

# Non-human Subjects and Environmental Ethics: An Ecocritical Reading of Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse*

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**Abstract** Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse* examines how the lives of the people of the Banda Islands are intrinsically connected to their landscapes and the environment. Their livelihoods and culture revolve around the nutmeg, which is traded with other countries. The study will examine how the text challenges the traditional Western anthropocentric views of nature as an inert object that led colonizers to exploit the nutmeg trade, resulting in destructive changes like resource extraction, environmental exploitation, land ownership, displacement of indigenous people and the imposition of the nutmeg monoculture. By examining how Ghosh's work depicts the agency of non-human subjects, the paper emphasizes the need for recognizing the interdependence between humans and the natural world, the intrinsic value of biodiversity, and the ethical significance of land, which form the core concerns of environmental ethics. The paper will use ideas from environmental ethics as the theoretical framework to understand the urgent need to recognize non-humans as subjects and call for developing ethical relationships between humans and non-human beings so as to save the planet from further environmental catastrophes.

**Keywords** Biocentrism; Capitalism; Environmental Justice; Indigenous Communities; Sustainable development

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## Introduction

The relentless pursuit of economic growth remains a dominant aspect that continues to influence societies in different regions of the world. Capitalism and its intricate connection to the economic system based on resource extraction have profoundly impacted the natural world. In the process of economic expansion, humans have often disregarded the implications of their actions on non-human entities, causing disruption to entire ecosystems, resulting in the loss of biodiversity. This has led to severe environmental degradation, which has now caught the attention of environmental ethicists. Globalization has led to rapid growth in international trade. Demand for material goods has accentuated carbon footprints from transport, industrial activity and excessive consumption, encouraging deforestation and leading to impoverished biodiversity (Huwart and Loïc 112-15). According to The Living Planet Report 2024, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) publication declared an average decline of 73% in species populations between 1970-2020 (*Living Planet Report 2024*). The recognition of non-human subjectivities and their agency has become crucial in understanding the challenges for today's planetary crisis. Acknowledging the agency of these entities, including landscapes, trees, rivers, and animals, prompts a re-evaluation of our understanding of nature as well as questions the traditional anthropocentric perspectives. Ghosh's nonfictional work *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable Planet* (2016), which discusses the colonial legacies of Western thought and the intersections of history, culture, and climate crisis "reveals how climate change is the result of a set of interrelated histories" (Vincent 2). *The Living Mountain: A Fable for Our Times* (2022), critiques human actions and their impact on nature and urges us to heed the warning signs of environmental apocalypse. His *Smoke and Ashes* examines the cultural history of the opium plant and unearths its connections to most of the modern industries in the globalized world. Ghosh's works have contributed to a

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much more critical understanding of colonial modernity by exploring historical events and showing the root causes of how they are connected to today's planetary crisis. Ghosh's writings often incorporate discussions on climate change and how the colonial conquest of natives and resources has contributed to the modern climate crisis. Similarly, *The Nutmeg's Curse* traces the history of the Banda Islands and how the coming of Dutch ships on these Islands marked the beginning of their economic power with the imposition of nutmeg monoculture. Ghosh highlights how this has altered the relationship with nature, causing severe environmental devastation, habitat loss, soil erosion, and disruption of ecosystems, affecting local flora and fauna because of the nutmeg industry.

This paper tries to explore how Ghosh depicts the agency of non-human beings and their role in shaping human history. The paper examines how capitalism affects not just humans but also non-human entities and ecosystems by looking at the practices imposed by European colonizers, as it serves as a good template for devastations happening today. Environmental Ethics is used as a theoretical framework to analyze how *The Nutmeg's Curse* reconfigures the category of 'subject' to include non-human beings within a biocentric ethical framework. This paper also tries to understand to what extent Ghosh's work aligns with ideas of environmental justice and the challenges that capitalism poses in recognising non-human agency.

