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ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN RUSKIN BOND AND AMITAV GHOSH: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ECOCRITICAL SCHOLARSHIP

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Abstract
The present paper examines five selected ecocritical studies discussing Ruskin Bond's Angry River and "Panther's Moon" and Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide and Jungle Nama. It follows a critical narrative review method using studies available in full-text PDFs. The discussion compares the scholars' questions, textual examples, and explanations of human–nature relationships. It focuses on care, belonging, disaster, animal conflict, conservation, and displacement. The selected scholarship does not support a simple division between Bond's concern with harmony and Ghosh's concern with environmental conflict. Readings of both writers address dependence on nature alongside danger and responsibility. The comparison finds that differences in interpretation arise partly from the critical approaches and examples chosen. It also identifies limits in arguments that extend particular incidents into broader explanations of environmental harm. The paper contributes an assessment of how these readings connect environmental care with human survival and unequal power. Its findings concern the five studies reviewed and do not represent the whole field of scholarship on either writer.

Key Words: *Ecocriticism; ecological consciousness; Ruskin Bond; Amitav Ghosh; environmental ethics; environmental justice.*

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1. Introduction

Rivers, forests, plants, and animals form part of people's work, memories, and daily relationships. Literature examines these connections through the places in which characters live and the choices they face. A river may provide food while threatening a home during a flood. A forest may sustain a community and also become a place of conflict between people and animals. Such accounts raise questions about dependence on nature, the use of resources, and responsibility towards other living beings. Ecocriticism examines relationships between literature and the environment. Its concerns include the representation of natural beauty, but also damaged habitats, threatened animals, and the difficulties of people whose livelihoods depend on their surroundings. In this paper, ecological consciousness means awareness of these relationships and their consequences. The term includes concern for nonhuman life without overlooking human needs or differences in people's ability to protect themselves from harm.

The selected scholarship on Ruskin Bond gives attention to encounters with rivers and animals. Angry River, a novella, and "Panther's Moon," a short story, provide its main literary focus here. Banerjee considers how the river's changing conditions shape the lives of Sita and her family. Chakraborty examines disaster and recovery in the novella, as well as human responsibility in conflict with animals. These approaches give the Bond discussion a wider concern than affection for the countryside alone (Banerjee 226; Chakraborty 173–75). Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide and Jungle Nama are examined through scholarship on conservation, livelihood, and environmental responsibility. The former is a novel; the latter is an illustrated verse narrative. Pilia and Vincent discuss tensions involving human settlement and the protection of the Sundarbans. Bera approaches the Bon Bibi story through the difference between need and greed. The Great Derangement, Ghosh's nonfiction work, provides supporting context through these studies rather than a separate literary case study (Pilia 117–18; Vincent 1; Bera 52–53).

The central question is how the selected studies interpret human–nature relationships in Bond and Ghosh, and where their explanations agree or differ. The paper compares the scholars' use of examples and assesses the support for their conclusions. Its argument concerns the scholarship reviewed, rather than claiming a new reading based on independently consulted primary editions.

2. Scope, Research Gap, and Review Method

2.1 Scope and research gap

The review covers five studies published between 2017 and 2025. Two concern Bond and three concern Ghosh. They were selected for their direct relevance to the chosen works, identifiable publication details, and accessible PDF evidence. Different genres remain part of the comparison: an interpretation of an illustrated verse narrative cannot be treated as though it arose from the same narrative conditions as a reading of a novel. The five studies develop their main arguments within one author's writing. They examine river ecology, animal conflict, conservation, displacement, or environmental ethics, but do not develop a sustained comparison of these concerns across Bond and Ghosh. This review brings their approaches into that comparison and examines what each explains or leaves less fully developed. This is a gap within the selected material, not a claim that no relevant comparative scholarship exists.

2.2 Search and review method

The paper follows a critical narrative review method. Online searches were conducted using the authors' names, the titles of relevant works, and combinations of terms including ecocriticism, river, animal agency, environmental ethics, environmental justice, slow violence, and PDF. Journal and publisher websites and university repositories were consulted to check source identities and locate full texts. The publication range describes the retained studies; it was not imposed as a search limit. Each retained study was examined for its research focus, theoretical approach, textual examples, and conclusions. Studies addressing related concerns were then compared, with attention to the differences between their evidence and literary settings. The findings concern the arguments and evidence of these five studies.

