



## SUBLIMINAL NEXUS BETWEEN MEN AND NATURE IN THE SELECT NOVELS OF AMITAV GHOSH

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of the paper is to explore the psychic connection of man with nature in the novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh. The paper analyses the emotional tie up of the characters with nature by tracing the various phases of change in their behavioral habits during dire situations. It also explores the survival instinct of man and nature that prepares them to overcome the complications by using various strategies and behaviorist techniques of observation as mentioned by David Krech. It is not only the predominant characters Fokir, Piyoli Roy, Kusumand Moyna, but also the animals (Dolphins, Tiger and the Crocodiles) in *The Hungry Tide* and the characters Paulee, Deeti, Kalua, Raja Neel Rattan, Ah Fatt of *Sea of Poppies* portray the subconscious attitude of self-preservation when they are subjected to natural calamities like storm, low, high tides and political pressures. The Morichjhapi incident in *The Hungry Tide* depicts the struggles faced by the dislocated refugees who succeed in survival and self-preservation by overcoming their habitual behavior and adapting to the new circumstances for their survival. The paper further examines Thorndike's *Law of Readiness and Effect* in order to explore Man's inherent capability to respond with physical and mental readiness in adapting to the changes that makes them exhibit their survival instincts in both the novels *The Hungry Tide* and *Sea of Poppies*.

Keywords: emotion, interconnection, Law of Readiness, Effect, Self-preservation

The term "*Cognition*" refers to the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses. It encompasses processes such as knowledge, attention, memory and working memory, judgment and evaluation, reasoning and computation, problem solving and decision making, comprehension and production of language, etc. Human cognition is conscious and unconscious, concrete or abstract, as well as intuitive (like knowledge of a language) and conceptual (like a

model of a language). Cognitive processes use existing knowledge and generate new knowledge".<sup>[1]</sup>

Cognition which dates back to 15<sup>th</sup> C. analyses the process from different perspectives within different contents. In Psychology and Philosophy, the concept of cognition is closely related to abstract concepts such as mind and intelligence. "Aristotle focused on cognitive areas pertaining to memory, perception, and mental imagery. The Greek philosopher found great importance in ensuring that his studies were based on empirical evidence; scientific information that is

gathered through observation and conscientious experimentation."<sup>[2]</sup>

Thomas Aquinas, divides the study of behavior into two broad categories:

- cognitive (how we know the world),
- affective (how we understand the world via feelings and emotions)

David Krech, Social Psychologist, conducted his research on animals (rats) using his Hypothesis Box and found that they try different solutions to problems before arriving at the final, correct solution. He concluded that learning is a trial-and-error series of actions, where responses that are incorrect are stopped and correct responses are "stamped in". Along with Karl Lashley he explored that the brain processes underlie the behavior of hypotheses. <sup>[3]</sup>The predominant characters in the novels of Amitav Ghosh have an insight to analyse the problems the characters face and find the solutions to survive any odds and show that they can change their behavioural nature to endure any catastrophes. Fokir, the fisherman of the Sundarbans leads his life with his behavioural instincts and succeeds in learning the secrets of nature. He has a strong physical and mental bondage with nature and leads his life by following what his heart instructs him. He lives a content life and finds happiness when he trusts his heart and doesn't want to undergo any changes in his habitual life. He helps Piyoli Roy, a Botanist who comes in search of the Irrawady Dolphins. She believes in technology for the research to find the changes in the habitat of the Dolphins. The Sea bred Dolphins undergoes greater change in their behavior and habitat in order to live in back waters. She feels astonished to learn the change in their activities and the adaptability to sustain even amidst natural calamities. The Crocodiles and the Tigers too change their hunting techniques for their survival. When man uses his decision making skills for his fight and survival in nature, animals and birds too exhibit their struggle for their survival by changing and adopting themselves for sustenance. Piyoli Roy wonders the mutual relationship between the fishermen and the Dolphins. The Dolphins help the fishermen to catch the crabs in their net by maintaining a stream line along the currents which benefits them equally. The