### **Environmental Ethics: A Biocentric Approach**

The paper draws on environmental ethics and not ecocriticism as its framework to foreground the moral status of non-human life and the ethical dimensions that need to be examined in the context of the relationship between man and nature. Although ecocriticism often analyses representations of the environment at a cultural level, environmental ethics poses direct questions as to how humans can morally account for non-human beings. Ghosh places strong emphasis on how non-human entities are active participants in *The Nutmeg's Curse* and not mere passive spectators to the historical suffering. This paper draws its central idea about non-human subjects from Holmes Rolston III's biocentrism.

Rolston argues that all organisms are teleological centers of life, having welfare and good of their own (111). In this study, non-human subjects can be understood not just as a metaphorical personification, but as beings who have intrinsic value. This means that a tree is significant because of its inherent existence, by virtue of its own self-nurturing capacities unlike human life that is transient. Its agency, in biocentric terms, is expressed through forms of purposive activity grounded in

biological flourishing (Rolston 110-13). This framework complements Ghosh's idea, which consistently features nutmeg trees as entities whose life cycles were violently altered by colonial extraction through monoculture.

This differs from the Post-humanist, new materialist, and actor-network models, which conceptualize agency as relational entanglements that are distributed and not purposive. Rolston on the other hand grounds subjecthood in biological purposiveness, which is the organism's evolutionary drive to sustain itself. A biocentric understanding of non-human beings demands ethically interpreting Ghosh's representation of trees as historical agents, an agency that is grounded in the biological reality that organisms strive, adapt, and enact self-maintaining processes, independent of human intervention.

Ghosh does not merely depict trees as symbols of loss or resources under threat, but sees them as historical agents whose lives were altered by imperial domination. Colonialism has not only impacted the communities on the Island, but trees and ecological life forms as well. Thus, the ethical lens of biocentrism helps us in reading Ghosh's work as a narrative of ecological injustice, where non-human subjects are central to the story of colonial violence.

### **Textualizing Moral Narrative in *The Nutmeg's Curse***

Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* traces the violent colonial history of the Banda Islands and exposes how colonial expansion reconfigured both human and non-human worlds. Ghosh avoids the conventional historical narrative style while foregrounding the agency of plants, landscapes, and ecological systems, and adopts a parable format interweaving history. This kind of narration allows Ghosh to portray the ecological and human devastation caused by the spice trade not merely as an episode of colonial conquest, but as an ethical crisis. Driven by their capitalistic agenda of capturing the nutmeg trade, the European colonizers unleash violence on the natives and non-human entities. The text highlights the implications of these actions through the trading networks that brought European navigators to Maluku, leading to the spice race. As nutmegs traversed the globe far and wide, their price soared. The value of these spices is accounted not just for utilitarian purposes, medicinal properties, or culinary uses, it had even become an expression of luxury and wealth desired by people during the sixteen century (Ghosh 9). To establish a monopoly on the nutmeg trade, the colonizers altered the land by imposing terrestrial terraforming through extensive nutmeg plantations, consequently creating a new economy in the archipelago.