3. Conceptual Background

3.1 Ecological consciousness and dependence

Ecological consciousness involves recognising that people live within environments they cannot fully control. It includes an understanding of dependence: food, shelter, and work rely on conditions that also support other forms of life. Familiarity with a place can encourage care, but does not remove its dangers. The question is therefore how people understand and respond to the relationships on which they depend. Banerjee's phrase "embracing the disequilibrium natural to the river" gives one explanation of this awareness (226). Disequilibrium here refers to changing river conditions rather than permanent calm. The term directs attention

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to movement and variation. An understanding of the river based only on its usefulness to people leaves these conditions insufficiently explained.

3.2 Environmental ethics

Environmental ethics concerns responsibility towards the natural world, including living beings that have little or no direct usefulness to people. In the reviewed scholarship, that responsibility becomes difficult when human safety or livelihood is at risk. Concern for an animal does not remove the danger faced by villagers. Dependence on a forest does not give every person an unlimited claim to its resources. The distinction between meeting a need and seeking more wealth is particularly relevant to Bera's approach. It allows different uses of the forest to be judged according to their purpose and consequences. Treating all human use as equally harmful would overlook differences between subsistence and excessive taking.

3.3 Environmental justice and slow violence

Environmental justice concerns the unequal distribution of protection, resources, and harm. A decision to conserve a habitat can affect communities differently according to their access to land, work, and political influence. The resulting questions concern both the environment and whose needs receive recognition. Pilia uses Rob Nixon's concept of slow violence to discuss harm that accumulates and may remain outside public attention. In his explanation, the loss of resources and the continuing effects of displacement extend beyond a single visible event. A sudden flood, a political eviction, and continuing environmental damage remain distinct experiences even where a critic establishes connections between them.

4. Ecocritical Scholarship on Ruskin Bond

4.1 River ecology, disaster, and belonging in Angry River

Banerjee reads the river through its changing relationship with the people who live within it. The central example is Sita's experience of flooding. Her familiarity with the island does not make the rising water safe. Banerjee also examines Archana Sreenivasan's illustrations, including Sita's position amid the water and her hold on the uprooted tree. Written narrative and illustration together convey both dependence and danger. Banerjee reproduces Krishan's words: "'We are part of the river,' said the boy. 'We cannot live without it'" (qtd. in Banerjee 226). His recognition of dependence follows the experience of danger. The river remains necessary to their lives even though it cannot guarantee their safety. The interpretation is tied to features the reader can identify. The images give scale to the flood and place Sita's body within the threatened landscape. They also prevent the discussion of the river from remaining a general statement about nature's power. The argument is supported through the book's presentation, not simply through an environmental message assigned to its author. Chakraborty places greater emphasis on recovery. He reads Sita's return and rebuilding, including the planting of a mango tree, as a renewed relationship with her surroundings. He then describes the flood as contributing to her learning and a wider sense of belonging.

The movement from recovery to moral improvement is less secure than the account of rebuilding itself. Working to restore a home can demonstrate continued attachment without making the disaster necessary for personal growth. A reading that concentrates on what Sita gains can give less attention to losses that recovery does not undo. This is a limitation in the interpretation of suffering, rather than a reason to dismiss the study's account of renewed care. The difference between the critics is consequently a difference in explanation. Banerjee foregrounds the river's movement and its representation; Chakraborty foregrounds the meaning of Sita's response. Each places a different part of the experience at the centre of the argument.

