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**WHERE IS CLIMATE CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE INDIAN ENGLISH
FICTION?
(AMITAV GHOSH'S THE GREAT DERANGEMENT)**

**Inderpreet Kaur
Research Scholar
UGC-NET (English)
New Delhi**

Abstract

Due to climate change in India, the safety and sustainability of the tribal communities living aside Eastern Coasts are exposed to vulnerability. This demands a universal appeal from all corners of the life. To this, Amitav Ghosh employs fiction, as the best suited of all forms, to serve as a powerful weapon. In addition to this, Ghosh questions the elimination of climate consciousness as a genre in Indian Literature. The paper is written in an investigative mode, analyzing his concern regarding concealment of the truth in the realist mode of fiction, which becomes another reason for individuals' ignorance towards it. The relationship between the literature and the physical environment is thought to be encouraged in such a way that the idea to preserve one' environment becomes an implicit goal. Discussion on various issues ranging from one's incapability to address the climate change, to the right kind of literature, has been tackled within the scope of a paper, yet the response to the climate derangement still remains unanswered. What is that which can help realize the humankind the objective of social commitment, is the sole purpose of the debate.

Keywords: - Climate change, Climate derangement, Climate issue, Climate Consciousness and Weather phenomenon.

Introduction

For More than thousand centuries, the human being is seen as continuing to live on the planet called Earth. The Earth has been adopted as a survivor in the wake of all natural disasters.



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If there are tornadoes or floods, which would be dangerous to pass on, the confidence of coming out of calamity is possible on the ground in the hope that there is something that is protecting one

from the behind. Yet, the thought of returning the favour, unfortunately, has got challenged by one's negligence towards earth's safety from climate derangement. One of the problems that need urgent attention from all walks of life.

The climate crisis has taken a toll on the lives of the people. The impact of the weather phenomenon has put the world under the curse of the global warming. This type of situation demands a universal form of mankind's existence. Here, Amitav Ghosh, has employed fiction as a tool to address the climate consciousness at the global level. His *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, 2016, is written in an investigative mode that tries to analyze the problem of the climate change, specifically in India. Many people felt that the climate event is the scientific question and one is powerless to do anything about it. It is to the credit of the author that he has brilliantly changed the pillow talk. He moved it out of the narrow aisle of the scientific world into the wide zones of politics, culture and power.

According to the author, the lack of literature's "...concealment of the real..." is the root of all causes. Human life is vulnerable to hazardous calamities. The ability to anticipate the nature is unknown to anybody till it strikes upon his habitat again and again. The rest, such as use of carbon dioxide in daily life, pollution, deforestation and the plastic, are just externalities. The truth about the global threat is not exposed to the public. The evacuation measures do not ensure the safety of the country in the face of the catastrophe. One's incompetency to grasp the changes of the climate, thinking it would not affect the upper class society, but to those who are poverty-stricken, is a terrible delusion.

Considering a quote by Ghosh,

"...In a substantially altered world, when sea-level rise has swallowed the Sundarbans and made cities such as Kolkata, New York and Bangkok uninhabitable, when readers and museum-goers turn to the art and literature of our time, will they not look, first and most urgently, for traces and portents of the altered world of their inheritance? And when they fail to find them, what can they do other than to conclude that ours was a time when most forms of art and literature were drawn into the modes of concealment that prevented people from recognizing



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the realities of their plight? Quite possibly, then, this era, which so congratulates itself on its self-awareness, will come to be known as the time of the Great Derangement...”

An inference would be drawn that the serious issue lies in the fact that the Indian fiction has failed to engage with such weather-phenomenon. The book is a non-fiction overcoming fiction, which means it is not an imaginary thing, but as a matter of fact happening to the actual world, this world. “Why We Do Not Hear the Waters”; why the current storyline mode of climate consciousness did overlooked by the writers. Would it be right to say that the sensitivity of the nation is focused more on the romantic ideals of the society, than on the accountability of social commitment?

