Subaltern Ecologies: Cultures of Concealment and Carbon Economy in Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*

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In his excellent introduction on Gayatri Spivak, Stephen Morton writes that "the subaltern is a position without identity or a situational term that eludes positive categorisation" (13). Hence, as Morton rightly contends, situating the conditions of marginalization, exclusion, loss of agency, and attendant extraction can be some of the keywords in the discourse on the subaltern. The neologism "subaltern," used initially as a description of a rank in the military, was redeployed by Gramsci to explore power relations, and later adopted by Spivak, marking a radical change in its meaning and application. For Spivak, "[t]hat word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that doesn't fall under strict class analysis. I like that because it has no theoretical rigor" (1990: 141).

Ever since, subaltern theory has acquired a very rigorous theoretical contestation, particularly within postcolonial societies. However, we are at that moment of a critical threshold, which urgently requires us to reconfigure our conceptualization of the subaltern, so that it may also open up to include ecological crisis. Spivak also suggests that the "actual practice" of Subaltern studies requires a methodology that is "closer to deconstruction" (1987: 198). This is exactly the kind of clarion call that underlines Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement* (2016; hereafter cited as *TGD*), more so when he asks us to broaden our domain of "recognition" (2) to include the presence of non-humans. Extending Ghosh's idea to (re)cognize our relationship with ecology, this essay argues that non-humans and the endangered indigenous communities in different parts of the world, including developing nations, can be seen as the subalterns of the present times; they are treated as disposables, and their lives do not matter in the capitalistic formulations of the planet. Yet, like the proletarians, they play the most important role in sustaining and preserving life on earth. Evidently, the bodies of proletarians are extracted since capital cannot function without such bodies. Likewise, non-humans, nature and indigenous communities are seen as resources, central to accelerating the process of capitalist accumulation.

Keeping this methodology in mind, I use the term "subaltern ecology" to point to the loss of agency of non-humans, nature, and the endangered indigenous communities. The article suggests that resource extraction and "accumulation of carbon" (3) are driven by cultures of concealment and sustained by the "carbon economy,"

exacerbated as they are by the racialized global capitalism, and its resolute blindness to the fundamental principles of ecology, thus ignoring the fact that all forms of life on this planet are interconnected.

In this article, I argue that concealment cultures and carbon economy have led to the present condition of environmental degradation. By drawing from Amitav Ghosh's *TGD,* the article attempts to show that both the concealment culture and carbon economy are methodologies that retain and even heighten the colonial power structures, leading to the treatment of non-humans, natural resources, and endangered indigenous communities as "subaltern ecologies." The article identifies the exploitation of these subaltern ecologies as moment of planetary emergency and following Ghosh's call for a new cognition of our social relationships, it advances an approach of interconnectedness, which can be seen as a planetary aesthetics.

The cultures of concealment and structuration of carbon economy are essentially vital to present a glossy picture of the global world and to ensure the maintenance of economic inequities, which can then be exploited by global powers. As Ghosh avers, "the poor nations of the world are not poor because they were indolent or unwilling; their poverty is itself an effect of the inequities created by the carbon economy" (148). Ghosh argues that carbon emissions continue "to be a major, although unacknowledged factor in the politics of contemporary politics of global warming" (146). Evidently, these themes underline Amitav Ghosh's climate concerns in *TGD*. The complex of rich nation-states and corporations, which Ghosh sees as a "deep state" (176), have led to the present moment of planetary crises, arising as they do from the acceleration and "accumulation of carbon in the atmosphere" (9). However, Ghosh promptly adds a caveat that it would be naïve to assign the task of climate repair singularly to the developed nations. Rather, it should be a collective act if we have to preserve the elemental forms of life on this planet, and hence the role of developing nations cannot be overlooked. Nonetheless, a cursory look at any balance sheet of environmental justice will suffice to indicate that the "shape of the global carbon economy" was moulded and accelerated by the "major European powers" in "much of Asia and Africa" (145), buttressed by its technologization and the attendant industrialization during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Contextualizing the ecological inequities, Andrew Simms contends that "it is the inescapable ecological debts of the rich that threaten our collective future" (69).

