Everyday Anthropocene and Multispecies Kinship in Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*

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The Anthropocene, a term increasingly embraced across disciplines, is often used to denote the current geological epoch that signifies the profound impact humans have exerted on the Earth's geology and ecosystems. This concept challenges the traditional delineation of geological epochs, suggesting that human activity has caused significant environmental changes that are substantial enough to mark the commencement of a new geological era. Central to the Anthropocene theory is the recognition of human-induced alterations that span across climate change, biodiversity loss, and the transformation of land through deforestation, urbanisation, and agriculture, alongside the proliferation of man-made materials like plastics and concrete. The idea of the 'everyday Anthropocene' brings this concept closer to our daily lives, emphasising how ordinary, everyday human actions contribute to these large-scale environmental changes. It recognises that the cumulative effects of daily human activities — such as driving cars, using plastic, consuming energy, and producing waste — play a crucial role in shaping our planet's future. At the same time, the everyday Anthropocene refers to the ways we experience the effects of environmental changes in our day-to-day lives. This notion compels us to recognise the Anthropocene not as a distant or abstract epoch but as an immediate reality, manifesting in the climate we experience, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we consume.

In her essay, "Climate Change and the Struggle for Genre," Stephanie LeMenager refers to the 'everyday Anthropocene' as "the present tense, lived time of the Anthropocene" that calls for paying attention to what it means to live, day by day, through climate shift and the economic and sociological injuries that underwrite it" (225). She presents this concept as a critique of epochal thinking. The conventional perspective on the Anthropocene as a geological epoch detaches us from the immediate, tangible effects of our actions on the environment and ourselves. Epochs, as large-scale historical markers, can lead to a kind of forgetting, abstracting the very real and ongoing depletion and suffering of living bodies and ecosystems into broad, impersonal spans of time. The everyday Anthropocene, in contrast, calls for attention to "a more granular and personal account" of those living through the anthropogenic changes of our planet (225). She emphasises the importance of recognising and addressing the slow, often unnoticed wear on bodies and environments caused by systemic issues like bio-deregulation and slow violence. She highlights the role of the Anthropocene novel as a medium to focus closely on what it means to live amidst climate change, capturing the day-to-day reality of existing in a world under threat. She views such narratives as tools for preparing and adapting to change, advocating for a re-evaluation of our daily lives and our collective home in a more empathetic and sustainable manner.

This essay delves into Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019) as a nuanced portrayal of the 'everyday Anthropocene', positioning the novel as a narrative extension of Ghosh's earlier work, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016). Often described as a theoretical precursor to *Gun Island*, *The Great Derangement* scrutinises the literary and cultural incapacity to adequately address the magnitude of climate change. By analysing *Gun Island* through the lens of *The Great Derangement*, this paper aims to illuminate the novel's intricate blending of historical and contemporary realities, the interplay between myth and materiality, and the fusion of the conceivable with the seemingly implausible, underscoring these elements as essential for depicting the lived realities of the Anthropocene. *Gun Island* intertwines the past and the present, demonstrating how historical narratives and myths continue to shape and are reshaped in the face of current environmental crises. This essay argues that Ghosh's melding of timelines is not merely a narrative technique but a critical method of engaging with the

Anthropocene's temporality — where the impact of human actions transcends the immediate moment to echo through history. Such a narrative strategy confronts the reader with the realisation that the environmental challenges we face today are deeply entangled with our historical trajectories, challenging the conventional separation of past, present, and future. Further, the paper contends that the novel promotes the concept of multispecies kinship as a survival strategy in the everyday Anthropocene since this era brings humans into direct confrontation with non-human forces that have reshaped our everyday realities.

