historical time: seas rising to submerge land or droughts ravaging them, extractive capitalism producing "dead zones" in the seas and on land, with species habitat getting destroyed, with landscapes no longer constituting merely a background for human action?" (190-191)

Unethical fishing practices have also played a major role in the fish kills and the loss in numbers of the dolphin population.The aquatic organisms are often killed due to lack of unrestricted movement "because we humans are standing in their way" (Chakrabarty 60). Speeding of motorboats has led to consistent loss of lives as even the calf of an endangered dolphin that had survived from a threatening event "was killed in a collision with a motorboat when it was just a few weeks old" (Ghosh 92). Rani and her pod, Piya's research focus groups and the struggles they undergo are described in detail to

bring out the crisis of the nonhuman inhabitants of the Sundarbans. Fishing practices and the usage of nylon nets have also ensnared lives as Rani was "entangled in a length of nylon netting" (92).

The nonhuman inhabitants of the ecology also go through displacement without any movement as they no longer relate to their places of residence. Piya empathetically questions Deen: "wouldn't you be stressed, if you had to abandon all the places that you know and were forced to start all over again?" (Ghosh 97) The dolphins establish their breeding grounds, home, pod and all aspects of life but due to climatic instabilities and anthropogenic activities are forced to emigrate, resettle and build their patterns of life. When Rani felt "perfectly adapted to her environment, perfectly at home in it" (97), such learning became futile as "the places you know best can't sustain you any more and you've got to find new hunting grounds. Rani must have felt that everything she knew, everything she was familiar with- the water, the currents, the earth itself – was rising up against her." (97)

The struggles undergone by Rani and her pod provide a glimpse of the turmoil undergone by the nonhuman inhabitants, who are turning into climatic refugees for no fault of their own. They are also ridden with ecological mourning due to loss of their home, families, and the resources that sustained them.The beaching of dolphins has turned out to be a frequent event in the Sundarbans and it is earlier suspected "that man-made sounds – from submarines and sonar equipment and stuff like that – could be behind the beachings" (Ghosh 99) as dolphins use echo location but Piya explains how the Sundarbans does not have vehicles of such capacity, which only clarifies that climatic change has been the sole reason behind the beaching of dolphins.The novel presents a huge scale of beachings of Irrawaddy dolphins and also predicts how it might even cause extinction of the species if proper action is not taken. Piya explains the urgency of the

situation by saying how the "entire population of Irrawaddy dolphins in the Indian Sundarbans probably did not exceed eighty or ninety individuals: if dozens of them had died, it would mean that the species would not survive in this habitat" (176).

The novel also brings to light the dislocation of species of a particular habitat or region to some other place due to climatic displacement.This bears a close resemblance with the displacement of monarch butterflies due to climate induced shift in migration trajectories in Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behaviour*.The novel takes into account the displacement of yellow bellied snakes that "generally lived in warmer waters, to the south, but sightings in southern California had become increasingly common: their distribution was changing with the warming of the oceans and they were migrating northwards" (Ghosh 134). Ghosh not only focusses on the climate induced displacement of inhabitants of the Sundarbans but sheds light on the crisis of the nonhuman inhabitants of other places too, to depict the global scale of the crisis. He also addresses the migration of spiders to other regions due to the rise in temperature as the species of the "brown recluse spider is extending its range into places where it wasn't found before – like this part of Italy" (214). Such dislocation or forced relocation occurs due to persecuting anthropogenic activities. Cinta explains Deen's question about the reason behind the relocation: "It is here because of our history; because of things human beings have done. It is linked to you already – you have a prior connection with that spider, whether you like it or not" (214).

Ghosh in *Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* raises the question of how the theory of evolution and other ideologies must have given rise to solidarity and unity rather than anthropocentric pride and hierarchies. It challenges 'the Anthropocene' by putting forth Haraway's concept of 'Chthulucene':

> Shouldn't the theory of evolution, and the knowledge that humans are linked to other life-forms by close ties of kinship, have created a sense of familial fellow

> feeling? Shouldn't the discovery that all humans are descended from shared ancestors have created a sense of fraternal solidarity? While this did happen for some, for many others the idea of evolution did exactly the opposite: it reinforced a belief in the absolute exceptionalism and supremacy of one kind of human – White, Western Man. Evolution came to be seen as an inevitable process of elevating this "crowning race" over all other beings, human and nonhuman. (Ghosh 81)

In *Gun Island*, Ghosh dismantles this obsession with the superiority of the human race by splitting the narrative focus to all inhabitants of the ecology. Ghosh's ecological thought arises from Indian culture, myths and religion that have worshipped and placed the animal and plant kingdom in the centre of existence. In his recent work on the same theme, the *Living Mountain:A Fable for Our Times*, Ghosh crumbles the anthropocentric centrality in narratives and agency by using the character as his mouthpiece by questioning "How dare you speak of the Mountain as though you were its masters, and it were your plaything, your child? Have you understood nothing of what it has been trying to teach you? Nothing at all?" (35) He debunks the human centric ideologies and aspects of domination by establishing ecocentric grounds of coexistence and co-dependency.