The great derangement can be seen as the acidification of oceans, chemicalization of life, deforestation, melting cryosphere, radioactive waste, and other forms of exploitation of natural resources, which has become a defining feature of the modern world. Within the environmental humanities, this age is popularly known as the "Anthropocene," a term first used by the Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen and his friend Eugene F. Stoermer to emphasize the role of the human as a geological agent. Crutzen and Stoermer argue:

> Considering [the] . . . major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere, and at all, including global, scales, it seems to us more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term "Anthropocene" for the current geological epoch. (23)

Likewise, Ghosh argues that "the Anthropocene presents a challenge […] to our common-sense understandings and beyond that to contemporary culture in general" (12). Hence, Ghosh's main concern that grips *TGD* is to create possibilities for more narrative spaces to register the ongoing cataclysmic changes giving way to public emotions and urgent political interventions, and most importantly, to give a structure to non-human life, which this essay identifies as "subaltern ecologies."

The non-human or the subaltern ecologies attain the fate of "insectual view" (2020), to use Pavan Malreddy's term. The insectual view places no importance on non-human or subaltern ecologies within the bioeconomies of capitalism. These rules are precarious in the sense that subaltern ecologies are coerced to supply blood, oxygen, and other natural resources to mould, nourish and strengthen the structure and lives in the Global North. A point can be made that the networks of the deep state have muted the vitality of subaltern ecologies. So deeply structured and designedly racial are these rules, that the imaginary spheres of the Anglosphere and other rich "deep states" consider subaltern ecologies as nothing more than processors. The metaphor of "processor" is useful since we know that they are used to get a speedy and meaningful outcome. They act as catalysts and as such do not have their own life, controlled and instructed as they are by a set of instructions devoid of human touch. Ghosh's *TGD* is replete with such references to speedy developments, maximizing profit, and strengthening power hierarchies that result in the creation of "subaltern ecologies." One such example can be seen when Ghosh critiques the insatiable desire of our times, which are reflected in the "contemporary trends in architecture" […] that "favour shiny, glass-and-metal-plated towers" (14). Seeing this trend of self-destruction, "that are rooted in the 'regularity of bourgeois life'" (47), it is no wonder then that in a blink of an eye our environmental surroundings change. Driven and led by the imperatives of the modern keyword of progress, the nexus of capital-state has failed to take note of "the place of non-humans in the modern" world (88). Hence, the positioning of the non-humans as processors are well-suited to re-examine our ideological and moral failures, culminating in the weaker health of the planet.

Ghosh suggests that there is substantial merit in renewing our relationship with the planet, which will allow us frameworks to understand the ongoing environmental catastrophe. This renewed relationship can render "subaltern ecologies" a vital recognition, making us realize the role of non-humans and natural resources in making the planet habitable for humans. To *recognize* is to identify and, according to Ghosh, it is "a passage from ignorance to knowledge" (5). Part of the problem of the present-day crisis emanates from the fact that the world is transforming at an increasingly

accelerated speed, which lacks any interaction with ecology. Our relationship with ecology has rather turned out be more transactional, which is a hindrance in recuperating planetary health. The transactional problem has been exacerbated by the digital world, which has turned the proletarian class and endangered indigenous communities into "burnout figures," to borrow a term from Byung-Chul Han (2010). A rich passage from *TGD* points to such haunting changes around us: "overnight, a stretch of riverbank will disappear, sometimes taking houses and people with it, but elsewhere a shallow mudbank will arise and within weeks the shore will have broadened by several feet" (7). The climate change crisis is so dynamic that Ghosh asks us to heighten our sense of awareness, broaden our imagination and relationship with subaltern ecologies. In fact, the accelerated changes can be damaging to the extent that the entire cartography and the attendant sense of recognition becomes unfamiliar, as Ghosh mentions that "even a child will begin a story about his grandmother with words: 'in those days the river wasn't here and the village was not there where it is […]'" (8). Hence, what is important to understand and overcome are the cultures of concealment, that design our modern world of eco-disasters.