LeMenager argues that the ongoing environmental crisis destabilises much of what we know about life and its parameters. She states: "Habit, the subjective practice of reality, frays in this unique moment of global ecology, and such fraying indicates *a potential shift in human understandings of the everyday*" [italics mine] (220). Similarly, Adam Trexler observes that "the underlying causes of the Anthropocene have altered the horizon of human activity, as well as the capacities of the novel" (15). Ghosh, in a similar vein, insists in an interview that the reality of our world is actually "a strange reality," "an uncanny reality" (qtd. in De 75). In *The Great Derangement*, he discusses the limitations of literary forms, especially realist novels, in capturing present-day environmental realities. The new environmental realities are so strange and unheard of that they are beyond the oeuvre of modern novel that works with the parameters of probability. Ghosh argues that before the growth of the modern novel, storytelling was always about describing exceptional or unlikely events. The modern novel, on the other hand, is characterised by "the relocation of the unheard towards the background … while the everyday moves into the foreground" (*Derangement* 25). But what happens when the everyday itself becomes filled with improbable events? What if the impossible becomes the normal? How can fiction incorporate this new normal into the everyday lives of its characters? The strange, unlikely weather events of the age of the Anthropocene, therefore, demand a reconsideration of the concepts of everyday and improbable in the context of literary fiction.

Climate change novels are generally categorised into two broad types based on their settings: speculative and futuristic. The first type of novel is set in "a recognisable, realist present (or very near future)," and the second in "a futuristic climate-changed world," which can be depicted as apocalyptic, post-apocalyptic, or dystopian (Goodbody and Johns-Putra 234). *Gun Island* clearly falls into the first category as it unfolds in present-day settings that are familiar and relatable to the readers, including locations like Kolkata, the Sundarbans, Los Angeles, and Venice. These areas are portrayed in ways that reflect their current socio-political and environmental conditions, such as the rising sea levels affecting the Sundarbans, wildfires in Los Angeles, and flooding in Venice, which are central to the novel's concerns. However, the author experiments with the genre of a realistic climate change novel by incorporating a mythical world into its contemporary storyline, thereby mixing the everyday lives of the characters with the improbable. He loads the narrative with strange occurrences, coincidences, and premonitions alongside scientific explanations behind the climatic disturbances, emphasising the unpredictability and complexity of the phenomena.

The novel follows the journey of Dinanath Datta, Deen in short, a Brooklyn-based Bengali businessman — "a dealer in rare books and Asian antiquities" (*Gun Island* 3) who becomes entangled in a quest that takes him from the Sundarbans to Los Angeles and Venice, tracing the lore of the Gun Merchant. Deen's journey is not just geographical but also a deep dive into the intersections of myth, history, and the urgent reality of climate change. He comes to know about the myth of the Gun Merchant, which is a localised version of the popular Indian myth of Chand Sadagar and Manasa Devi and goes to the Sundarbans to visit a shrine associated with the myth. Deen's visit to the shrine unleashes a series of improbable and unlikely events, exposing the 'strange realities' of the Age of Anthropocene. A king cobra that resides in the interior of the dhaam comes out and strings Tipu, a local young boy who guides Deen to the shrine. Though Tipu

recovers in the hospital after receiving a dose of rare antivenin, the snake bite seems to grant him a special power, giving him access to knowledge beyond human comprehension. He foresees a threat to Rani, a river dolphin, and his prediction comes true when Rani, along with her entire pod, beaches themselves on the shore at about the same time he had anticipated. Tipu starts believing himself to be a reincarnation of the merchant himself and sees Rafi, the grandson of the caretaker of the shrine, as Captain Illyas, his co-traveller to the Bonduk Dwip (which is eventually revealed as present-day Venice), and finally leaves the Sundarbans towards the island. When the novel ends, both Rafi and Tipu reach Venice, completing the journey once taken by the merchant himself. Meanwhile, Deen, too, becomes strangely fascinated by the myth and ends up following in the footsteps of the legendary merchant.

LeMenager emphasises the importance of memory along with speculation in climate fiction, suggesting "attachment to multiple generations, distant futures as well as distant pasts" to survive "our diminished present" (236). Her suggestion can be interpreted as the significance of drawing on inherited knowledge from past generations, preserved as cultural memory in myths and legends, in order to manage the present crisis and thereby sustain the future. In *Gun Island*, the author situates the myth of Manasa Devi within the historical context of the seventeenth-century global climatic upheavals by mentioning that the merchant flees his homeland due to frequent floods and draughts (*Gun Island* 141). So, the myth in the novel is depicted not merely as an imaginary tale but as a historical account that resonates with our current catastrophic reality. In this sense, the Gun Merchant becomes a precursor to modern-day climate refugees like Rafi and Tipu in the novel. By linking the present crisis to the past experiences of the mythical characters, the novel presents the myth as a didactic tale about environmental crises. The merchant finally escapes the wrath of Manasa Devi when he accepts her power and devotes himself to her worship. The novel suggests that the current environmental disruptions throughout the world are nothing but "signs of nature biting back: the retaliation of the Manasa Devi" (Gilson 272). Therefore, in order to survive the present crisis, we too must rediscover our "kinship with other beings" and "transcend the isolation" that entraps our species (Ghosh, *The Great Derangement* 217).