The inclusiveness and coexistence of multispecies communities is not portrayed through a transaction of resources but through an "urgent proximity of non-human presences" (Ghosh 7) and shared kinship. The aspect of familial ties and kinship between the various species is explored through the myth of the Manasa Devi, who acts as a communicator by bridging the gap between the communities. The Goddess "was in effect a negotiator, a translator – or better still a portavoce – as the Italians say, 'a voice-carrier' between two species that had no language in common and no shared means of

communication. Without her mediation there could be no relationship between animal and human except hatred and aggression." (153)

The Sundarbans can be literally and metaphorically called "the submergence zone" as it "swallows place-based connections to the dead, the dead as living presences who move among past, present, and future, animating time with connective meaning" (Nixon 162). In the legend, Manasa Devi is mighty and is not restricted to territories of geography, time, or ties. Krause calls such an omnipresent depiction of nature as "a politics of 'eco-emancipation' which aims at 'releasing nature and people from unconstrained, exploitative human power' and which proceeds from 'a new kind of political ecosystem understood as the constellation of interconnected human and more-than-human networks'" (Cole 14). The novel upsurges such an ecosystem that is not emancipated by institutions that do not promote just inclusivity.

The novel begins with the exploration of the legend of the gun merchant and how he had earned the wrath of Manasa Devi and had to take uncanny routes of escape to save him from the wrath of the goddess. The mythical tale revolves around the "snake-goddess' attempts to gain recognition from Chand Sadagar, a Brahmin merchant and devotee of Lord Siva" (Som 1). In the novel, Ghosh delves further into the conflict between the goddess and the gun merchant who like Chand "was said to have been a rich trader who had angered Manasa Devi by refusing to become her devotee. Plagued by snakes and pursued by droughts, famines, storms, and other calamities, he had fled overseas to escape the goddess's wrath…" (16). The goddess is furious with him due to his pride, disobedience to her will and pursues to punish him by unleashing her poisonous creatures on him. Through the unfolding of this legend, Ghosh weaves interconnectedness of multispecies communities by overlapping the patterns of existence and migration trajectories of the human and nonhuman climate refugees. The legend of the gun merchant

and the divine workings of Manasa Devi connect the human world and the nonhuman world. The mythical tale of Manasa, "acts as connective tissue in holding the different parts of Dinanath's journey together, allows him to address issues as diverse as climate change, mythology, Venetian history, and animal and human migration" (Som 1). The legend is deciphered slowly as the plot progresses, and with every clue decoded, a climatic event is unravelled, thereby making the relationship of the climatic plot and the legend co-dependent and inseparable.

The novel can be perceived with a spatial approach as the mythical legend takes place in one space and the current crisis takes place in another space. But the novel is situated in a liminal space that connects the spaces together, to bring out the semblances and the contrasts. Through a thorough exploration of the two spaces, it is evident that they are not entirely exclusive of each other but are rather upsurges of the core theme: an inclusive ecological thought. Within the tale of the snake goddess, there is anthropocentric pride, refusal to submit to the more than human and disrespect for the environment and its inhabitants. The same factors can also be found within the bounds of the current climate crisis of the novel, which restates the co-dependency of the spatial dimensions as J.E. Malpas writes, "places always open up to disclose other places within them …while from within any particular place one can always look outwards to find oneself within some much larger expanse" (qtd in Ingold 146). The narrative analysis of the plot discloses such dimensions and events that mark the transition from the global to the planetary. Such overlapping of timescales and spatial dimensions of existence frames Ghosh's depiction of the planet as an earth system rather than a globe characterised with human dominion. In the novel, "the actions of both the living and the nonliving are often interlocked in complicated, complex, and precarious ways, and it is the fact of their being interlocking

and interactive in character that is highlighted by the use of the term *Earth system*" (Chakrabarty 77).