Cultures of Concealment

We are moving towards the sixth mass extinction if the current trend of carbon emissions continues unchecked. This concealment is multivalent, including digital technologies which use up the earth's resources, such as cryptocurrencies (consider Bitcoin which uses more electricity than the entire nation of Argentina). As Aleksandr Wansbrough notes, bringing digital technology into relation with capitalism, "the internet as a medium is material, but as with some proselytizers of capitalism, it proclaims an infinite growth" (92). This technologized reconfiguration of the modern world has brought us to a state where the calculation of profit is prioritized over human and more-than-human bodies and natural resources, thus damaging subaltern ecologies.

The prevalence of climate change-induced catastrophe also implies that nation-states and networks of capitalist economy need to reimagine their notion of progress. Ghosh terms the duo of powerful nation-state and corporations a "deep state" (176) given their powerful interplay in the neoliberal age, resulting in "a deadlocked public sphere" (176) or a "paralysis" (177). The "deep state" sets out the global agenda with little or almost no concern for the developing nations and the subaltern ecologies. The Paris Agreement is the best example to understand the politics of "denial" (2012: 9), to use a term by Peter J. Jacques. As we know, the Paris Agreement set out a supposedly euphoric task of lowering the "global mean temperatures to 1.5 degrees Celsius—a target that is widely believed to be already beyond reach" (Ghosh: 205). The seriousness of world leaders and rich corporations in tackling an important issue that concerns the future of life on earth can be understood if one tries to read between the gaps

and silences of the Agreement's language. Despite the fact that the Paris Agreement lays down thirty-one declarations, the absurdity of the Agreement as a whole comes out forcefully in the omission of words like "catastrophe" and just a single use of the word "disaster" (207), as if everything is normal with life on earth. It therefore should not come as a shock to read that the Agreement sees climate change as "a common concern for humankind" (207).

Concealment of life-sustaining facts, as witnessed in the Paris Agreement, is singularly alarming as this kind of culture can damage the health of the planet. Santiago Zabala sees this "absence of emergency" locked within the categories of "politics, finance, and culture" (5). In fact, "whoever does not submit to the ongoing absence of emergency is defined as mistaken or, worse, on the wrong side of reality—maybe even the wrong side of the border" (5). No wonder, then, that Zabala emphasizes a turn to "emergency aesthetics" (9), through which artists and humanists can possibly change the world. The emergency aesthetics can provide us with the existential reflection needed to mitigate the ongoing planetary crisis.

Yet, Zabala's "emergency aesthetics" is not lent credence by the global gatekeeping of natural resources. This ongoing denialism of the "deep state" through its concealment culture simply reflects the greed of extractivism, which Imre Szeman and Jennifer Wenzel see as "the name for every process and practice through which value is generated for capitalism" (2021: 505). This greed, then, becomes the motor of the Paris Agreement since it "does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation" (Ghosh 212). Hence, the principle of extractivism is directly linked to the cultures of concealment. No harm or no damage involves no compensation, and the freedom to continue the extraction of all that sustains, nourishes and promotes life on this planet. Ghosh sees this inclination towards rampant extraction as "humanity's present derangement" (149).

This great derangement makes us reflect on the pattern of genocide triggered due to climate change and exacerbated by a sense of ignorance or resolute denialism. Neelu Tummala writes: "[w]e don't appreciate that air pollution is an invisible killer" (online). She goes on to write that "the air we breathe impacts everyone's health but particularly children, older individuals, those on low incomes and people of color. Usually, people in urban areas have the worst impacts" (n.p.). While the impact of carbon emission on poor countries and people is frighteningly unprecedented, the optical illusion that there can be lifeboats for the rich to save them from its clutches is extremely naïve since a damaged ecology will not make any such class or racial discrimination. Yet, the way concealment and denialism try to blur our imagination is disturbing. What else can one make of the Mobil advertisement, which avowedly announces: "Good news: The end of the Earth as we know it is not imminent" (Supran and Oreskes 10). The advert goes on to highlight the power of Nature in order to ensure the march of the carbon economy:

