



Climate Fiction (Cli-Fi): A Study of Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*

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Abstract

Nature has been, always, a continuous source of motivation for the writers since long past. A great deal of creative writings has been resulted having climate change, environment destruction, depletion of natural sources and ecological imbalance as the focal point in them. Still much more to be done through the creative writing by dealing primarily with the challenges caused by the climate change, ecological imbalance, the fast and irrational exploitation of natural resources and rapidly vanishing biodiversity. Even till today, so many writers and novelists are not much concerned about the global warming and its impact on life in contemporary world scenario possibly due to their half-heartedness regarding the pressing environmental issues i.e. the storms, thunders, cyclones, tornadoes, floods, drought and so on since they don't make a considerable platform for the serious efforts. The stories of these natural disasters do not find a right place in their writings and consequently rendered to another category such as a fantasy fiction, rather the periphery of the 'literary novel'. But Climate fiction (Cli-Fi) emerged as an important literary phenomenon today, addressing profound and complex issues in a range of realist and non-realist forms, and going far beyond the genres of popular reading with which it started. To put it another way, where climate fiction addresses the issues of climate change, having the prospects to cope with the Anthropogenic issues i.e. sensitive, moral and empirical concerns.

Amitav Ghosh, being a sensitive climate change activist and a renowned author of global environmental issues and biodiversity has addressed seriously the imminent climate dangers in his literary works. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) is an ample evidence of those concerns. This complete non-fictional work is seriously bothered about climate change along with, the startling upshots of the changing weather patterns of the world and having a penetrating scan of the constraints of history, politics, and literature to grab the magnitude of this climate change and its disastrous effect. Basically, the issue of deterioration and devastation of the environment and the condition of India in the world scenario have undertaken as the crux in the fictions of Amitav

Gosh. The climate fiction prominently deals with the network between economical disparity, ecological devastation and environment crisis at large. The present research paper aims to strengthen the urgency of encompassing the global issue of climate change and its impact in the circumference of our literary and philosophical discourse and to re-think our cultural and environmental policies and as well as our instructive engagement here and now by discussing in detail the non-fictional work of Amitav Ghosh entitled *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) as a climate fiction.

Key Words: Climate Change, Climate fiction, Anthropocene, economic imbalance, disastrous effect, environment devastation.

Full Paper

Introduction-

Nature has been, always, a continuous source of motivation for the writers since long past. A great deal of creative writings has been resulted having climate change, environment destruction, depletion of natural sources and ecological imbalance as the focal point in them. Still much more to be done through the creative writing by dealing primarily with the challenges caused by the climate change, ecological imbalance, the fast and irrational exploitation of natural resources and rapidly vanishing biodiversity. Even till today, so many writers and novelists are not much concerned about the global warming and its impact on life in contemporary world scenario possibly due to their half-heartedness regarding the pressing environmental issues i.e. the storms, thunders, cyclones, tornadoes, floods, drought and so on since they don't make a considerable platform for the serious efforts. The stories of these natural disasters do not find a right place in their writings and consequently rendered to another category such as a fantasy fiction, rather the periphery of the 'literary novel'. But Climate fiction (Cli-Fi) emerged as a significant literary phenomenon today, addressing profound and complex issues in a range of realist and non-realist forms, and going far beyond the genres of popular reading with which it started. The climate fiction started by approaching the issue within the framework of existing popular genres such as science fiction, the thriller, and the disaster novel, authors have broadened the range of approaches in the past ten years, blending these and other genres.

The Rise of Cli-Fi as a Literary Genre-

The growth of climate fiction was widely reported in several newspapers of USA in mid-2013 – probably the first time the birth of a literary genre actually made the news. The growth of the climate novel is testimony to climate change increasingly entering the public consciousness. That climate change is becoming ever more represented in culture shows that it is extending from a matter solely concerning science. It is increasingly permeating across art forms and as well as continues to evolve, with a small number of authors (Robinson and Bacigalupi, in particular) focusing their literary production on depicting climate change, and there is a new onset every year to capture the complexity of the after effects of climate changes and the depletion of natural resources poses to individuals and

societies, climate change novels must meet the emblematical issues resulted out of climate change, confronting not just the invisibility of climate as opposed to weather, but also the gulfs between the standard, quantitative discourses of climate and the imaginative language of literature, as well as between the unprecedented scale of climate change effects and the human dimensions of fiction.