According to Goodbody and Johns-Putra, one of the key challenges in representing climate change in novels is the "invisibility" of the phenomenon, as it often exists "outside immediate [human] experience" and is primarily constructed through "the rational discourse of science" (234-35). Ghosh addresses this challenge in *Gun Island* by bringing the phenomenon of climate change from the abstract realm of scientific discourse into the tangible realm of everyday human experience. The narrative revolves around the protagonist, Deen's mundane day-to-day activities such as travelling, meeting people, attending conferences, making calls and emails, sharing posts on social media, etc., all of which become tools for the author to represent the changing scenarios of the Anthropocene. Deen's conversations with different characters like the scientist Piya, the historian Cinta, the boatman Horen, the nurse Moyna from the Sundarbans, and young refugees like Rafi and Tipu provide varied insights into the climate crisis. Most importantly, more than these external activities, the novel focuses on the inside of the characters, on their thoughts, emotions, and personal growth in response to the changing world around them. By embedding discussions of climate change within everyday conversations and activities, Ghosh normalises the discourse around the Anthropocene. This normalisation reflects how climate change becomes a part of the characters' daily consciousness, influencing their worldview and actions.

The myth of Manasa Devi, too, plays a crucial role in integrating the novel's discourse on the Anthropocene into the sphere of everyday life. For the people of the Sundarbans, as well as other communities in West Bengal and Assam, the myth of Manasa Devi is deeply ingrained in their belief system. Saba Pirzadeh notes that "upon arrival in the Sundarbans, Deen discovers

the myth to be part of the everyday vernacular and belief systems such that local people have built multiple shrines to pay homage to the Devi" (106). The locals believe that Manasa Devi protects them from natural calamities such as storms and floods. This illustrates how the myth is interwoven with their daily lives and survival strategies, making it highly relevant for representing the lived experience of the Anthropocene from the perspective of these inhabitants. The decisions of characters like Tipu and Rafi to leave the Sundarbans due to climate-related problems, following in the footsteps of the Gun Merchant, underline the myth's immense significance in their lives. From this perspective, the myth becomes a vehicle for expressing the lived reality of the Anthropocene for these communities, making the global phenomenon of climate change tangible and immediate.

While discussing the drastic transformations brought about by climate change, LeMenager refers to the emergence of "a new everyday" in the Anthropocene (221). Ghosh, in the novel, illustrates this 'new everyday' by depicting the disruption of traditional life in the Sundarbans region of India — an area he identifies as "extremely vulnerable" to climate change (Malhotra Web). The novel details the catastrophic impact of Cyclone Aila in 2009 on the inhabitants of the Sundarbans; it describes the extensive damage caused by the cyclone, which led to the sea inundating inland areas, infusing fertile lands with saltwater to such a degree that they became barren and unsuitable for agriculture, probably for generations. Beyond these catastrophic events, the narrative also addresses the gradual, everyday effects of climate change in the area, which have rendered life untenable for the islanders. Moyna, a local woman, reflects on the changing environment in the Sundarbans:

> (I)t seemed as though both land and water were turning against those who lived in the Sundarbans. When people tried to dig wells, an arsenic-laced brew gushed out of the soil; when they tried to shore up embankments the tides rose higher and pulled them down again. Even fishermen could barely get by; where once their boats would come back loaded with catch, now they counted themselves lucky if they netted a handful of fry. (Ghosh, *Gun Island* 49)