4.2 Animal conflict in "Panther's Moon"

Chakraborty's reading of "Panther's Moon" considers the danger faced by villagers alongside the discovery of an old bullet injury after the panther is killed. He connects the injury with the possibility that the animal could no longer hunt its usual prey. Human violence thus enters the explanation of later conflict. The injury matters because it changes the terms of responsibility. The villagers encounter an immediate threat, but the animal's condition has a history. Recognising that history allows concern for the panther to coexist with an explanation of the villagers' fear. It also avoids describing animal danger as something entirely separate from human action. Chakraborty acknowledges the possible connection between the wound and the attacks. His emphasis on human interference leaves the villagers' immediate need for protection less fully developed. The account of repeated attacks makes that need part of the evidence, even as his explanation directs sympathy towards the animal. The difficulty concerns the balance of his reading: the history of the injury and the immediate danger both require attention. Bond's place in these studies is therefore not confined to a comforting natural world. The critics

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examine how relationships continue under conditions of danger, while differing in their explanations of what responsibility requires.

5. Ecocritical Scholarship on Amitav Ghosh

5.1 Conservation and displacement in The Hungry Tide

Pilia's account of The Hungry Tide centres on the Morichjhapi refugees and Nirmal's diary. He considers how conservation arguments become involved in decisions about settlement. The loss of a home is connected with the loss of familiar work, language, and relationships, rather than treated as a problem solved simply by moving people elsewhere. The diary is important to the argument because it gives those experiences a place within the novel's account of the region. Pilia's reading connects narrative form with the question of recognition: a landscape described for official purposes may leave out the lives and claims of people within it. His attention to Nirmal's account explains how literature can preserve a view that differs from an administrative description of land. Vincent addresses a related difficulty through the exchange about the tiger, in which Kanai questions Piya's response to animal suffering while villagers' deaths receive little recognition. Vincent reproduces Kanai's question about why "we can feel the suffering of an animal, but not of human beings?" (qtd. in Vincent 7). The question draws attention to villagers whose suffering receives little recognition. It gives a specific basis for examining unequal sympathy without making concern for animals itself the problem. She connects the episode with the tension between conservation and human equity. Unlike Pilia's emphasis on settlement, this discussion turns on the unequal attention given to suffering. The two approaches bring out different meanings of protection. Protection can refer to a species, a habitat, a home, or a person exposed to attack. Agreement about its value does not establish whose claims take priority. The episode Vincent discusses is especially useful because it makes that disagreement part of an exchange between characters. Their positions remain situated responses, rather than an agreed statement by the whole novel. This distinction also limits what the example proves. A character's accusation can expose unequal sympathy without establishing a complete explanation of conservation policy. The criticism is more persuasive when the discussion stays close to the conflict it identifies.

5.2 Continuing harm and historical difference

Pilia extends the account of eviction through slow violence, connecting visible removal with longer losses of livelihood and recognition. He also reads the refugees' circumstances as anticipating questions associated with climate migration. Pilia acknowledges that the novel "does not tackle the climatic crisis openly" (128). His connection with climate migration is therefore an interpretation developed from the refugees' circumstances. This qualification keeps the distinction between the novel's account of displacement and the wider comparison proposed by the critic. The extension gives displacement a longer timescale, but political expulsion and climate displacement remain different explanations of why people lose their homes. Reading one in relation to the other is most convincing when the specific political circumstances remain clear. The later environmental concern adds a perspective; it does not replace the earlier history. This is a significant difference from the treatment of disaster in Bond scholarship. In the selected Ghosh studies, institutions and unequal resources have a central place in the explanation of vulnerability. Environmental danger is examined alongside decisions about who can remain, whose livelihood matters, and whose suffering becomes visible.

5.3 Myth and forest ethics in Jungle Nama

Bera interprets Jungle Nama through the Bon Bibi story and the contrast between Dhona's pursuit of wealth and the vulnerability of Dukhey and his mother. Her account connects greed for forest resources with the exposure of poorer people to harm. She also examines myth as a means of expressing limits on human demands. Bera describes Bon Bibi as "conserving a balance between the needs of human beings and of other-than-human lives in the forest" (52). Her wording makes coexistence central to the interpretation. Human livelihood receives consideration alongside the needs of other beings, rather than becoming an unrestricted claim over the forest. The distinction between need and greed makes this reading useful to the wider comparison. It does not require every person to withdraw from the forest. Instead, it distinguishes a livelihood from an unrestricted claim to what the environment contains. Poverty and wealth matter because the characters do not act with the same choices or bear the same risks. Bera also links the narrative with climate colonialism and describes nature as retaliating against human greed. The interpretation gives the fable a wider political meaning, but it creates a problem of scale. A pattern of greed and punishment can be explained within the story without demonstrating every proposed connection to climate harm. Nature's retaliation belongs to the critic's reading of the moral narrative; it is not itself a factual account of environmental disasters. Bera's attention to ethical limits expressed through a familiar story provides the clearest connection between her examples and her argument. It broadens