Literature has unique ability to capture complexity that enables it to play a special role in the discursive construction of knowledge of climate, and its multiple interconnections with the issues of class, race, and gender. As a medium for negotiating social values and a vehicle for reflection on how we want future society to be, climate fiction complements and informs political and scientific discourses. Literary texts transport us to other worlds, giving readers access to unfamiliar environments, and they foster the understanding of different experiences and imaginations by prompting us to inhabit new vantage points. Climate fiction helps to define our perception of climate change, while drawing out its social and political, philosophical and ethical implications. Dan Bloom explains this in terms of the climate novel's apparent political agency:

The difference is that cli-fi is written with a certain moral sense of what things might be like if we do not stop climate change and global warming, whereas sci-fi is more concerned with science and amazing stories and adventures created mostly as escape and entertainment. Cli-fi is not about escapism or entertainment, although cli-fi novels and movies can be entertaining, too. But cli-fi has a moral imperative. Sci-fi does not.

Although now-a-days 'imagining' the future of climate change seems like an uncomplicated task for scientists, climatologists, geographers, writers, artists and thinkers to prove how enormous the problem it is and to draw attention to other aspects of this global problem of climate change and its after effects on this planet i.e. the earth including global economy, culture and education as well. Amitav Ghosh postulates his climate fiction on the showcase of natural disasters and devastation of biodiversity and peculiarity of the weather and shows that fiction is the best literary tool to cope with the burning issues of our time i.e. the troubling issue of climate change. As a sensitive writer Amitav Ghosh touches upon the tangled chain of the carbon economy and unfurls the root causes behind the climatic change as a too much reliance on fossil fuels. It's a kind of derangement for us to say we desire a new different world but hardly try to change the deeds to make it realised perfectly.

The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable: An Alarm Alert towards Impending Climate Disaster-

Amitav Ghosh is one of the notable writers who prominently address the contemporarily pressing issues of environment and climate crisis along with being a well known environment activist. He has got a different outlook and is seriously concerned about the imminent danger from climate change i.e. droughts, wild fire and heat waves which threaten public health, food security, and social and economical development all over the world. The non-fiction *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) of Amitav Ghosh is the ample proof of that since the entire work is concerned with climate change, the shocking effect of the changing weather patterns

of the world. With a cutting insight, he analyses the limitations of history, politics, and literature to grab the magnitude of this climate change and its disastrous effect. Basically, the topic of degradation and destruction of the environment and the position of Asia in the world history have woven the context of Ghosh's fiction. It concentrates on the nexus between economic imbalance and annihilation of the ecology and environment at large. Through this non-fictional work Ghosh is highly anxious about the grim reality that the present generation is deranged. At this very crucial juncture, Amitav Ghosh has questioned the incompetency of the contemporary generation of the writers to understand the urgency and aggression of the climate change and postulates that it should be mirrored in the current literary texts, politics, and history.

The present research paper aims to strengthen the urgency of encompassing the global issue of climate change and its impact within our literary and philosophical discourse and to re-think our cultural and environmental policies and as well as our instructive engagement here and now by discussing in detail the non-fictional work of Amitav Ghosh entitled *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) as a climate fiction. This is a grave issue that reflects our 'deranged' manners of socio-economic as well as political matters through several themes like history, politics, and literature. Amitav Ghosh tries to answer the relevant questions: why is serious fiction reluctant to deal with climate change and environmental issues? If it does, then why is it immediately classified as science-fiction or relegated to subgenre literature?

Of course there are exceptions, which Amitav Ghosh takes the time to address, but central to his argument is a deficiency in the humanities in dealing with the stories of freak weather patterns, rising sea levels, and increasing temperatures. His non-fictional work, *The Great Derangement*, similarly tackle these issues in innovative ways that often challenge conventions. For example, in the second part this lecture series entitled "History," Ghosh addresses the Western-centric nature of climate politics, first of all because it does not acknowledge Asia's centrality to global warming, or if so, simply to "blame" India and China for their pattern of recent industrialization. Rather, he demonstrates that Asia—by population—is under the greatest threat by climate change. He does not refrain himself from technical explanations of the climate crisis as well, providing details of potential human displacement, using real cases and estimates from Mumbai to Bangladesh. But the historical explanation requires an understanding of the experience of imperialism, which delayed Asia's entry into the carbon economy and yet fueled Europe's growth and development. He incorporates these historical realities into his analysis of global responses to climate change as well. And throughout the book, by introducing a global perspective—from Su Dongpo to Gandhi—Ghosh suggests that solving the climate crisis requires utilizing all the intellectual resources the world provides.

The Great Derangement, however, is a concise set of essays based on lectures Ghosh delivered at the University of Chicago. The three essays, titled "Stories," "History," and "Politics," discuss the shared deception—or misperception common in the past three hundred years or so—that human beings exist separate from the nonhuman, from nature. The result is that in art and literature, even more than in social science, there is an ignorance—a

persistent ignoring—of our interrelationship with the earth and its climate. And so when climate change events take place they have proved “peculiarly reluctant to the old forms that literature has employed to ‘Nature’.