The lines poignantly capture the plight of the ecosystem people who are amongst the first to endure the gradual, "moment-by-moment loss of the world" due to climate change (LeMenager 225). The natural resources — land and water — that once sustained these communities have become hostile. Their intergenerational knowledge and traditional ways of life are being dismantled in the face of recent environmental changes, forcing the inhabitants to adapt to new realities. Many of them have left their ancestral professions of cultivation and fishing to end up as refugees in distant lands. Rafi tells Deen about his grandfather's reluctance to teach him traditional survival methods on the islands, believing the natural environment had altered too drastically: "[T]he rivers and the forest and the animals are no longer as they were … things were changing so much, and so fast, that I wouldn't be able to get by here — he told me that one day I would have no choice but to leave" (*Gun Island* 86). Young people like Rafi are thus compelled to migrate illegally in search of better opportunities. The narrative traces the migratory journeys of these climate refugees from South Asia and reveals the harrowing world of human trafficking and illegal migration driven by the climate crisis. By focusing on the life struggles of these individuals, the novel highlights the emotional and psychological trauma involved in adjusting to the 'new everyday' of the Anthropocene.

Most importantly, the novel's concern over climate change and migration does not remain confined to human society alone and rather extends to include tales of non-human beings. According to Serpil Oppermann, "species migration is part of the tragic consequence of … violence practiced every day in geographies that kindle human as well as multispecies migrations. If we are not able to see this cross-species kinship of fates, needs, and troubles … we risk missing

a huge part of the picture" (245). Ghosh, in his novel, includes this other part of the picture of the everyday Anthropocene by describing extensive species movement due to disruption in the ecology. The novel vividly portrays how alterations in climate, such as shifts in temperature and humidity, are disrupting the traditional migratory patterns of creatures, including snakes, dolphins, spiders, and even shipworms, pushing them into new, often unexpected, habitats. For instance, Ghosh describes an event where yellow-bellied snakes, typically inhabitants of warmer southern waters, are found on the shores of Venice Beach, a phenomenon becoming more frequent as ocean temperatures rise, nudging these snakes to venture northward. Similarly, the brown recluse spider, known for its venomous bite and traditionally confined to certain geographical areas, is expanding its territory rapidly across Europe, a shift attributed to the increasing temperatures.

The non-human perspective is highlighted in the novel, particularly through the story of Rani and her pod. Rani is the name of an individual river dolphin of a species called *Orcaella brevirostris*, on which Piya, a marine biologist, has been doing her research in the Sundarbans. Piya tells Deen that she is familiar with the usual routes of Rani and her pod. But recently, their movements have become "increasingly erratic" due to rising sea levels and the consequent changes in the composition of the waters of the Sundarbans (*Gun Island* 92). As the water becomes more saline, they abandon their usual hunting grounds and move upstream, where they face other, more dangerous threats — "some had been ensnared by fishermen's nets, and some had been hit by motor boats and steamers" (*Gun Island* 92). So, only a few members, including Rani, are left in the pod.

Through Piya, the novel exposes the various calamities that marine species face due to the anthropogenic activities of human beings, such as oceanic dead zones, massive fish kills, the beaching of dolphins, etc. She explains to Deen that oceanic dead zones are "vast stretches of water that have a very low oxygen content — too low for fish to survive" (95). These areas have been expanding rapidly, largely due to the accumulation of chemicals from fertilisers. They have also begun to emerge in rivers, particularly at points where rivers flow into the sea. Piya thinks that Rani and her pod may be facing this kind of disturbance in the water due to the effluents from a nearby refinery, and therefore, they have been changing their usual routes.

Throughout the narrative, the author consistently draws parallels between the experiences of human and non-human entities as victims of the climate crisis; for example, the following sympathetic words of Piya about Rani exactly replicate the emotions felt by the human refugees from the Sundarbans:

> And it must be hardest on Rani, knowing that the young ones depend on her. There she is, perfectly adapted to her environment, perfectly at home in it — and then things begin to change, so that all those years of learning become useless, the places you know best can't sustain you anymore 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. (Ghosh, *Gun Island* 97)