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the Ghosh discussion beyond conservation policy by considering how a community's account of the forest can guide conduct within it.

6. Comparative Critical Discussion

6.1 Belonging and security

The comparison separates attachment to a place from security within it. Sita's familiarity with the river does not prevent flooding. In Pilia's discussion, the refugees' attachment to the tide country does not secure permission to remain. The relationship is similar in one respect: belonging does not give people complete control over the conditions of their lives. The causes of insecurity are different, since movement of water and enforced removal involve different forms of power. Keeping those causes distinct improves the comparison. Otherwise, a broad language of vulnerability can conceal decisions for which particular institutions are responsible. Equally, treating every environmental danger as a political act would misrepresent the flood discussed by Banerjee. The studies are most useful together when their shared concern does not erase their different explanations.

6.2 Care under conditions of conflict

The panther and tiger discussions reveal a common problem in judging ecological responsibility. Sympathy alone cannot settle competing claims. Concern for an animal requires attention to human actions affecting it, but concern for villagers requires an explanation of the dangers they face. Neither account is complete if one side becomes merely an obstacle to the other. Bera's discussion of need adds a further distinction. People who depend on a forest for survival cannot be judged on the same terms as those pursuing unlimited wealth from it. The comparison therefore involves more than placing humans against animals or nature. Differences among human interests also shape the conflict. This qualification connects the ethical question of care with the social question of power. The relationship between the two questions is uneven across the studies. The selected Bond criticism gives particular attention to personal experience and human interference. The Ghosh studies give more sustained attention to poverty, institutions, and control of resources. These are differences within the selected criticism, rather than fixed characteristics of the authors' entire writing.

6.3 How critical choices shape interpretation

The studies support different arguments partly because they select different kinds of evidence. Illustrations make the scale and changing appearance of an environment visible. A diary supplies a personal account of settlement and loss. A conversation presents competing judgments, while a fable connects action with moral consequence. The formal differences help explain why the critics do not approach ecological consciousness in identical terms. They also affect the limits of an argument. A moral outcome in a fable is not evidence of environmental causation. An interpretation of an injury does not establish a universal explanation of animal behaviour. A character's opinion cannot automatically be treated as the position of the novel. These distinctions concern the relation between evidence and claim, not a rejection of wider social or environmental interpretation. Across the five studies, the division between Bond as harmony and Ghosh as conflict is consequently too narrow. The evidence supports overlapping concerns approached through different questions and forms. A more useful distinction concerns what each reading makes central, and how fully it explains the consequences of that choice.

7. Findings and Conclusion

The selected scholarship explains ecological consciousness through dependence, responsibility, and the difficulties of sharing an environment. Its differences arise partly from the critics' choice of examples and methods. Banerjee gives attention to river change and illustration; Chakraborty considers recovery and animal conflict. Pilia and Vincent examine competing claims to protection, while Bera interprets limits on resource use through myth.

The comparison establishes two closely related findings. First, care and danger occur across the readings of both writers, so the opposition between peaceful Bond and political Ghosh does not adequately describe this material. Second, ecological responsibility depends on the circumstances of the people and other beings involved. Attachment does not guarantee safety, and a need for survival is different from a demand for greater wealth.

The review contributes by comparing the support for these interpretations as well as their themes. Arguments remain clearer when literary details support the scale of the claims made. Connections to moral improvement or climate harm require qualification where the explanation moves beyond what a particular example

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establishes. Within these five studies, the comparison establishes that accounts of environmental care become clearer when they explain whose needs are recognised and who bears the consequences of a conflict.

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