In the novel, the existence and pathways led by each life form leaves a memory in the landscape and space which can be sensed and treaded on by those to come as the planet is an interconnected mesh of coexistence. In *Being Alive*, the work explores the concept of space as interpreted by Christopher Tiley. The term 'place-binding' is introduced to put forth the idea of paths and not places. He believes that "every inhabitant lays a trail. Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the destiny of the knot" (Ingold 148). Here, places can be associated as knots and every strand as a way of life and the process of the narration is a process of untying the knots of climatic awareness and myths. The legend unveils the blind of climate denialism and scepticism in Deen by evoking evidences of change, interconnectedness and climatic instability. Deen denies the potential of the legend by saying "'I don't see how a legend could reach out into the future" (127) but Cinta urges him to "Think of it as an ordeal at the end of which there may be a reward, maybe even just something that will bring you peace of mind" (143). The reward of the ordeal turns out to be the ecological thought that puts forth climatic wisdom and inclusivity.

The interconnection of spaces can be found in the semblances between the Sundarbans and Venice. They are both submerging due to climate induced disasters and rising water levels, they are home to relocated animals and are major climate hotspots. The Sundarbans has almost ceased to be habitable and has led to an increase in the number of climate refugees but Venice is partly habitable and has not yet given rise to climate refugees. The building and embankment of Venice is under destruction due to the encroachment of the worms. Ghosh draws a close resemblance between the geographically

distinct but climatically similar in terms of ecological ravages: “It’s just like the Sundarbans. There, if you put your ear to the embankments you can hear the crabs burrowing inside…Sometimes, if you listen carefully, you can tell if an embankment is going to collapse. It’s the same over here” (235).

The migrant trajectories of the human and the more than human inhabitants can be analysed as wayfaring as “they journey through the world along paths of travel” (Ingold 154). The migration pathways slowly open up avenues to pathways of knowledge acquisition and climatic wisdom. Such avenues, “instead of the complementarity of a vertically integrated science of nature and a laterally integrated geography of location, wayfaring yields an alongly integrated, practical understanding of the lifeworld. Such knowledge is neither classified nor networked but *meshworked*” (154). The plot is a “meshworked” (Ghosh 17) representation of such migration pathways and overlapping trajectories of displacement that provides climatic knowledge, enlightenment and spectacle of the ever present ecological doings. In such an exposition of avenues, lies the power of the legend as it holds knowledge only for those who seek. As the boatman says the legend is filled with secrets and if one does not understand it then it might be absurd “But some day, when the time is right, someone will understand it and who knows? For them it may open up a world that we cannot see” (Ghosh 17). For the characters in the novel, Deen, Piya, Tipu and Cinta the legend unravels with their consistent probing and laborious deciphering of the meaning that it holds.

In the novel, the transition from climate denialism to climatic awareness and knowledge happens at different levels for different sets of people depending on their connection to the environment. Cinta terms the transition in Deen from climatic denialism to climatic awareness as “a risveglio, a kind of awakening. It may be dangerous of course, but that is because you are waking up to things that you had never imagined or sensed

before. You are lucky, Dino – some unknown force has given you a great gift" (217). Tipu, Rafi and the people of the Sundarbans in spite of lack of research knowledge or scientific potential they possess the inherent ability to comprehend the changes in the environment and view it as an active participant with regard to agency. Nixon calls this set of people as "ecosystem people" and clarifies that the term does not suggest "some romantic, timeless, organic bond to the pulse of nature, but rather to acknowledge that their often precarious conditions of survival depend on different combinations of temporal awareness" (Nixon 61- 62).

Manasa Devi has not just been a divine onlooker of human and nonhuman activities but she has been the communicator, and a companion of the species. She has sustained the continuance of the multispecies communities in the Sundarbans by providing resources and promoting coexistence by bridging the gap between the species' hierarchies. Even during ecological disasters, the shrine provided them refuge and "continued to shelter them afterwards, even providing them with clean, fresh water from its well – a rare amenity in the Sundarbans" (Ghosh 14). The source of sustenance and peace was tampered with when one species presumed the role of supremacy and refused to act by the rules of kinship. Manasa Devi was dejected as "an intermediary must, after all, command the trust of both the sides for which she is mediating. How can a translator do her job if one side chooses to ignore her? And why would her constituents obey her if they knew that those she was addressing on their behalf – the Merchant and his fellow humans – had refused to acknowledge her voice?" (153). This refusal to submit to collective wellbeing and the emergence of anthropocentric corruption of human actions has wretched the goddess and has created havoc in the functioning of the region.