The campaigns could be organized to protest against the human activities and against anything illogical, but how does it ensure that the needs of the campaign would help deal with variation in climate. What is more appropriate sometimes seems challenging for the human race. Particularly, being totally passive towards the climate change would mean that one is adapting it for their whole existence.

The floods are something that the cities like Mumbai have been facing from the centuries. The sea level in the Kolkata is rising; the Chennai floods are inevitable. The lives of thousands of people have come to the dire straits. It has become an annual ritual for Madhya Pradesh and Bihar where the monsoon rains foreshadow terrible disasters. It is something which does not come with the notification, but is unavoidable. The coming of Ghosh across the first tornado in Delhi, in 1978 was one of the incidents he quoted is, of “extreme improbability. And it appears that we are now in an era that will be defined precisely by events that appear, by our current standards of normalcy, highly improbable: flash floods, hundred-year storms, persistent droughts, spells of unprecedented heat, sudden landslides, raging torrents pouring down from breached glacial lakes, and, yes, freakish tornadoes. The superstorm that struck New York in 2012, Hurricane Sandy, was one such highly improbable phenomenon: the word unprecedented has perhaps never figured so often in the description of a weather event...” The framework has to be created by a force in order to make it look more “persuasive”, since the notion of improbable does not let one to have a complete control upon natural disasters.



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Reflecting upon the situation of ‘Ecological refugees’, the dislocation of family, due to the environment has been brought up to the forefront in one of Ghosh’s interviews (July 21, 2016, NDTV). His father has presented manifold stories about their ancestors getting migrated from Bengal to Bihar due to the enormous change in rivers of Ganga; this made him reluctant to

undertake the concern into the pages. Besides, he has divulged into the lamentable plight of his own city, Kolkata, which had got hit by the dangerous frequent cyclones in the past.

The other historical facts were shared by the Indian filmmaker Srijit Mukherji, who found the book ‘horrifying’. The thought of ‘Arabian sea has gone up by 46%’ and ‘The Bay of Bengal drop out by 31%’ made him realize that there would not have been a better way to address the unthinkable derangement than this. Contributing to the author’s anxiety, Mukherji felt the ‘considerable risk of flood’ approaching Mumbai could result in heavy damage to the lives and property of the tribal community. The poor, the rich and the middle class could not be spared upon the condition of being superior to one another. The precious life of a man could become vulnerable at any time of catastrophic environment. As a result, numerous diseases could follow up like epidemics, thereby, further deteriorating the quality of living in a city. (Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet and Penguin India, held on August 1, 2016).

Stating his reasons for the true type of fiction, the objective is not to shift the literature into the regional or realist mode, but to question the craft of the writer’s narrative to bring out the complexities of life in this increasingly threatened environment. Most of the South Asian writers talking about India are Indian in origin like Arundhati Roy, who has depicted the Indian villages and tribes. Yet in their characterization, either the urban or the middle class rules the central stage. Roy’s *God of the Small Things* (1997), is one of the examples, in which she has tried to preach about the environmental issues, through an untouchable character of Velutha. Velutha is suggestive of sustainable development methods. Nevertheless, the whole action of the novel has remained powerless to reach to a suitable conclusion, where one could think of preserving one’s environment from degradation. What is the point of advocating about the social responsibility when the efforts of Velutha could not be acknowledged by the snobbish villagers of Ayemenem house? The gap is left untouched. This is the problem, Ghosh feels, is lying bare in front of the present world.



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The Author's argument about the climate derangement is beyond any romantic novel. It is a real threat. The exclusion of the people, living in villages or outer the periphery is possible. Regardless of the situation of the underprivileged people who are becoming more and more marginalized, the mode of the literature is becoming more and more urban-centered. The mythical reader is constantly entertained through the portrait of somebody who is a vagabond or

a spendthrift. The hero with the big bungalow or the Mercedes Benz believed to attract the audience more than those who are not socially powerful. The selling of the books is measured on similar plot of a story. In between this fictional portrayal of the community, the real social cause is always suppressed. If the publication of the books would carry this way, the literature would become totally commissioned. It would discourage the exploration of the significant topics revolving around climate issues. Its artificial nature may prove futile in fighting off the massive indignations caused due to weather-related events.