Ghosh's reconstruction of Jan Coen's policies on mass displacement,

enslavement, and the imposition of plantation monocultures draws attention to the catastrophic consequences of colonial capitalism. A tragic pattern of displacement of indigenous people and the seizure of land ownership by Dutch colonizers marked their dominance over the Banda Islands. Under the authority of Jan Coen, brutal tactics were used to maintain their control, conforming perfectly to the doctrine of liberal interventionism (Ghosh 27). Furthermore, the Bandanese people resisted the Dutch attempts to seize their lands and resources, which resulted in a massacre. Their resistance was suppressed by brutal force that made the council sign a treaty and “burn everywhere their dwellings” (23), by destroying the existence of Banda settlements that claimed the lives of native people, wiping off their cultural heritage and identity. As Ghosh explains, “Once a proud and enterprising trading community had ceased to exist as people” (30). The massacre did not stop with displacement and dispossession of indigenous people. Those who survived the initial onslaught were captured and enslaved, forced into labor on Dutch-owned nutmeg plantations. This act of violence and enslavement was part of the Dutch strategy to control the spice trade and suppress any resistance. However, the fact that the tragic history of this incident revolves around a nutmeg tree brings us to question the influence of the capitalistic approach of the West on global affairs. This reinforces the belief held by many global South convictions that the planetary crisis can be addressed by fixing capitalism (160). Although Ghosh is touching upon historical events of the sixteenth century, they are very much relevant to the current times. A notable example in this regard would be Bolsanaro’s administration of Amazon policies that aimed to dismantle the protective environmental measures that limited capitalistic extraction. His policies that boost deforestation such as merging the Ministry of Environment (MMA) with the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food Supply (MAPA) for economic development (Deutsch 825) raised apprehensions about the well-being of Amazon ecosystems.

Ghosh’s text is subtitled as *Parables for a Planet in Crisis* signalling that these narratives are meant to prompt moral reflection rather than simply documenting historical events. By allowing the reader to view ecological integrity violations as moral failings, the parable gains momentum for engaging with environmental ethics. Through this approach, Ghosh presents the Banda Islands history as a moral lesson on how modernity is shaped by recurrent patterns of excessive extraction and environmental degradation. He also foregrounds local ways of knowing that attribute vitality and relational significance to trees, seas, and volcanic peaks by bringing the cosmologies of indigenous communities. These perspectives push back against the old colonial habit of separating humans from everything else.

Indigenous knowledge has long recognised the worth of non-human life and the web of relationships that bind species together, well before environmental ethics tried to formalise these ideas. This way, they line up closely with the principles of biocentrism. For Ghosh, these worldviews are not just folklore, they are serious ways of understanding the environment. His writing does not place nature in the background, but it shows a world where non-human life is caught up in the same unfolding of history as people. By narrating ecological entanglements through the form of a parable, Ghosh makes visible the agency of non-human subjects that colonial epistemologies attempted to erase.

### **Non-Human Subjects , Agency and Environmental Ethics**

Early environmental philosophers like Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, and John Muir contributed to the field of environmental ethics by paving the path for a more sustainable future. Leopold's depiction of land ethics contends that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold 211). His emphasis is on seeing land as a community that grows out of intertwined relationships based on caring. Carson's emphasis on ecological management and human use of unchecked chemical pesticides illustrate how the eradication of one species inflicted by pesticides can have detrimental effects on other, leading to ecological imbalance as well as their effect on soil, water, wildlife, and humans too (Carson 11). John Muir's environmental ethics centered around preserving wilderness, continues to resonate with the modern establishment of national parks and the protection of natural landscapes. These perspectives of early philosophers anticipated the dangers of biodiversity loss. They propagated the idea of ethical concern for humans to be stewards, which remains relevant today as the world wrestles with environmental challenges due to ecological imbalances. These aspects of ethical responsibility align with contemporary environmental ethics, which calls for "a more inclusive ethics that asks about appropriate respect toward all living beings" (Rolston 93).

Holmes Rolston developed this at length in his regard for biocentrism, which refers to an ethics of respect for all life. Ghosh too acknowledges the agency of non-human subjects by respecting the ecological roles they exhibit within the environment. There were times when nutmegs ceased to be rarities, and their value began to decline. The Dutch East India Company (VOC) officials started a campaign to eradicate the existence of these trees to limit the supply of these spices. They decreed that nutmeg trees would only grow on the Bandas and clove trees only on Amboin Island. Every nutmeg and clove tree grown on other islands