animals predict the upcoming storm and try to protect themselves from it. Though Fokir foresees it, he becomes successful in saving only the life of Piyoli Roy by sacrificing himself to the storm. Man tries to overcome his struggles by coming out of his behavioural nutshell through his cognitive approach. Man binds himself emotionally with the situations he faces and tries to find the solution through logical reasoning, adaptability, decision making, judging and evaluation. Moyna overcomes her moral fears of dependability and tries to substantiate herself by acquiring skills that marks her independent and she further equips herself to serve the society by becoming a nurse. Unlike Fokir who believes in learning from nature, she depends on herself rather than nature and believes that only education from the books will transform their life. She even struggles to educate her son by sending him to school, but he shows more interest in fishing like his father and builds close relationship with nature. Kusum fights for her survival along with the other refugees to create a dwelling place amidst the natural calamities like the tides, the storm and the Government which declares Morinchhapi as a Tiger Reserve. The refugees show readiness to adapt from their regular behavioural attitude to survive and preserve themselves.

"Thorndike's Law of Readiness refers to a preparatory set on the part of the organism to learn. It points out that one learns only when he is physically and mentally ready for it. In other words, preparatory set on the part of the organism is an important condition for learning. When the organism is prepared to do some work, the act of doing is satisfying, and not doing it is annoying. Conversely, when he does not want to work, forcing him to work is dissatisfying."

"The Law of Effect states that responses that produce a satisfying effect in a particular situation become more likely to occur again in that situation, and responses that produce a discomforting effect become less likely to occur again in that situation."<sup>[4]</sup>

Paulette, daughter of a French Botanist in *Sea of Poppies* is brought up by Jodu's mother after her mother dies giving birth to her in Jodu's father's boat. The moment Paulette is born she is forced to

adapt physically and mentally to the circumstances and fights for her survival. Jodu's mother treats Paulette like her own daughter. She learns Bengali and calls Jodu's mother *Tantima- aunt mother*. She is a fusion of both French and Indian culture. She treats Jodu as her own brother, enjoys learning Indian Culture and displays tolerance of both the cultures. After the death of her father she disguises as one of the *grimitiyas* to travel in Ibis to find a place of safety and to escape from the chauvinist society. Her survival instinct helps her to fight every moment physically, psychologically and mentally. She succeeds in maintaining her disguise as one of the *grimitiyas* and none identify till she herself reveals it. She respects human and nature equally and exhibits utmost tolerance. Born in India she adapts Indian ways to sustain by overcoming the natural habitat that she inherits through heredity. She helps in the plot that Deeti plans to escape Kalua and shows her inborn valor.

Deeti, the protagonist exhibits the Law of Readiness to defend herself from the tortures of her mother-in-law. She plans her life every day and fights to every situation in life to secure herself from the sexual harassment of her husband's brother and the idea of expansion of family by her mother-in-law. She finds happiness in living for her daughter Kabuthri and gets ready to sacrifice her life (Sati) after the death of her husband. She sends her daughter to her brother's house and enter into the pyre, saved by Kalua, an untouchable. She accepts him as her second husband and finds real happiness of life. She devises a plan for his escape from the Ibis and exhibits her leadership quality in helping the *grimitiyas*. She sheds her fear in the pyre and like phoenix bird her revival from the pyre makes her independent and brave. She no longer identifies her as Kabuthri's Ma but calls herself as 'Aditi'. She fights for the right of the *grimitiyas* and shows her readiness to sustain in terrible situations. The transformation of the character from Deeti to Aditi helps in identifying the Law of Readiness and Effect in the life of a woman. Ah Fatt, Raja Neel Rattan and Kalua too represent Thorndike's Law of Readiness and Effect who respond only to the situation which satisfies them. All the characters in the novel exhibit their interconnection with the

society and nature and the attitude of self-preservation in various situations through logical reasoning, judgement and evaluation.

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