

**“Sailing Through Multilingual Ecologies: Language, Folklore, and Environmental Memory
in Amitav Ghosh’s *Wild Fictions*”**

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Abstract

Language plays a vital role in the expression for mankind. The language of the ecological world is no different than the language of mankind. Man is the evolved creature from Earth, Sun, Water, Fire and Wind. Similarly, all ecological aspects are evolved from the environment. Hence, ecology and mankind can never be separate. This paper examines multilingual vocabularies and folkloric memory accustomed by Amitav Ghosh in ‘*Wild Fictions*’. The adaptation of nautical and botanical vocabulary is essential to establish a rich and immersive setting in various writings. The essays ‘*Of Fanás and Forecastles: The Indian Ocean and Some Lost Languages of the Age of Sail*’ and ‘*The Well-Travelled Banyan*’ ponder into the same vocabulary as the platform for environmental memory, putting them within transcorporeal networks that join human and nonhuman interactions. Ghosh’s representation of obscured Indian Ocean vocabularies transmits embedded ecological knowledge of winds, oceans and species and the banyan tree functions as a transnational ecological presence that intertwines cultural and botanical histories across the globe.

Embedded in postcolonial ecocriticism, posthumanism, transcorporeality and new materialist frameworks, this paper reveals how ‘*Wild Fictions*’ mobilizes folklore, myth and language as ecological archives that counter capitalist forgetting and reassert complex human-nonhuman worlds. Through the depiction of trees, ships, winds and seas, Ghosh’s narration puts forward environmental thinking beyond anthropocentric paradigms.

This paper demonstrates how multilingualism and folklore facilitate ecological exchange and sustain cultural resilience, pointing towards new possibilities in postcolonial ecocriticism and the environmental humanities.

Keywords: trans corporeality, multilingualism, folklore, ecocriticism, Indian ocean

I. Introduction

Amitav Ghosh's *'Wild Fictions'* makes a distinctive contribution to contemporary environmental humanities by foregrounding the intertwined histories of language, ecology, and culture across multiple geographies. Through a collection of reflective essays, Ghosh moves beyond conventional literary and historical approaches to examine how oceans, winds, trees, and other nonhuman forces actively participate in the making of human worlds. Rather than positioning nature as a passive backdrop to human action, *Wild Fictions* reconceives ecological spaces as dynamic sites of memory, circulation, and agency, particularly within the interconnected realms of the Indian Ocean and broader transnational ecological networks.

At the core of Ghosh's ecological perspective is an emphasis on multilingualism and folklore as vital reservoirs of environmental knowledge. The retrieval of forgotten maritime vocabularies, indigenous terms, myths, and oral traditions demonstrates how language encodes detailed understandings of climate, navigation, species, and landscapes. These linguistic and folkloric forms preserve ecological memory that counters colonial and capitalist erasures, offering alternative ways of knowing that challenge dominant anthropocentric frameworks. By highlighting hybrid languages and culturally grounded narratives, *Wild Fictions* reveals how environmental thought is shaped by linguistic diversity and vernacular traditions emerging from sustained human–nonhuman relationships.

This paper analyzes the essays *'Of Fanás and Forecastles: The Indian Ocean and Some Lost Languages of the Age of Sail'* and *'The Well-Travelled Banyan'* to show how ecological worldviews are constructed through language and memory. It examines Ghosh's engagement with multilingualism and folklore to demonstrate how nonhuman entities—such as trees, winds, and seas—are positioned as active participants in shared ecological histories, thereby extending postcolonial ecocriticism toward posthuman and trans corporeal perspectives.