had to be destroyed. Nevertheless, these colonizers should have realized that these spices were picky to flourish. The practices of transplantation and replicating their natural habitat for cultivation purposes may hinder their growth, considering their needs and requirements, making them more susceptible to pests and diseases, which Ghosh makes clear when he indicates that “it is said that nutmeg trees must be able to smell the sea, whereas clove trees must be able to see” (Ghosh 159). They also have their home to grow. Indeed, the agency of these trees was not realized because the colonizers could not locate intrinsic value in nature. They perceived nature as anthropocentric, that is valuing non-human life instrumentally and not intrinsically. A biocentric focus makes clear what was really at stake in the Dutch East India Company’s push to control nutmeg and clove trees beyond the designated islands. It was not just an economic strategy, but was a violent disruption of the ecological home of the trees. This encompasses Rolston’s biocentric ideas that these trees have precise ecological conditions under which their life projects unfold and it helps us in understanding questions like what nutmegs can give us, or what these nutmegs require and what it means to sabotage that. After the European colonization, the trees of Banda Islands were stripped of subjectivity and reclassified as instruments of capitalism.

Ghosh challenges the traditional European anthropocentric view of natives as brutes and non-humans as mere commodities (190). In his book *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh highlights the agency aspects of non-humans and their entwined existence with humans by referring to the people of Sundarbans as those “who live around the Mangrove forest and have never doubted that tigers and many other animals possess intelligence and agency, and even for Yukon people who considered that glaciers are endowed with moods and feelings” (85). The Scientist, Jagadish Chandra Bose has also indicated that plants can feel pain and fear (Ghosh, *The Nutmeg’s Curse* 197). This shows why acknowledging the agency of non-human life is not optional, it is an ethical obligation. They resonate strongly with Rolston’s insistence that respect for life is not limited to sentient beings and the key question is not only “Can it suffer?” but “Is it alive?” (Rolston 110).

However, from the colonizers perspectives, the idea that volcanoes can make meaning, or that trees hold significant cultural memories and are woven into songs, is merely a superstition. They had discarded every belief and the agency of these entities, that encompass the land of the native people. Ghosh explains this when he says, “the trees, volcanoes and the landscapes of the Bandas had no meaning except as resources that could be leveraged to generate profit” (36). The attribution of accounting value is subjective; the fact that native people could interact with the

landscape shows the vitality of the landscape as they consider the Earth as a living entity and believe in the vitality of trees, rivers, and mountains. Their lives are enmeshed with non-human forces as they consider these forces to have an intrinsic value, and that is how they keep the stories alive through songs and storytelling. Their belief systems are deeply rooted in the agency of non-human entities based on the indication of the entire spectrum of non-humans as relatives, including forests, landscapes, mountains, rivers, trees, animals, and spirits of the land, which are intrinsically bound to humans. Recognizing these interconnections and interdependence is the thrust of co-existence, as Timothy Morton writes in his *Dark Ecology*, “realizing that non-humans are rooted deep within us, not just biologically and socially but in the very structure of thought and logic. Coexisting with these non-humans is ecological thought, art, ethics, and politics” (159). This alignment can be seen in Rolston's argument for a win-win situation, where he claims that the collective endeavour of inheriting the Earth is not just for human benefits, but for the fact that our happiness is bound with it in nurturing a diverse ecosystem (Rolston 153).

Highlighting the ethical significance of inclusivity, Ghosh projects how crucial it is to consider the Bandanese natives and their bonding with terrestrial spaces, whose lives are tied explicitly to their landscapes. Their ways of life developed through their belief systems, reflect their identity associated with a specific region. This concept of bioregionalism is responsible for shaping human identity. However, the colonial dominance over the Banda Islands was seen as an opportunity for development by exploitation of resources and terraforming native lands. But terraforming involves environmental interventions which impact non-human entities (Ghosh 5). The drive for resource extraction played a central role in this process, as colonizers sought to enframe the project of terraforming, a process carried out by colonizers to alter and reshape the natural environment of native lands to make them more suitable for human habitation precisely to resemble European ways of life. Leopold's argument on land alteration suggests that land ethics cannot prevent resource alteration, management, and use. However, it does affirm their right to continued existence in a natural state (192). Ghosh argues that these terraforming projects involve conflicts where entire populations, including non-human entities are subjected to violence, causing ecological disruptions. This involves displacing indigenous inhabitants from their traditional ancestral lands, disrupting their way of life, and promoting the erasure of their cultural heritage. Colonizers have reduced the terrain as a resource to fuel economic growth, simultaneously believing that they bear no blame, as their conquest using material forces falls under nature's domain

(58). Ghosh argues that this Western idea considers 'nature' as inert and subdued, and that the Europeans fail to recognize the agency of non-humans.

