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Disillusionment of a Communist: Living 'through Poetry' in *The Hungry Tide*

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Abstract:

Amitav Ghosh's "The Hungry Tide" delineates the struggle of a Communist who tries to reconcile between idealism and mundane reality, welfare economy and utilitarianism promoted by capitalism. The struggle of the settlers in the Sundarban islands cannot be put under the strict term of Communist movement, but the struggle between the haves and the have-nots, between solvent society and the uprooted and dislocated breaks all the boundaries among ideologies or among living and non-living phenomenon. Nirmal, a hardcore Communist has gone through tremendous shocks perpetrated by the conflict between his Communist ideology and his experience of it with ground reality. He gets out of illusion regarding the benefits of Communist rule when he experienced the massacre at Morichjhapi and his self-transformation reaches the highest acme. His disillusionment ultimately leads to a new idea of the development of the poor depending not on a one way direction propagated by the Marxian economy but on a diversified field of satisfaction with social and cultural security, one's identity with the land and language, personal idiosyncrasies, one's historical and poetic being. Through the character of Nirmal

the fiction opens up a new avenue to explore into the conflicting but intrinsic relationship among various ideologies, beliefs, concepts and convictions.

Key words: Capitalist, proletariat, sreni sangram, historical materialism, Marxian value.

Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* delineates a biographical account of a hardcore believer in Marxism in a character named Nirmal, expressed mostly in the form of a diary and through the description and reflection by other characters. Nirmal's constant psychological oscillation between idealism and realism, Marxism and welfare economy, equality and totality, imagination and waking dream—asserts a new journey of life through illusion and disillusion presented through the upheavals of personal relationship with his wife Nilima, Kusum, Horen et al. As a stern believer in Marxian Communism, Nirmal in his youth was swept away by the revolutionary ideas of the post-War world—the Vietnamese insurrection, the Burmese Red Flag rebellion, the Malayan insurgency—in the South Asian contemporary scenario. Though much less important in this queue, is Calcutta's 'Armed Struggle', it took the