The passage reflects the disruption of normalcy for the non-human species as well since Rani's years of adaptation become futile when her familiar environment can no longer sustain her. The emotional and psychological toll on Rani, as she struggles to find new hunting grounds for her dependents, represents the case of countless animals whose lives are upended by habitat disruption and climate change. Interestingly, the lines closely echo Moyna and Rafi's comment about the precarity of human life in the Sundarbans. In fact, the life journeys of human and non-human migrants are also made identical, emphasising their shared sufferings due to global climate change. Like the pod of dolphins, Rafi and other migrants from South Asia face dire consequences in European countries, where they immigrate illegally in search of a better life. During his stay in Venice, Deen encounters several Bangladeshi workers, most of whom are

climate migrants. The novel provides insights into the lives of these migrant workers, both before and after their migration. Their stories are almost the same; driven by poverty and natural calamities, they flee to the rich countries of the West, where they again live a life of drudgery and threat, as their rights and needs are never recognised by the host country.

The novel juxtaposes this grim reality of the global climate crisis experienced by marginalised communities and non-human creatures with the complacency of the world's privileged classes, who still perceive the climate crisis as a futuristic scenario relegated to science fiction. The author critiques the detached attitude of the world's elites towards the looming threats of climate change, their indifference stemming from not yet facing its direct consequences. An illustrative moment occurs during a conference in Los Angeles that Deen attends, where the keynote speaker discusses the "Little Ice Age" of the seventeenth century as the onset of our climatic woes, cautioning about a perilous future. Yet, his serious warnings are met with laughter from the audience. One attendee even dismissively comments, "I feel like I'm back in 1999, arguing with some kid who thinks the world is going to end at the stroke of midnight" (*Gun Island* 124). This was followed by an announcement from the conference manager that they had to change the venue of the conference due to the wildfire, but the schedule would remain the same. He ends the announcement with a haughty remark: "we've got to show Mother Nature that we're not quitters" (*Gun Island* 125). For these privileged individuals, who observe the wildfires of LA from the comfort of their business class flights or the opulent dining rooms of their five-star hotels, the climate crisis still remains an abstract concern, a distant future. The novel challenges this view by highlighting the disruptions that have already begun to affect their privileged lifestyle due to various climate-related upheavals. Ghosh does not want to project the climate apocalypse into a distant future; rather, for him, the apocalypse has already started. Cinta acts as the author's mouthpiece as she tells Deen that every day, when she reads the newspaper, she feels as if "the Little Ice Age is rising from its grave and reaching out to us" (*Gun Island* 125).

After returning from the Sundarbans, Deen experiences persistent discomfort and disturbance for reasons he cannot fully grasp. Rakibul Khan describes this state of Deen in terms of 'environmental uncanny' born out of the ecological awareness he gains during his visit to the Sundarbans (200). In *The Great Derangement,* Ghosh distinguishes the environmental uncanny from the uncanniness of the supernatural, often depicted in fiction. According to Ghosh, environmental uncanny "pertains to non-human forces and beings" and has "no human referents at all," whereas elements of the supernatural, such as ghosts, are none but projections of humans once alive (*Derangement* 42-43). From this perspective, Deen's uneasiness stems from his heightened consciousness of the agency of non-human beings as he witnesses the destructive effect of climate change on local communities as well as aquatic animals. His uncanny feeling represents the psychological and emotional trauma of climate change. Notably, Ghosh argues that despite their seemingly non-human characteristics, the 'uncanniness' of climate-related phenomena paradoxically arises from the knowledge that they are the result of our own reckless activities: "They are the mysterious work of our own hands returning to haunt us in unthinkable shapes and forms" (*Derangement* 43). In *Gun Island*, therefore, the portrayal of environmental uncanny becomes a means for the author to offer a critique of the everyday Anthropocene, practised by the privileged classes of both the Global North and the Global South.