It is true that the nutmeg was also an object of commerce for the aboriginal people. However, their approach differs from the colonizer's intention. Bandanese lifeways present an alternative ethic that is strikingly compatible with biocentrism. "For the Bandanese, the landscapes of their Island were places of dwelling that were enmeshed with human life in ways that were imaginative as well as material; the land did not exist solely to produce nutmeg and mace" (Ghosh 36). On the other hand, the colonial view is reflected in their capitalistic principles of a profit-driven approach, introducing a nutmeg monoculture while violently carrying out the extermination of the aboriginal people for the sake of economic gains. They do not see these trees as agents in themselves and their interdependence with the natives, but rather look upon them as inert brutes that would convert the island into a lucrative nutmeg-producing factory. The initial act of extermination such as mass killings of animals and deforestation ensures the destruction of vital aspects (42). Ghosh illustrates instances from the text, such as livestock disputes, the extermination of buffalo herds of the Great Plains (68), and the unleashing of violence by destroying the natives' ways of life, through the process of terraforming. This is similar to other events during King Philips's time, when the colonizers indulged in ecological interventions, to curb conflicts that arose between settlers and native people. The settlers attacked natives by destroying the entire web of life that sustained them. Rolston argues that by terminating all diverse life forms, the mistake that humans are committing is stopping the historical vitality of life, as the interruption of biodiversity has disrupted the stability of ecosystems (154). The colonial rule has exploited the resources without concern for long-term consequences. Environmental ethics plays an essential role in dealing with these issues on sustainability, as it calls for reversing the colonial damage, by advocating holistic approaches such as sustainable practices, recognizing the intrinsic values of all beings, conservation, preservation of wilderness, acknowledging indigenous knowledge, and seeking environmental justice.

Resistance movements like that of the native Americans is based on an ethic of familial instinct to protect 'all our relatives,' including the entire spectrum of non-human kin. Ghosh emphasizes that the legal victories won by indigenous peoples on vitalist grounds, highlight the kinship between non-humans and humans. He cites the examples of the Sarayakus, a tiny Kichwa group in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the Maori tribe, and similar instances where the indigenous communities have fought for their rights (Ghosh, 237-38). These cases concerning environmental

justice reveal that acknowledging and rectifying historical environmental injustices require placing human and biotic communities together for a more equitable and sustainable future that respects both human and non-human entities. This mandates an ecological responsibility that advocates the welfare of humans and the protection of non-human entities. It challenges us to reorient the economic systems with ethical considerations for the environment. However, one of the major problems with contemporary global capitalist-based development, which Rolston argues, is that the privileged grow more affluent and the poor become even poorer. The unequal distribution of wealth has coincided with increasing environmental consumption, intertwined with issues of overpopulation, overconsumption, and under-distribution, which are now addressed under environmental justice (Rolston 202).

Vandana Shiva in her work titled *The World on the Edge*, argues about the unequal distribution and injustices of environmental risks and the lack of access to a healthy environment among marginalized communities. She critiques global free trade and the deregulated commerce of power and control where “resources move from the poor to rich, and pollution moves from rich to the poor” (112). She also comments on the ecological threat to the food chain, the force feeding of genetically engineered foods where harvesting of safe food is stolen from consumers worldwide (122). Shiva’s view on how capitalistic-driven economic value is now a threat to the ecological crisis is evident in her statement, “diversity is replaced by monoculture, the ecological web of life is replaced by the engineering of life, the sanctity of life is replaced by the marketability of life” (129). While capitalism has leveraged economic progress, it also needs to bring in ethical commitments that need to be executed for the welfare of our planet’s human and non-human inhabitants. Daniel Faber in his book *Global Capitalism, the Ecological Crisis and the Quest for Environmental Justice*, highlights how environmental injustices are a consequence of global neoliberal ideas. His view that capital accumulation is based on unsustainable consumption of nature is exactly what Ghosh tries to highlight through the nutmeg’s story, emphasizing on the threat to ecological democracies.