> More than 30 years have passed since the environmental movement began. They made their point. There is no longer a

> need for alarmists . . . [T]o those who think industry and nature cannot coexist, we say show a little respect for Mother Nature. She is one strong lady, resilient and capable of rejuvenation. The environment recovers well from both natural and manmade disasters. (10)

Pointing to the problematic of concealment and "messiness" of representation as advanced by Ghosh in *TGD*, Julia Adeney Thomas argues that "[w]e can act only when we create an appropriate distance between our abstract tools of understanding and the exuberant messiness of reality" (938). From this vantage point, what humanity needs at the moment are modes of resilience to question authoritarian and extractive ideologies by showing them the mirror of these messy conditions of climate change.

Having witnessed the forces of "deep state" that inevitably create a kind of mirage in the public imagination, the next part of this essay argues that the great derangement of the modern world and the fate of subaltern ecologies are part of populist techniques and narratives, which decide what is important and of self-interest for the global forces.

Populism and the fate of Subaltern ecologies

Yochai Benkler *et al.* define populism as an "epistemic crisis in media and politics that threatens the integrity of democratic processes, erodes trust in public institutions, and exacerbates social divisions" (n.p.). Likewise, Ghosh sees populist narratives as part of the global forces, which they use for "the maintenance of the status quo" (194), and their self-expansionist accumulation. Understandably, populist discourses sugar-coat the real emergency facing humanity and the planet's future, and play a crucial role in distorting facts and churning out false narratives to nullify any culpability of the "deep state." A case can be made that populism and denialism are the obverse and the converse of the same coin. Both nourish each other's requirement, and in so doing the subaltern's suffering keeps exacerbating. In fact, Pavan Malreddy *et al.* reflect on the paradoxical nature of populism, which lures belief in its utopic desires only to be shocked by its dystopic disruptions (2020: 2).

The everyday narratives from the political sphere stoke and energize denialism and populism. Such examples can be found abundantly in the rise of the far-right popularity across the world. One such case can be witnessed in the emergence of Alternative für Deutschland (AfD). AfD overtly claims its scepticism and criticism of the European Union; however, a closer look enables one to understand that the rhetoric of denialism is enmeshed in its *modus operandi*, since it links climate change with the beginning of the planetary evolution, foregrounding that climate change "has been going on for as long as the earth has existed" (156). To drive its denialism, AfD boastfully reveals that "[c]arbon dioxide is not a pollutant but an indispensable component of all life" (156). Similarly, in August 2018, Alexander Gauland, the party's spokesperson declared that "here and now, the

AfD is fighting the false doctrine of man-made climate change" and that "0.3 percent of [scientific] studies indicate that global warming is man-made" (Malm 5). Nourished with such rhetoric of concealment/denialism, it is apparent that for the AfD, the whole issue of climate change "comes down to a non-problem." From this vantage point, Pavan Malreddy *et al.* see populism as a "redemptive symptom" that "conceals *and* reveals the limits of democracy […]" (4). Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, democratization of the global world has also led to the decimation of social infrastructures of developing nations (2).

It can be argued that populist discourses, buttressed by cultures of concealment, shape the fate of subaltern ecologies; these can be seen, as attempts to sustain the global circulation of power and economy. In such a flawed and hierarchical nature of power distribution, it is no wonder then that "neo-liberal economies and neo-securities are one" (Chaturvedi and Doyle locs 3256). To give life to subaltern ecologies, according to the geologist David Archer, a restructuring of the world order is needed, which should also entail a reconceptualization of social networks. I will take up the idea of the reconceptualization of social networks in another section, but here it makes sense to discuss the restructuring of the world order in detail. As David Archer suggests, this kind of restructuring would "require cuts in the developed world of about 80 percent. For the United States, Canada and Australia, the cuts would be closer to 90 percent" (163). On a similar note, Ghosh posits problems with Western food production, which he sees as "dangerously resource intensive" (197), and hence, requires around a "dozen fossil fuel calories for each calorie" (Orr 33). Juxtapose this scenario with that of many poor nations where hunger has turned out to be the biggest enemy, and of course, a shame in the face of humanity. According to Ghosh, "the distribution of power in the world […] lies at the core of the climate crisis" (146).