Ghosh believes that the climate crisis is a "crisis of culture" (*Derangement* 12). This culture, which Ghosh refers to, is the culture of a 'modern' lifestyle that leads to overconsumption of resources as well as excessive carbon emissions. During a conversation between Deen and his Venetian friend Giacinta, Ghosh skillfully shifts the reader's focus to the minutiae of daily life that contribute to the larger ecological crisis. Deen provides a scientific explanation for species migration due to global warming caused by the emission of excessive carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. In contrast, Cinta challenges the perceived naturalness of these alterations in

the environment, highlighting the significant impact of human activities on these changes. “And where do these gases come from?” Cinta questions. “Do they not come from cars and planes and factories … whistling kettles and electric toasters and espresso machines? Is all this natural too — that we should need these things that nobody needed a hundred years ago” (*Gun Island* 214)? Cinta’s rhetorical questions bring to light the unsustainable nature of current global consumption. At the same time, it points to the inherent inequality at the heart of the climate crisis. While the privileged classes in developed regions enjoy access to technologies and gadgets that emit vast amounts of carbon dioxide, impoverished communities in underdeveloped areas, like those in the Sundarbans, often bear the brunt of the consequences — such as severe weather patterns and rising sea levels — without having contributed significantly to the problem.

Notably, Ghosh believes that climate injustice is deeply connected with other forms of injustice in society, including colonial histories, and so we cannot discuss them in isolation from other societal issues. “[C]limate change, mass dislocations, pollution, environmental degradation, political breakdown, and the Covid-19 pandemic are all cognate effects of the ever-increasing acceleration of the last three decades. Not only are these crises interlinked — they are all deeply rooted in history, and they are all ultimately driven by the dynamics of global power,” he argues (*The Nutmeg’s Curse* 158). The novel demonstrates these views by highlighting the link between environmental migration and the socio-economic background of the migrants. The scene involving the Blue Boat makes a significant statement regarding the current refugee crisis and the global power politics rooted in colonial history. Palash, a Bengali immigrant, comments that the Blue Boat has become “a symbol of everything that’s going wrong with the world — inequality, climate change, capitalism, corruption, the arms trade, the oil industry” (*Gun Island* 199). Ghosh suggests that those refugees from the Global South boarding the Blue Boat represent the global inequalities of power stemming from the histories of colonialism and recent neo-colonialist capitalism. He hints that the European countries have their share in the fate of these climate refugees, both due to their history as colonialists as well as their massive role in accelerating global warming. Significantly, Deen compares the refugees with the indentured labourers of colonial times. Both are transported under dehumanised conditions. However, the process that was once started by the European countries has now gone out of their control. “This was why those angry young men [people who come from different European countries to prevent the Blue Boat from entering Italy] 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” (*Gun Island* 280). The scenes around the Blue Boat thus serve as a reminder of the interconnectedness of historical actions and present realities, urging a reflection on responsibility, justice, and humanity’s collective future.

LeMenager, too, while discussing climate fiction written from an African American perspective, recognises the inseparability of the Anthropocene from colonialist practices that include “racism, the first act of enslavement, the first rape, the first territorial theft” (227). Viewing the everyday Anthropocene through the lens of an “anticolonialist” or “Black Anthropocene” perspective, she argues, adds depth to a key concern in all climate fiction, i.e., the loss of humanity and civilisation, often with “an explicit call for new humanisms and new cultural forms” (227). The narrative of *Gun Island*, especially the last chapter, expresses such a call for a new humanism that will be based on both inter-human and intra-human relationships. Ghosh brought people belonging to different national, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds onto the rescue ship Lucania, which set out to support the refugees on the Blue Boat. The “outpouring of hope, goodness, love, charity and generosity” that the people on board display towards the refugees embodies the novel’s urge for a reassessment of the power relations within societies and nations (*Gun Island* 271). But, most importantly, Ghosh brings into the scene multispecies solidarity as various creatures of the sea and the sky begin to circle around the Blue Boat — “a halo of birds

spinning above," "a chakra of dolphins and whales" down in the water, leading to a moment of bioluminescence (*Gun Island* 282). This scene reminds Rafi of a particular moment in the Gun Merchant myth, in which the merchant is rescued from pirates by "the creatures of the sky and sea rising up" (*Gun Island* 281). The miraculous moment leads the captain of the ship to take the momentous decision to defy the government order and rescue the refugees, as he looks at it as a divine order. This scene of multispecies intervention in the human affair, echoing the myth, suggests the entanglement of human fate with that of non-human beings in order to survive the age of the Anthropocene.

