



Plant-Thinking Calcutta: Vegetable Temporality, Botanical Affect, and Urban Ecology in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the largely unexplored dimension of plant-thinking in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988), arguing that the novel's botanical imaginary—its recurring invocations of trees, gardens, monsoon vegetation, and decaying organic matter across the cityscape of Calcutta—constitutes a complex philosophical and ecological statement about time, memory, affect, and postcolonial urban life. Drawing on Michael Marder's philosophy of plant-thinking, Luce Irigaray and Michael Marder's collaborative theorisation of vegetal being, and Timothy Morton's concept of the ecological thought, this paper reads Ghosh's Calcutta not merely as a human-centred metropolis but as a deeply vegetated, multi-temporal organism in which plants function as affective agents, temporal markers, and ecological counter-narratives to the violence of partition and nationalist modernity. The analysis focuses on three interlocking themes: vegetable temporality, or the way plant life in the novel disrupts linear historical time by asserting cyclical, slow, and non-teleological durations; botanical affect, or the capacity of plants in Ghosh's prose to generate and mediate emotional states in characters and readers; and urban ecology, or the manner in which Calcutta's green spaces, monsoon weeds, and domestic flora enact alternative visions of the city against the grain of colonial and nationalist cartography. The paper concludes that Ghosh's plant-thinking anticipates contemporary ecocritical concerns and positions *The Shadow Lines* as a foundational text for a botanical poetics of the South Asian city.

Keywords: Plant, Botany, Urban, Ecology, Vegetable, Anthropocene, Postcolonialism.