### **Global Capitalism and the Biocentric Critique of Planetary Crisis**

Ghosh challenges the idea of capitalism by stating that modern citizens have become ‘Homo Economicus’ (Ghosh, 116), which refers to an individual who acts to maximise his well-being (Jan and Staveren). The idea here is the characterization of an economic man who pursues opulence for self-fulfilling interests to maximise utility. Capitalism as a system is deeply intertwined with the history of imperialism that continues to shape today’s market systems, starting from colonial conquests of

mercantilism. Rolston's discussion on global capitalism helps in clarifying why this economic order is ethically incompatible with a biocentric worldview. He argues that the contemporary world faces three linked problems including overpopulation, overconsumption, and under distribution produced by a system in which high net worth individuals are ready to exploit people and nature including animals, plants, species, ecosystems, and Earth itself (Rolston 202).

The Dutch colonial rule associated their power structures with the ideology of global free trade, which allowed them to dominate in securing nutmeg supplies during the colonization of Banda Island. The strategy for economic development requires a tenacious increase of private ownership over natural resources, accelerating industrial monoculture growth, which they have implemented mainly on nutmeg plantations in the Islands of Maluku. It becomes imperative to look at the diverse historical factors that shaped capitalism's development, as its formation has often operated from the colonial conquests beginning from imperialism. Under the facade of trade, the colonization of the Banda Islands was driven by a capitalist motive as the spice trade turned into a global trade economy, which signifies the impact of how non-human subjectivities and their exploitation played an essential role in shaping modern history. Looking at capitalism's development, one must recognize the intertwined relationship between geopolitical dominance and imperialism. An understanding of capitalism is rooted in historical imperialism that is often based on the model of economic rationality built on violence, such as exploitation of labour, mass enslavement, and excessive extracting of resources at the cost of the environment. The idea of unregulated free markets often influences the profits generated from this kind of conquest as capitalist principles align within the system of economic forces rather than environmental sustainability or the well-being of certain indigenous groups. One example is Indonesia's demand for palm oil expansion where the State is determined to increase palm oil production for economic development. As such, Indigenous communities were forced to surrender their unused lands to palm oil companies (Brainard 175). While a capitalist-oriented system may have contributed to the growth of the economic system, it has drawbacks as it creates inequality, income disparity and environmental concerns. Addressing these issues has become a challenge as modern society grapples with the demands of excessive consumerism and advancement in economic growth. With an ever-increasing capitalist economy, there is a demand for ethical regulations that aim to address the most significant issues, such as income disparity and environmental degradation, for the welfare of the most vulnerable groups and our ecosystems. The historical exploration of the Banda Islands in *The Nutmeg's Curse*

challenges us to rethink the interconnected history of colonial ambitions, which has laid the foundation for a capitalist economy at the cost of the environment, which Ghosh believes to be connected to today's planetary crisis. Global capitalistic ideologies often come with practices that erode the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities. The Bandanese Islands are a stark example, wherein colonial rule did not just reshape their economy, but also led to the enslavement of the people of the Island. The narrative reveals how this capitalistic mindset disrupted the harmony between man and nature.