LeMenager notes that her notion of the 'Everyday Anthropocene' resonates with Donna Haraway's idea of 'staying with the trouble'. Haraway writes: "…staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings" (1). LeMenager sees this perspective as "an antidote to the 'abstract futurism' related to the epochal understanding of the Anthropocene (226). Notably, in the same book, Haraway proposes 'making kin' both within and beyond our species as a strategy for 'staying with the trouble'. By the term 'kin', she means "something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy;" in this sense, "all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense" (103). Similarly, Deborah Bird Rose's concepts of 'dialogue' and 'connectivity' are also crucial in understanding the novel's agenda of multispecies kinship as a solution for the environmental crisis. Rose advocates for an ethic of connectivity underpinned by the understanding that life on Earth is an intricate web of mutual dependencies. She eloquently states, "The logic of connection holds that the web of life is a web of mutual inter-dependencies. Human beings are enmeshed in webs of life as much as are koalas, eucalyptus, flying foxes, coral, vultures and bacteria" ("The Ecological Humanities" 5). This perspective necessitates a profound respect and care for the 'Other' — both marginalised humans and non-human entities — and calls for the cultivation of a dialogical environmental ethic that challenges the prevailing Western narrative of hierarchical dominance. In her article, "Indigenous Ecologies and an Ethic of Connection," Rose articulates the concept of dialogue as an antidote to the hierarchical dichotomies — such as mind/body, man/woman, human/nature, civilised/savage — that perpetuate Western patterns of domination and exclusion. She critiques these binary oppositions as monologues, or "series of singularities" (176), where the 'Other' is rendered invisible and voiceless by the dominant discourse. Rose contends that it is imperative for us to transcend our "monologic self" and engage in meaningful dialogue "with the people of the world and the world itself" (177). To foster this dialogue with our earthly cohabitants, Rose champions the practice of 'other-focused care', urging us to embrace a principle of care not only for our human counterparts but also for the non-human beings with whom we share our environment.

These concepts are integral to understanding the parallel depiction of human and non-human migration stories in *Gun Island*. Ghosh, like Haraway and Rose, posits that living in the Anthropocene demands a reconceptualisation of kinship and community. The novel's final scene of a multispecies assemblage symbolically represents this expanded notion of kinship. It posits that survival in the Anthropocene does not solely hinge on technological solutions or grand geopolitical manoeuvres but also on the everyday choices and ethical stances that guide how we live with and relate to the numerous other forms of life with which we share our world.

Goodbody and Johns-Putra observe that novelists often struggle to represent climate change in fiction due to its "enormous scale, both spatial and temporal" (235). To manage this, writers frequently employ what Timothy Clark refers to as 'scale framing', which involves reframing the issue within a manageable scale (qtd. in Goodbody and Johns-Putra 236). Ghosh employs the technique of scale framing in the novel by zooming in on the lives of inhabitants in the Sundarbans and concentrating on the personal stories of characters like Deen, Tipu, and Rafi. At

the same time, he connects these local experiences with the global scenario by referencing environmental catastrophes in different parts of the world. The technique of scale framing, though necessary for depicting climate change in fiction, often results in a simplified view of the issue as primarily a human problem, which, in turn, reinforces the notion of human exceptionalism, as argued by Goodbody and Johns-Putra (235). However, Ghosh's narrative consciously avoids falling into the trap of human exceptionalism. The myth within the novel, interpreted as a story of non-human agency, plays a crucial role in this regard. Additionally, the inclusion of non-human suffering, particularly the episode involving the river dolphin, Rani, helps in effectively framing the climate crisis as an everyday multispecies experience.

In fact, the novel emerges as a critique of human exceptionalism, for it questions human reason as the sole arbiter of truth. Contrarily, the novel elevates the role of instinct and other 'non-rational' forms of understanding in apprehending the realities of our age. The famous environmental philosopher Val Plumwood's critique of rationalist culture is relevant to understanding this stand in the novel. In her book *Environmental Culture*, Plumwood argues that the present age of ecological crisis demands a change in our culture because the crisis has developed primarily from the rationalist culture of the West and its associated human/nature dualism. The rationalist culture, according to her, promotes human superiority over and separation from nature and other non-human beings and relegates them to the sphere of the Other, diminishing the rights of non-human beings to the Earth and to aspects of mind, reason, and ethical consideration (Plumwood 4).