Manasa Devi punishes humankind due to their breakaway from the principles of coexistence and the climatic crisis can be interpreted as a way of persecuting the species

responsible for the global calamity. This reaction of the goddess can be compared with the ancient God of moral punishment as put forth by Anderson in "Cli-fi and the Uncanny", wherein he traces the anthropogenic narrative templates found in climate change representations in media wherein the Gaia or the nonhuman world is interpreted as a "stand in for the ancient God of moral punishment and purification" (864). Ghosh follows the same narrative template in *Gun Island* as Manasa Devi's legend follows both the gun merchant as well as Deen, Tipu, Rafi and so on in the form of snakes, spiders and other uncanny events that lead them to climatic awareness.

The uncanny spectacle that occurs during the blue boat event marks a pivotal point of cohesion of human, nonhuman and more than human powers. The event though seemingly unreal casts a glorious light on the ecological thought of inclusiveness as well as of resistance. The climate refugees, the components of nature, and the power of Manasa Devi come together posing an act of resistance against climate injustice. Uncanny events surround the plot with every plot turn, for instance, the human refugees were held captive and were tortured by the illegal immigration chain of people but a series of uncanny events of storms freed them and helped them reach the borders of Italy. Though the novel reasons out that "such freak storms were becoming increasingly common in that area; this was thought to be an effect of changing weather patterns" (Ghosh 263), it was surreal and suggests the intervention of the more than human.

The series of uncanny events grow in spectacle as the blue boat awaits entry into the land and is not permitted by the military and the government. But out of nowhere, "a major migration event" (Ghosh 274) occurs as Deen notes there were "millions of birds, circling above us, while below, in the waters around the Blue Boat, schools of dolphins somersaulted and whales slapped their tails on the waves" (281) and the characters also witness bioluminescence. Though animal migrations are being increasingly common and

have become intersecting events, the particular spectacle can be interpreted as "a collective rebellion of "the creatures of the sky and the sea rising up" (281) to seek climatic justice.

The collective act of rebellion by the human, and the more than human takes the admiral, the media, government and the characters by surprise as they realise that a supernatural working is in progress. This spectacle of "the presence and proximity of non-human interlocutors" (Ghosh 40) makes the admiral to permit entry to the blue boat as he has been moved by the event and expresses: "'I have acted in accordance with the law of the sea, the law of humanity and the law of God. If I am tried, those are the laws that I will answer to'" (284-285). This statement made by the admiral echoes Ghosh's ecological thought of how the anthropogenic crisis cannot be resolved by a continuation of anthropocentric practices but can be resolved only by taking up climatic action that is non-discriminatory and ecology abiding.

The end of the novel marks how the climatic crisis and lack of awareness "can be dispersed by human action" as it "will determine the climate of the future, not systems beyond our control." (Wells) The urgency for climatic action and the immediacy of climate proofing measures is brought out. Cinta's question to humanity resonates along the lines:

> Everybody knows what must be done if the world is to continue to be a liveable place, if our homes are not to be invaded by the sea, or by creatures like that spider. Everybody knows…and yet we are powerless, even the most powerful among us. We go about our daily business through habit, as though we were in the grip of forces that have overwhelmed our will; we see shocking and monstrous

> things happening all around us and we avert our eyes; we surrender ourselves willingly to whatever it is that has us in its power. (216-217)

In the novel, the crisis of climate change, its disproportionate impact and rampant climate racism is brought out to signify the need for climate justice for multi species communities. In the novel, various forms of injustices and inequalities that surface due to the global calamity is depicted to put forth the urgency of climate action and just intervention. Ghosh calls for inclusive climate justice for multi species communities and the necessity to establish justice in a climatically degrading world. The chapter aims to bridge the global and regional disparities discussed to counter the climatic crises. Climate change adaptation requires mobility, dignified process of displacement and rehabilitation sans discriminatory views of the Global South and the Global North. The climate change crisis "needs to be enhanced with a global view; otherwise, there is the risk that inequalities will continue to widen, creating human crises at the local level and humanitarian crises at the international level" (UNDP 61).

The need to establish safe, inclusive grounds of justice that also includes free mobility, just transitions and settlement of climate refugees in a climatically degrading world is as important as indulging in climate proofing mechanisms. The characters in the novel inclusive of human and animal climate refugees put forth acts of resistance and activism to call for justice in an eroding world of climate change. The human participants as well as the more than human participants raise together to spread climatic awareness and the need for free mobility and justice. The various events occurring in various timescales, dimensions, and regions intersect in its collective purpose of securing justice to bridge the global disparities caused due to the disproportionate impact of climate change.