The ongoing degradation of subaltern ecologies is, therefore, also an outcome of the imbalance of carbon emissions. In their analytical essay on ever-widening carbon imbalance, Lucas Chancel and Thomas Piketty mention that the "top 10% emitters contribute to 45% of global emissions, while bottom 50% contribute to 13% of global emissions. Top 10% emitters live on all continents, with one-third of them from emerging countries" (9). They further suggest that "these are inequalities generated by environmental policies that alter income distributions" (12). Economy, as one can witness, is being prioritized over the overall health of the planet. No wonder, then, that the culture of concealment/denialism is needed to wash off one's sense of guilt. Priya Satia terms this erasure of guilt as "conscience management" (6). For Satia, conscience management remained strictly central in the entire British colonial enterprise. It was needed to spread the empire across the world, since a guilt-ridden person/group can jeopardize the profit-making business. This consistency of denialism ensures that the project of selective progress keeps moving unhindered. Within the ambit of capitalist modernity, one can, therefore, easily

witness the juxtaposition of progress and exploitation. However, the balance sheets of such organizations only give space to the progressive aspect, repudiating any traces of guilt. Satia goes on to argue that "conscience and agency are intertwined in our habit of understanding the formerly colonized world with balance sheets of empire" (9). The question, then, that surrounds the British colonial enterprise is also a question that one encounters in the ongoing environmental catastrophe, which according to Priya Satia is: "How did such avowedly 'good' people live with doing bad things?" (5). The answer, of course, can be found in the way historical management of conscience has been carried out by the hierarchical power structure, which is apparently connected to a culture of concealment. After all, it is a larger ethical issue: accepting culpability would essentially result in a kind of moral fog, even reparations.

But the other questions that need to be asked is how can one continue to be blind towards the incidents of climate crisis that are happening around us at regular intervals? Can the heat of the climate melt the greedy attitude of our policymakers? We can try to dig up answers to these pressing questions to find that not only it is a matter of "conscience management," but also to generate distractions and blur the public imagination, which are needed to divert people's attention from something more serious and horrendous with a view to obliterate any hurdles in the accumulative passage of the rich "deep state." The accelerating nature of climate change, however, will not give us much time to change. As Weisman puts it, "either we decide to manage our numbers [. . .] or nature will do it for us" (40). The effects of climate change can be experienced in our everyday life. For example, the bushfires in Australian forests that recently resulted in the loss of "some 143 million mammals, 2.46 billion reptiles, 180 million birds and 51 million frogs were impacted by the country's worst bushfires in decades, the WWF said" (Reuters online). Similarly, the UK, which happens to be one of the G7 members is witnessing "heat-related deaths among people over 65 years," that rose "21 percent between 2004 and 2018, according to data gathered by Climate Coalition" (Paul n.p.). Such ecodisasters are deeply interlocked in the power structures of the carbon economy, reflecting our deranged mind, and rendering perennial harm to "subaltern ecologies."

Carbon Economy

Following Ghosh's argument related to the climate crisis and its synchronization with the modern period, this essay identifies carbon economy as an offshoot of the distorted notion of modern-day progress and its heavy reliance on the fossil fuels. Likewise, "carbon economy" is selective, exclusive, structural, and racial, emanating from extractivism and sustained by undemocratic principles. In *TGD*, Ghosh identifies carbon economy as the driving principle of modern-day democracy in a way that "other variants of modernity came to be suppressed, incorporated, and appropriated" (173) to fit into the template of progress. This fixed definition of progress as envisaged

and practised by the Global North continues to fuel their growth and development, while jeopardizing life conditions in other regions. Ghosh notices this fault line of the undistributed progress and wealth in terms of environmental injustice. He argues that "the fruits of the carbon economy constitute wealth, and […] the poor of the global south have historically been deprived of this wealth" (146).

