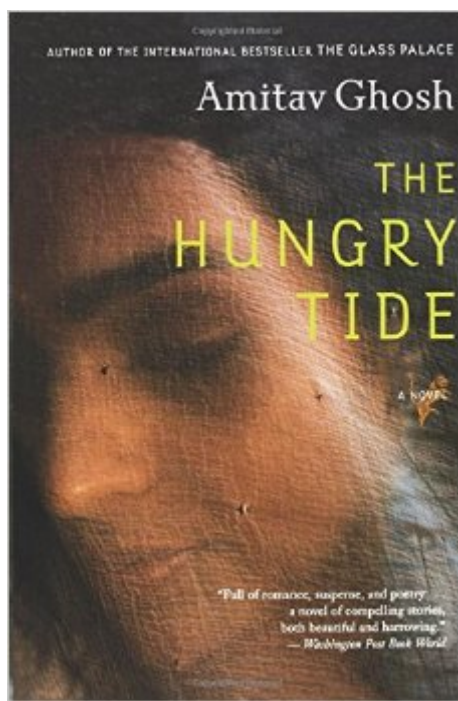


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The Hungry Tide: A Novel



Synopsis

A contemporary story of adventure, history, and identity by acclaimed author Amitav Ghosh. Off the easternmost corner of India, in the Bay of Bengal, lies the immense labyrinth of tiny islands known as the Sundarbans, where settlers live in fear of drowning tides and man-eating tigers. Piya Roy, a young American marine biologist of Indian descent, arrives in this lush, treacherous landscape in search of a rare species of river dolphin and enlists the aid of a local fisherman and a translator. Together the three of them launch into the elaborate backwaters, drawn unawares into the powerful political undercurrents of this isolated corner of the world that exact a personal toll as fierce as the tides.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Hungry Tide" is the first novel by Amitav Ghosh I read. I am very interested in India and read a lot of Indian authors, but somehow Ghosh had escaped my attention. Till now - because now I will definitely read his other books. I was drawn to "The Hungry Tide" by its setting - the action takes place in the Sundarbans, the archipelago in the Bengal Bay, at the mouth of the Ganges, partially belonging to India and partially to Bangladesh, where the fresh river water mixes with the saltwater from the ocean. The tides make the Sundarbans a difficult place to live for humans, but, at the same time, a unique habitat for fauna and flora. The mangrove swamps are dominant, and they provide the shelter for many species of animals, which are specific to the region or very rare in other areas. The example is the Royal Bengal Tiger, a man-eater, featuring in "The Hungry Tide" together with

several species of dolphins and deadly crocodiles. The novel starts with the meeting of two main characters, Piyali (Piya), an Indian-American field biologist specialized in dolphins, and Kanai, a sophisticated interpreter and businessman, on the train to Canning. Piya has a plan to collect data on the life of the rare river dolphins, which are the subject of her research. Kanai was summoned by his aunt, Nilima, to the island of Lusibari (he spent there only one summer as a schoolboy), where she runs a charity, to get the package left to him in the will of his late uncle, Nirmal, a leftist schoolteacher with literary ambitions. Kanai is interested in Piya, and when they part in Canning, he invites her to Lusibari. From this point, the narration is separated into alternating chapters devoted to the doings of Piya and Kanai.

Amitav Ghosh is a master of the genre "Fictionalized Thesis". Before this one he excelled in 'In An Antique Land' in mixing fiction with facts gathered through painstaking research and the synergy turns out to be extraordinarily capable of conveying the message creating the desired effect. Though he extensively deals with science, Ghosh has appeared to nurture mystic elements within his basic views of the world, history. He seems to believe in destiny and recognizes omen as would be evident through his 'Calcutta Chromosome' also. His perception of history has its full quota of heroes. As he lamented in 'Dancing in Cambodia At Large in Burma' that the postmodern world has taken away from the middle class its heroes, here (in Hungry Tides) he is very firm in acknowledging them in his definition of things. And, as always, with a quotation of Rilke here and a passionate interpretation of his own there, he entralls the poetically oriented one to one's heart's content. Sundarbans, a vast forest that insulates the inland of lower Bengal in India from the ocean, is slowly being denuded of its bio-diversity; the ecological balance is seriously being threatened. And all these are because the life of the ordinary, extremely poor people living there do not count for anything to the political establishments. As the scientist Mr. Piddington warned, if the forest is itself endangered that is certainly to diminish the possibility of Calcutta being protected any more against the devastating oceanic storms of Bay of Bengal. Interestingly that threat of a sad destiny where the guilty will not be spared destruction is hinted at very clearly through a metaphorical local tale of Bon-bibi and Dakshin Rai among the dwellers of Sundarbans.

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