II. Maritime Multilingualism in “Of Fanás and Forecastles”

In the essay “*Of Fanás and Forecastles: The Indian Ocean and Some Lost Languages of the Age of Sail*” Amita Ghosh represents the Indian Ocean as a multilingual ecological zone which came into existence due to trade, migration, and environmental arbitration. The essay focuses on the hybrid vocabularies of the seagoers from the Arabs, Portuguese, Malays, Gujaratis, Bengalis, and other linguistic cultures, showing the readers the new linguistic universe that came into existence due to an uninterrupted synergy with the pelagic ecologies. Rosi Braidotti's idea of a posthuman condition, where subjectivity is formed in relation with detached human agency, is reflected in the mixed idioms that this essay talks about. The flexibility of coexistence with the nonhuman forces like tides, currents, and winds has led to the development of this maritime linguistic culture and it is not a result of human influence over nature. (Braidotti)

The environmental importance of these obsolete vocabularies is specifically revealed in the fact that they are pregnant with ecological insight. Maritime words related to monsoons, seasonal winds, sailing routes, and oceanic species work as a linguistic technique formed by a substantiated involvement of humans with the ocean. Stacy Alaimo's concept of transcoporeality, the physical exchange between human bodies and ecological agents, applies here. The sailor's vocabularies that Ghosh retrieves here, are the results of transcoporeal coincidences, which are shaped through the porosity of human bodies to climatic conditions, rhythms of the sea, and the environmental risk. (Alaimo).

Furthermore, Ghosh's analysis of ships, winds, and seas is a reverberation of Jane Bennett's new materialism, which emphasizes material forces. Oceanic elements in *Wild Fictions* are active forces that form the linguistic tradition and historical progress. Winds regulate trade, currents pilot navigation, and ships become the congregation of human labor and nonhuman commodities. With his environmental imagination aligned with Bennett's claim that agency is scattered across human and nonhuman organizations, Ghosh challenges the narrative of human beings as the centre of the universe.

The continuous disappearance of these oceanic languages thus is a sign of a loss that is not just cultural but ecological. Due to the replacement of vernacular oceanic languages with the modern standard languages, the related knowledge carried by them becomes extinct, which adds to Alaimo's idea of a serious delusion of human separation from the material world. The essay salvages multilingual oceanic/maritime language as an important environmental archive of human-nonhuman interactions and defies the epistemic violence of colonial modernity.

III. Botanical and Cultural Memory in “*The Well-Travelled Banyan*”

In the essay “*The Well-Travelled Banyan*” Ghosh depicts the banyan tree across linguistic, cultural, and geographical limits, while expanding his posthuman ecological perception to botanical life. The banyan tree is an example of nomadic subjectivity(Braidotti) which means it is a type of existence surrounded by movement, relationality, and historical intricacies, as it comes under variety of name and symbolic significances in South Asian, African, Caribbean, and Southeast Asian contexts. Its transnational spread in languages and symbols shows its colonial and diasporic journey, citing botanical life as an active part of global histories rather than a passive backdrop to human movements.

The physical features of banyan trees, like its aerial roots, immense growth, and ability to provide a sheltering ecosystem, emphasize its influence within the ecological system. Jane Bennett's idea of vibrant matter is specifically relevant here, as it focuses on the strength and potency of nonhuman entities. In this essay the banyan shapes social spaces, reinforces biodiversity, and holds cultural memory, showing how plant life influences human and nonhuman interactions (Bennett).

Folk and vernacular narratives around the banyan tree supplement the argument regarding the transcorporeal relationship between humans and plant life. Innumerable stories, myths, legend, and ritualistic practices endorse the intricate presence of banyan tree in human life, with an emphasis on the mutual susceptibility and interdependence. Alaimo's structure of transcorporeality highlights these synergies by presenting the permeable boundaries between bodies, ecologies, and cultural significance. The banyan, thus, becomes a focal point where biological processes and cultural history converge, emphasising the unity of ecological and social histories.

Ghosh here proposes a posthuman critique of anthropocentrism by exemplifying the banyan as both, a cultural link and an environmental agent. He challenges the hierarchical distinction between human and nonhuman lives by showing the reader how human migration, settlement, and memory take shape parallel to the histories of trees. In this way *Wild Fictions* also draws a parallel with Braidotti's call for an ethics of relationality, a perception that acknowledges the role of nonhuman life in developing the collective futures.