These ideas are vividly illustrated in the novel through the character of Giacinta Schiavon, a renowned Venetian historian and friend of Deen, who recounts her premonitory unease — a "sense of foreboding" — prior to the tragic car accident that claimed her husband and daughter (*Gun Island* 39). Often serving as the author's voice, Cinta challenges the primacy of rational knowledge throughout the novel. During her visit to Kolkata, she is fascinated by a roadside Jatra performance of the Manasa Devi legend and is especially captivated by its spellbound audience. Her ideas are, however, juxtaposed with those of Deen, who says, "I pride myself on being a rational, secular, scientifically minded person … I will not, in any account, go along with a whole lot of superstitious mumbo-jumbo" (*Gun Island* 35). His words at once differentiate him from the simple-minded audience of the Jatra Performance, for whom "the poem is alive" and "more real than real life," revealing at the same time his disbelief in the power of the non-human world (*Gun Island* 35). Deen, at this juncture of the novel, appears as an advocate of Western ideas of knowledge and rationalism. His rationality does not allow him to believe in the myth, which is mostly about the power and agency of the non-human world, represented by Manasa Devi. Against such "rationalist hyper separation of human identity from nature," the novel advocates for a position of ethical and ecological relationality (Plumwood 9). The story gradually subverts the idea of rational superiority by presenting events and occurrences that are beyond human rational explanation so that by the end of the novel, both Deen and the readers become profoundly aware of the non-human and non-rational ways of understanding the world, which are, the novel suggests, necessary to re-examine the present environmental conditions. Rakibul Khan rightly observes: "While for Deen, non-human agency appears to be supernatural, gradually he begins to respond to the enmeshed relationship between humans and non-humans, both emotionally and rationally" (187).

The American writer Roy Scranton, in his famous memoir *Learning to Die in the Anthropocene*, emphasises the need for more than scientific studies and military strategies to adapt to the challenges of our "strange new world" (qtd. in LeMenager 227). Scranton argues for the necessity of "new ideas … new myths and new stories … a new conceptual understanding of reality, and a new relationship to the deep polyglot traditions of human culture;" he insists that we require "a new vision of who 'we' are" and calls for "a new humanism" (227). LeMenager aligns

Scranton's idea of 'new humanism' with the concepts of 'posthumanism' or 'multispeciesism' as proposed by thinkers like Octavia Butler and Donna Haraway. The treatment of climate change in *Gun Island* explicitly reflects this line of thinking since it looks for an alternative reality for the Anthropocene not merely through scientific reasoning but via traditional knowledge systems such as myths and beliefs, suggesting that wisdom from diverse cultural traditions can contribute to a more sustainable and inclusive future. The novel insists that we must restore our primordial connection with the non-human world because it is only by listening to the other species and recognising their importance as our co-partners on the planet that we can survive the environmental catastrophes witnessed by the contemporary world. The novel presents Manasa Devi not only as a goddess but also as "a negotiator, a translator" between humans and non-human beings. She stands as "a voice-carrier between two species that had no language in common and no shared means of communication" (*Gun Island* 152-53). By weaving the myth into the contemporary narrative of the climate crisis, the novel invites modern readers to acknowledge and embrace non-human presence and agency as integral parts of their everyday reality.

To conclude, it can be said that *Gun Island* is a literary manifestation of the concept of everyday Anthropocene. The novel vividly portrays the stark realities of the age of 'great derangement'. From environmental disasters to human trafficking, disruption of traditional lifestyles to conflict over refugee settlement, species migration to species extinction, and environmental pollution to biodiversity loss, the novel encompasses all the myriad aspects of 'uncanny realities' that our age is witnessing. Notably, the novel does not focus on the catastrophic events themselves but on their ripple effects — how they influence the characters' movements, their interactions, and their understanding of the world, emphasising the continuous, often unnoticed, impact of environmental changes on our daily lives. Unlike conventional climate fiction, Ghosh does not set his story in an apocalyptic future; rather, he focuses on the present moment and the lived realities of his readers. Furthermore, though his novel contains a discussion on apocalypticism, it ends with a note of optimism. This optimism emerges from the potential for a multispecies kinship, presenting it as a redemptive path for humanity's fractured relationship with the natural world.

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