A primary condition of the "carbon economy" is its sustained deviation from effect and the subsequent precarious view of interconnectedness. In this context, Ghosh asks us to recognize our perilous presence, for in the stories of ecological awareness, "seeing is one of [its] central themes; *not* seeing is another" (38). The dovetailing of carbon with a new world order that underpins the narratives of modern progress reaffirms, according to Ghosh, "the arc of the Great Acceleration," which is strictly aligned to "the trajectory of modernity: it has led to the destruction of communities, to ever greater individualization and anomie, to the industrialization of agriculture and to the centralization of distribution systems" (216). It is significant to note that the world-making exercise remains largely deprived of normative practises. Pheng Cheah maintains that normativity is compellingly vital in "transforming the world made by capitalist globalization" (2). Hence, I argue that to decimate the building blocks of the "carbon economy", we need to go beyond the economic-centric worldview and adopt a planetary view since the world and the planet are two different categories. Whereas the world is largely derived from and run from the human-centric view, particularly the capitalist view, the planet is more encompassing, inclusive and hence, considers non-humans, nature, and even unidentified objects as its building components. The planet makes no discrimination and hence, is distributive, whereas the entire history of world-making is replete with racial prejudices and the Western hegemony, pointing to its extractive process of accumulation. Understandably, the planetary crisis is therefore a crisis of the world-making epistemologies, as well as the structuration and proliferation of the "carbon economy." Likewise, Spivak proposes a need for "the planet to overwrite the globe [...]" and that "the planet is in the species of alterity, belonging to another system; and yet we inhabit it, on loan" (338). Contrastingly, the world is largely constitutive of words, whereas the planet operates on a rhythmic pattern of visible and invisible life forces, most discernible in the way we inhale and exhale, and hence, Ghosh's notion of "interconnectedness" (98) attains primary importance.

Ghosh links the emergence of "interconnectedness" to the continuing deterioration of planetary health. He argues that "the stirrings of the earth have forced us to recognize that we have never been free of non-human constraints" (160), and that "the freakish weather events of today, despite their radically non-human nature, are nonetheless animated by human actions" (42). Ghosh's rehearsal of this interplay between the human and the non-human is suggestive of his clarion call to pay more attention to the cosmic order of the planet, which requires a reformulation of our notion of modernity and progress. Building on to Bruno Latour's idea of time as a linear

category within the imagination of modern life, and hence, "an irreversible arrow, as capitalization, as progress," (1993: loc. 1412), Ghosh points to our collective failure to recognize that such progression "inevitably creates winners or losers" (106), weakening and defying the biosymbiotic order, so integral to heal planetary life conditions.

The question that emerges, then, is how to proceed towards this biosymbiotic order? Whereas world-making is evidently configured on the scale of profit and economy, mostly dominated by the "Anglosphere" (182), planetary consciousness demands a poststructural methodology, pointing to the need to alter our notion of social networks. Aren't the problems of the "subaltern ecologies" and "carbon economy" after all, a crisis that emanates out of structured society, what is also termed as an "archaeology of silence"? (Laclau and Mouffe 7). Likewise, pointing to the "poststructural turn" in anthropology, Malreddy holds that "during the 1980s and 1990s," it challenged "the practice of ethnographic authority, textual representation of cultural description, and the geographical essentialism implied in the very concept of 'culture'" (76). Malreddy's claim is echoed in Stephen Morton's critique of singular and stereotyped epistemology, which raises a thoughtful question, "how might technologies of representation, such as printed books," become meaningful "to illuminate the ways in which the sign systems of the market economy, the media, and the state affect the bodies and lived environments of those who feel the slow violence of debt, capital accumulation, and dispossession most acutely?" (319). Arguably, the assertion of singular over plural epistemologies of world-making is increasingly detrimental for any society, and at the planetary level, it assumes far-widening implications.