Amitav Ghosh, through his non-fiction *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, offers some possible ways to understand, via excursions through the history of the modern novel, the inadequacy (as he claims) of science fiction to handle the ongoing climate crisis, along with some pertinent reflections on historical and political forces that have brought us to this moment in time. The trouble with climate change, Ghosh says, is its uncanny aspect. Its extremes—super storms, droughts, floods, sea level rise, wild fire—are so beyond the conceptual grasp of modern literary fiction that it is a rare author who wrestles with it. While it might seem natural that climate change should, therefore, be the province of imaginative literature—science fiction and fantasy—Ghosh argues that it is not so because unfortunately, Science Fiction can not address the global warming as the problem is set in our world and time, not in an imagined ‘other’ world apart from ours.

Ghosh explores the idea that climate change is "unthinkable" in the sense that it challenges our fundamental assumptions about the relationship between humans and nature. He argues that this "unthinkability" is rooted in our historical and cultural narratives, which have often portrayed nature as a "filler" or a static backdrop to human activity. Amitav Ghosh explores the current generation's incapacity to comprehend the scope of climate change in the fields of literature, history, and politics in his nonfiction book *The Great Derangement* (2016). This non-fiction work's main premise is predicated on the assertion that one day, literature will be charged with blindly accepting the climate crisis and complicity in the great derangement. This essay will examine how Ghosh's four enterprises, both fictional and non-fictional, express a desire for more creative and cultural forms of fiction that express opposition to materialism that threatens to destroy the planet.

Ghosh questions whether modern authors take into account what climate change means for the future and are oblivious to potentially fatal risks and dangers. “But why? Are the currents of global warming too wild to be navigated in the accustomed barques of narration? But the truth, as it is now widely acknowledged, is that we have entered a time when the wild has become a norm: if certain literary forms are unable to negotiate these torrents, then they will have failed—and their failure will have to be counted as an aspect of the broader imaginative and cultural failure that lies at the heart of the climate crisis” (Ghosh 2016, p. 8). Ghosh also discusses how authors like Paul Kingsnorth and Arundhati Roy have opted to use non-fiction rather than prose to express their opinions on the climate crisis. He ascribes this inclination to the opposition that climate change poses to what is currently considered serious fiction.

In his eco-critical works, Ghosh explores the difficulties that humanity faces in the Anthropocene, a new geological epoch in which humans have a part to play in changing the planet and preserving it for coming generations. He argues that as geological agents, humans do not only alter the Earth's most fundamental physical processes, but also that the "Anthropocene presents a challenge not only to the arts and the humanities, but also to our commonsense understandings and beyond that to contemporary culture in general" (Ghosh 2016). Ghosh suggests that "the climate

crisis is also a crisis of culture, and that of the imagination" in an attempt to explain why modern society struggles to cope with climate change (Ghosh 2016). Ghosh's three visions of a "postcolonial green" that advocates for the shift from "red" to "green" politics and the necessity of living as responsible citizens who support global justice and sustainability on our planet are discussed in the fictional endeavor that emphasizes the need for social and political change. Thus, *The Great Derangement* is a significant contribution to the ongoing conversation about climate change. It challenges us to rethink our assumptions about the relationship between humans and nature and to develop a collective imagination that can address the challenges we face.

Individuals' Consciousness Today (Net Zero Heads)-

Today, companies, countries and even celebrities have started setting "Net Zero" targets to combat climate change. Theoretically, the concept is based upon to balance green house gas removal with green house gas emission, so that the overall net emissions are zero. In this order, recently a survey of *The Economist* declared that the people of middle class in Britain are doing well to protect the environment by energy saving techniques, and the females are, significantly, far advance in adopting this process than the males. These people are named as Net Zero Heads due to their duly consciousness regarding the environmental crisis and global warming along with adopting the environment friendly tools and techniques such as heat pump, electric cars and other energy saving techniques and gadgets to make their houses environment friendly. In the same way, the world renowned Israeli wild life photographer named Roie Galitz recently selected as the best travel photographer of the year 2024 for his unique photography in the category of "The Planet Earth: Landscape, Climate and Water." His pictures captured the melting glaciers and the changing environment of Swalbird Iceland of Arctic Ocean and thereby he mirrored the problem of continuously melting glaciers and climate change in the North Pole. By these recent events we reach to the point that people, today, are becoming conscious and alert towards the global issues and problems of climate change.

Conclusion

All in one, this nonfiction of Amitav Gosh *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* is a great example of why inter-disciplinarity is crucial in environmental studies and researches and how the sometimes underrated genres can serve as examples in dealing with global problems as climate change. In fact this detailed discourse of Amitav Ghosh on climate change and its impact can be interesting and valuable insight or guidelines for both environmental activists and scientists, and especially for someone who is interested to lean about the climate justice movement throughout the world.

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