IV. Folklore as Ecological Archive

Folklore in *Wild Fictions* comes out as an important ecological reservoir that conserves environmental information that is otherwise excluded or destroyed by colonial modernity and capitalist epistemologies. Myths, proverbs, and oral histories related to winds, seas, trees, and landscapes carry in them methods of knowing the natural world and they have their roots in the long-term ecological involvement of humans and nonhuman. According to Ghosh these narratives are not a part of history that stand no role right now, rather they are the dynamic memories that preserve the ecological consciousness across generations.

Folkloric narratives about maritime cultures and botanical life are not what postcolonial ecocriticism describes as the accommodative inclinations of capitalist globalization, that prefers regularised languages, scientific coherence, and profit-driven relationships with nature. On the contrary, oral traditions conserve geographical knowledge of seasonal cycles, environmental limits, and human susceptibility to nonhuman forces. Such narratives recognize the agency of winds, seas, and flora, citing them as an important part of history rather than just an incapable resource. This idea is parallel to Jane Bennett's stand that nonhuman lives contain a form of exuberance that is beyond human control, and demands ethical as well as political acknowledgment(Bennett, 2010).

Above all, folklore works transcorporeally by registering materialised give and take between humans and ecologies. Similar to what Stacy Alaimo stresses regarding transcorporeality - humans and nonhuman are physically connected with the help of the movement of matter, energy, and meaning(Alaimo, 2010). Ecological memory is registered in cultural narratives which make the boundaries between nature and culture hazy. Ghosh's focus on the stories formes by storms,

migrations, and plant life exemplifies the same. Folklore in this way becomes a collection of alternative records, stories, and artifacts created to challenge dominant historical narratives, and ecological stupor. It advocates rational ways of environmental intelligence.

V. Posthuman and Transcorporeal Readings

Wild Fictions with the nonhuman sentiments, make us dive deep into the thoughts beyond human-centered perspective. Mother earth, winds and water play a pivotal role in giving shape to human history, language and culture. All such things do not put an impact only on humans, however it supports the ideas by Rosi Braidotti on moving beyond human-centric views. (Braidotti, 2013).

A transcorporeal viewpoint further reflects how Ghosh represents the permeability between human and nonhuman bodies. *A Life of a Sailor* takes shape by winds blowing during monsoon and currents of oceans, while communities flourish around trees that offer shelter and sustenance. All these types of representations highlight material interdependence and shared vulnerability, reinforcing Alaimo's rationalization that ethical responsibility comes out from recognizing the inseparability of human bodies from environmental systems (Alaimo, 2010)

Ghosh's description also creates a strong emotional connection with Bennett's idea of assemblages, wherein distribution of agency takes place across networks of human and nonhuman actants. Ships operate through the combination of wood, nature of wind, labor, and proper navigation; banyan trees sustain multispecies life while showcasing cultural practices. By foregrounding these assemblages, *Wild Fictions* challenges the concept of human supremacy and instead invites forms of reciprocity grounded in attentiveness, respect, and ecological humility. Thus, Human-nonhuman relationships are brought to a new framework and reinterpretation as collaborative rather than hierarchical, showing alternative ethical orientations toward the boundary going beyond the human world.

VI. Conclusion

This paper throws light on how Amitav Ghosh's *Wild Fictions* organize multilingualism, folklore, and ecological memory to clearly express posthuman and transcorporeal worldviews. By close readings of "*Of Fanás and Forecastles*" and "*The Well-Travelled Banyan*," we gain an idea as to how maritime stories and botanical narratives make our understanding clear about nature and its strong impact on us. By bringing back lost languages and local traditions, Ghosh challenges the concept of detaching humans from nature, which was thrust by colonial and capitalist views.

Thus, the study of Wild Fiction shows how we can get connected to nature through story and language. Trees, winds, and oceans can be seen as a part of the world we all share. And it

encourages humans to think beyond humans. Ghosh's work thus serves extremely to eco-humanities by emphasizing relationality, memory, and more-than-human agency.

It opens up an entire new area of research, specifically in the field of Indo–Japanese environmental stories. Across different types of cultures, sea myths, tree symbolism and folk ecology show how people and nature strongly connected. This can enhance our perception of world environmental issues and showcase different cultural aspects.

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