Ghosh links this crisis to the crisis of the literary imagination. Adopting a poststructuralist view, Ghosh critiques the moral failure of the modern novel and its human-centric view. He rightly advocates "a departure from our accustomed logocentrism" (112), directing "the viewer away from language towards all that cannot be said 'thought' through words" (111). Situating its roots in the modern novel, Ghosh convincingly demonstrates the crisis of failing to read between the gaps and silences as an intentional shift away from building an integral ecology or a planetary democracy, which essentializes "the relocation of the unheard-of-toward the background […] while the everyday moves into the foreground" (23). Corresponding to this disconcerting fact, Ghosh asks "[w]hat is the place of the non-human in the modern novel?" He cites the absence of "centrality of the improbable" (31) and overriding focus on "individual psyche" (105) as the structural components of the modern novel. The magnified focus on the individual's life and its adventures has inevitably led to a loss of the collective meaning of life. Ghosh, therefore, contends that "humanity finds itself in the thrall of a dominant culture in which the idea of the collective has been exiled from politics, economics, and literature alike" (108).

The singularity of our vision and imagination, a lack of agency, and the concomitant extractivism and exploitation of subaltern ecologies, therefore, coerces us to reimagine our notion of social networks. For we can only change what we can imagine. The lurking planetary threat should be enough to include the non-humans and natural resources as part of our social networks and relationships. The "relinking of the chain" of this proposed social network is increasingly essential to disrupt the carbon economy and revitalize subaltern ecologies. The distorted belief that subaltern ecologies are external species points to "a way of thinking that deliberately excludes things and forces" (75) relating to non-humans, and therefore, can be dumped, excluded, and exterminated. This line of thought erodes our attempts towards planetary healing. To make one see through the environmental degradation and its approaching dangers, Timothy Morton uses the metaphor of the "rear mirror" in cars to suggest that "OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR" (27), that there is no longer an "away" (31) or an "over there" (94) while dealing with the climate catastrophe. On a similar note, Ghosh argues that one of the main reasons "why climate change is a 'wicked' as opposed to a 'normal' problem is that the time horizon in which effective action can be taken is very narrow" and that "every year that passes without a drastic reduction in global emissions makes catastrophe more certain" (214).

Fundamentally critical and demonstrably racial, the relegation of externality to subaltern ecologies has fascinated many dwellers in metropolitan cities, as shown by Ghosh in *TGD*, to encroach nature and disfigure its composition, underlined with a capitalistic pattern of development and a concomitant sense of privilege, since, as I have shown earlier in this essay, subaltern ecologies are meant to be conquered, controlled, and consumed. This heightened sense of control over and attempt to decolonize subaltern ecologies can be seen as a continuation of colonialism, albeit in a different form. "To look at the climate crisis through the prism of empire," according to Ghosh, "is to recognize, first, that the continent of Asia is conceptually critical to every aspect of global warming" (117). This, again, takes us back to the problem of the undemocratic ethos of the "carbon economy," which is ideologically premised on fixed categorization and rigidity to deny any negotiations or dialogues on alterations as far as the marginalized are concerned. Deeply embedded within the network of the "deep state," emblematic of a deranged ideology and a lack of "recognition" that Ghosh convincingly advocates for throughout *TGD*, the failure of humankind to imagine what constitutes life, according to Ghosh, is taking "us nowhere to turn but towards our self-annihilation" (149). The "great derangement," therefore, leads to a state of ontological insecurity of the planet, perpetuated by the undemocratic ethos of "carbon economy" and structuration of "subaltern ecologies." As Allan Hassaniyan rightly argues, a "central feature of subaltern environmentalism is its claim to be as social, political and cultural as it is environmental" (2). We need to broaden our imaginative lens so as

to see subaltern ecologies not only as a part of this planet but *equally* vital to sustaining its life.