Looking at cinema in the British context, its series of events acknowledge storm as a principle approach towards audiences' imagination. The framework has been developed by the authorities to cast the scene, keeping in mind the climate consciousness. The publishing house has been devoted to promoting the climate genre among the young generation. There is no gray area, but the scientific awareness about the living and dying planets. Nonetheless, this is in sharp contrast to the plot of Indian literature where the hunt for love and marriage becomes a climax. This is considered as the restriction on the artistic freedom since there is nothing to experiment with the traditional narrative like a happy ending. The artist is said to contribute to the society, but if his talent would remain insufficient to bring out the cultural change, there is no hope left to demand help from the bureaucrats and diplomats.

More or less, some artists have a false opinion that "... To introduce such happenings into a novel is in fact to court eviction from the mansion in which serious fiction has long been in residence; it is to risk banishment to the humbler dwellings that surround the manor house – those generic out-houses that were once known by names such as the gothic, the romance or the melodrama, and have now come to be called fantasy, horror and science fiction..." These could be the events that are remote from reality; they are more or less susceptible of being identified as



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surrealist and magical realist novels. Withal this type of fiction could prove to be a powerful text and only the weak minded would refuse to be influenced by it.

It is a dream of every native person to live in a world that has beautiful landscapes, surrounded by rose-tinted flowers and cherry orchard gardens. Hence, an emotional appeal in every fictional work would help make the audience determine what is going wrong with the Earth. The climate change could not be dealt with an insouciant outlook.

For decades, the Readers have been listening to Ghosh's impeccable stories of humankind. It is across geographical and historical boundaries. His narrative approach has led to the uncomfortable question of restraint and resistance against the climate crisis. His other novels like *The Hungry Tide*, 2004, too had brilliantly captured the ache of the tribal people of Bengal, who fears the rise of unexpected tidal floods.

The thought of human survival on the Earth in the failure of the global climate is horrible. But this non-fiction takes a step further. With very few books written on natural disasters, it was his capacity in penning down the agonies, of none but of those lives which have been lost due to negligence. It is a wakeup call to make the whole world realize of the blunders they have committed against their habitat. The issue itself is great, it is huge; it is messing the livelihood of zillions of people. It is taken as a warning that if such bad climatic situations are not solved in the nick of time, it can bring havoc to the inhabitants.

There are various options listed by the author that could help prevent oneself from the effects of the climate variation. Reading of the World Bank report in order to determine the location of the par, is one of them. To put the pressure on the Government and institution's policies should be the moral obligation of every citizen. But what is more important is to recognize one's potential to be able to fulfill the true purpose of one's life, i.e., to get oneself engaged in the urgent task of dealing with global events and to lend a helping hand in order to bring sustainability to the communities residing across the Eastern Coast.

According to Ghosh, the genre of climate should become a part of mainstream literature. The discussion over the events would help in checking the validity of their ideas and opinions during the test of the time. In such a country that has a large number of populations, only a piece of writing could prove competent in informing the public about the state of their surroundings.



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Arundhati Roy had tried this mode of writing too, where the exploitation of the environment has taken place due to modernization. Yet, the saga does not stop here; the clouds of the threat are still sneaking around. Therefore, spreading a word about it as far as possible could assist in bringing a positive outcome.

It is clear from the above discussion that the real issue of the climate derangement is due to the universal ignorance towards it. This discourse has been created by Ghosh to promote the idea of the right kind of literature that caters to the needs of the climate change. Such type of

fiction, he believes, tend to promise to serve the country in the best possible manner. Despite logical arguments presented in the text, a survey could be conducted to review the handling of a genre by the Indian Authors in a current scenario. The difficult questions that were left open-ended could be answered by a call to action.

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