As Çıraklı and Karmakar state in their article “capitalist progress perpetuated an objectifying ethics culminating in a systemic dismantling of human-nature interconnections and the subjugation of the indigenous epistemic structures that believed in the primacy of nature and its enormous role in the web of life” (ii). Particularly within the context of an imperialist economic model, conquest driven by capitalist motives has led to the instrumentalization of nature at the expense of the environment, which has resulted in the degradation of ecological imbalance. As Ghosh points out, “the questions of who is brute and who is fully human, who makes meaning and who does not, lie at the core of the planetary crisis” (Ghosh 195). This explains how colonial Western belief systems have the tendency to categorize certain indigenous groups and the denial of the agency of non-human subjectivities. This raises questions about the power dynamics of the West which tends to devalue the identity of marginalized groups as well as disregard the agency of non-human subjectivities. According to Karmakar and Chetty, the prevailing paradigms of the interrelated history of “colonialism, capitalism, and the anthropocene act as corollaries in perpetrating varied forms of injustice on the environment, indigeneity, and indigenous people” (4). Ghosh challenges the colonial mindset that “have actively muted others by representing them as brutes, as creatures whose presence on Earth is solely material” (195). These unfair practices of historical injustices have led to the demand for social and environmental justice today. In the same way, environmental ethics emphasizes on managing the ecosystem properly, as this will protect natural values and support cultural values to sustain ecological productivity (Rolston 187). However, it is evident that the acceleration of globalization is a direct result of the adoption of colonial practices, where several economic policies have been promoted to spread free trade after the decolonization period. Even then, colonized regions maintained dependency relationships that were initiated during the colonial era (Lodigiani 19). The need of the hour is not to prolong historical dependencies in exchange for environmental damages and social injustices, but ensure environmental justice too, which cannot be confined to human victims

alone, and must address non-human subjects also whose lives “good of their own” (Rolston 111) have been compromised.

### **Conclusion**

As discussed, this analysis contends that *The Nutmeg’s Curse* reconfigures the definition of ‘subject’ by granting non-human entities agency that is grounded in their intrinsic value. It needs to be noted that the history of the Banda Islands cannot simply be understood without attending to the lives, needs, and vulnerabilities of non-human beings. Drawing on Holmes Rolston III’s biocentrism, the analysis demonstrates how the life processes of nutmeg trees, volcanic islands, and other more-than-human beings get disrupted by colonial monoculture and capitalist extraction.

The study deepens existing understandings of Ghosh’s work and moves beyond readings that treat *The Nutmeg’s Curse* primarily as a postcolonial critique of global capitalism, by emphasizing on the sustained environmental ethical vision emerging from the text. Rather than confining the analysis to human victims of colonial violence, this study also shows how Ghosh time and again locates agency and vulnerability in non-human entities. It is fundamental to acknowledge that the nutmeg tree was not just a symbol of trade, but a subject whose ecological needs and forced displacement reveal the moral cost of treating life as capital. This biocentric emphasis shows that Ghosh’s narrative is not only about history, but also about who counts as a subject in a multispecies world.

The study also contributes to environmental ethics and environmental humanities by placing Rolston’s biocentrism in direct conversation with colonial history and global capitalism. Rolston is often discussed at the level of abstract principle such as respect for life, intrinsic value, duties to organisms and ecosystems. Viewed through the biocentric lens, *The Nutmeg’s Curse* shows how biocentric ethics can be applied to concrete histories of terraforming, monoculture, and extraction. It also demonstrates to what extent biocentrism can be stretched, and that questions about intrinsic value cannot be separated from that of environmental justice.

As we face global challenges today, environmental ethics provides scope for making necessary interventions. It is imperative to acknowledge the agency of non-humans by recognizing the ethics of biocentrism, which is centered on intrinsic value and respect for all life. Indigenous people have always considered themselves as an intrinsic part of the web of life and therefore, often view non-humans as agents and sentient beings possessing consciousness and have reverence for the

natural world. Traditional knowledge must be included in the decision making processes regarding environmental issues. It is pertinent to revisit the philosophy of environmental ethics in the neo-liberal era, so as to ensure sustainability, inclusivity and environmental justice.

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