This, then, leads to a series of questions: why can we not think of our social network as an ever-evolving and inclusive category to give equal and vocal spaces to subaltern ecologies, and, to accept that they are part of and hence central to the idea of the planet? Why can't we think of "planetary sociology," rather than human sociology? Why do we tend to forget that life on this planet originated due to a series of reactions to natural elements and interactions with infinite species? Why, then, so much affinity with the human species? To grasp the magnitude of these questions requires us to enlarge our consciousness of the planet and to (re)arrange our imagination. The poverty of our deranged ideology, as Ghosh cuttingly suggests, is as much a result of the carbon economy as it is of our flawed sense of developed immunity from the ongoing planetary crisis. According to Ghosh, the tendency to see subaltern ecologies as a "ghost," "a present that is not of this world" (39) simply points to our moral, cultural, and sociological failure. Much of the sociological discourse tend to forget the fact that the future of humans is inextricably tied to the future of non-humans, and natural resources, for example, the plankton, which are vital to maintaining the oxygen balance in our atmosphere. To reiterate the importance of a just social order and its relationship with ecological life, Ghosh makes a case that "a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" (211).

However, it is important to understand that sociological restructuring requires a rebuttal of the "carbon democracy," linked as it is to the carbon economy. As Timothy Mitchell points out, the principles of extractivism inevitably render a withering of democracy, which he goes on to define as carbon democracy. According to Mitchell, "existing forms of democratic government appear incapable of taking the precautions needed to protect the long-term future of the planet" (11). Seemingly, our world-making exercise is perpetuated and nourished by the robust carbon economy, which eventually threatens life on a planetary scale. On a similar note, Dimock sees this "democratization of harm" unleashing casualties "on the non-human axis" (69) and erasure of discounted species. Like Ghosh's *TGD*, Dimock situates this "democratization of harm" as having its root in the modern period. Dimock argues that the modern period has changed the meaning of "tragedy," "enlarging its sphere of victimhood" (69) due to the onslaughts of climate change. No wonder then that harm continues to widen and tighten its grip over modern life. However, it must be pointed out that the harm also holds a "selective affinity between social inequality and the likelihood of becoming a collateral victim of catastrophes," (69) because the marginalized ones are usually the first to be hit by the visceral forces of harm, undemocratically being punished for the misdeeds of selective privileged ones.

Conclusion

What has been thoughtfully demonstrated throughout Ghosh's *TGD*, then, is a collective failure of imagination and modern-day democracy, the inability to establish any connection with subaltern ecologies, exacerbated by a capitalistic way of life and our myth of growth and progress, which have only ensured that "a blind eye is turned towards risk" (65). While alerting us to the drawback in our structured notion of humanism, Spivak suggests that to be human implies "to be intended toward the Other" (2012: 338), driven by alterity and hence, it is ever-evolving and discontinuous.

Spivak's pedagogy is echoed in Ghosh's compelling arguments about the urgent need to widen our lens of social imagination. We need to understand that the computational skills of capitalism and the power-absorbing carbon economy will not work to maintain planetary health and concomitant habitability. Hence, if planetary catastrophe is to be mitigated, we need to change our social imagination and the undemocratic way in which we have inhabited the earth. Questions of life require planetary consciousness. As Tabish Khair puts it, "death comes on its own, finally; it always does - what has to be attained and preserved is always life" (2007: 309). This echoes Ghosh's concerns that we all need to (re)cognize in order to mark a shift from our worldly thought towards a planetary consciousness since the planet is all about the preservation of life forms and a balance in the ecosystem. One needs to remember that inhalation is only made possible because there are the external forms that exhale, which points to the distributive and physiological aspects of ecology. Arguably, then, for collective survival and the maintenance of planetary health, "whole societies and polities" need to come up, as Ghosh avers, with "the necessary decisions" (72). Such decisions "will need to be made collectively, within political institutions, as happens in wartime or national emergencies" (72). The present climate crisis demands a *wartime emergency* since life can be found and sustained at the interface of humans-non-humans, which is the kind of interconnectedness that Ghosh advocates for in *TGD.*

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