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**Security Implications of Climate Change in *The Great Derangement:*
Climate Change and the Unthinkable by Amitav Ghosh**

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Abstract:

Amitav Ghosh's thought-provoking book *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* examines how climate change is noticeably absent from modern literary and cultural conversation. Published in 2016, Ghosh, an acclaimed Indian author known for his novels exploring historical and environmental themes, challenges the literary world to confront the profound implications of climate change through his compelling analysis. Ghosh argues that despite the escalating threats posed by global warming, literature, especially the novel, has largely remained indifferent or silent on the subject. He identifies this absence as a significant oversight, considering the immense impact climate change has and will continue to have on human societies and the planet.

One of Ghosh's central arguments is that the Western literary tradition, emphasising individualism and human exceptionalism, struggles to grapple with our time's complex, interconnected ecological crises. He suggests that the novel's focus on human drama and individual lives often sidelines broader environmental concerns, leading to a "derangement" – a collective failure to recognize and respond to the existential threat of climate change.

Drawing on examples from literature, history, and his own experiences, Ghosh illustrates how narratives of progress and development have shaped our understanding of the world, often at the expense of ecological sustainability. He critiques the cultural and political structures perpetuating this denial and argues for a more inclusive and ecologically informed approach to storytelling.

Keywords: Climate Change, Cultural Ecological Discourse, Global Warming, Urbanization.

In addition to being a criticism, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* is a call to action. Ghosh challenges writers, scholars, and readers to broaden their literary horizons and engage with the urgent realities of climate change. He advocates for literature that embraces complexity, acknowledges interdependence, and acknowledges the profound transformations reshaping our world.

Overall, *The Great Derangement* is a compelling and timely exploration of the intersection between literature, culture, and climate change. Through his wise investigation, Ghosh encourages us to reconsider how we relate to nature and how literature may help us confront today's most critical issues.

Our immediate surroundings comprise the environment we live in. It's divided into two categories: non-living and living. The six categories of nature dissects warm water, insects, reptiles, plants, animals, and humans. Given his superior intelligence, man is regarded by nature as a padrone. Man and nature are inextricably linked. While nature provides for man's basic needs, living things also aid in the growth and development of nature. A species' ability to flourish and coexist with other species depends on the health of the entire ecosystem. Nature has forcefully retaliated against human exploitation of the environment by causing floods, earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, and other natural calamities. Even though man has advanced to any degree, ecological balance remains as vital to the survival of all living things as it did in prehistoric times. In addition to scientists, ecologists, environmentalists, and nature enthusiasts, writers, poets, philosophers, thinkers, and artists also have a strong interest in and a deep concern for maintaining the ecological balance and protecting the environment.

An entirely different world existed before urbanisation. Worldwide, industrialization has harmed the environment. Environmental issues are discussed everywhere in the world. New technologies are causing the environment to deteriorate daily, and people are finally beginning to realise how essential nature and ecology are—something they had long ignored. All of these topics are being discussed in the literature, which has led to the development of a brand-new field of study known as ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism studies how nature is depicted in literature and how literature engages with the natural world. Ecocriticism examines how the natural world impacts human life. In his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*, William Rueckert created a new phrase in 1978 for showing care for the environment. Although its roots date to the 1970s, ecocriticism as an academic field only began to take shape in the 1990s. It examines different literary treatments of nature and evaluates texts highlighting environmental issues. Ecocriticism is "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment," according to one of the discipline's pioneers, Cheryll Grotfelty. Lawrence Buell states this study needs to be "conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis." "Ecocriticism has distinguished itself, debate notwithstanding," according to Simon Estok (2001). "Firstly by the ethical stand it takes, its commitment to the natural world as an important...." Estok argues that ecocriticism is more than "simply the study of nature or natural things in literature; rather, it is any theory that is committed to effecting change by analysing the function-thematic, artistic, social, historical, ideological, theoretical, or otherwise the natural environment...". Shakespeare's works have also been included in the ecocriticism movement's current expansion. This kind of research falls under the functional approach of the ecocriticism branch known as cultural ecology. It examines the similarities between literary works and ecosystems and suggests that creative writings may have an ecological purpose within the cultural system.

Joseph W. Meeker writes in *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* that the only literary creature on Earth is the human. If literature creation is a significant aspect of the human species, then it should be thoroughly and honestly studied to determine how it affects human conduct and the environment. (PP 3-4)

Culture and nature are inextricably linked to one another since neither can exist alone. Cheryll Grotfelty points out that it comes under the fundamental premise that human culture and this cosmos are interconnected and affect each other (19). Throughout the book, Amitav Ghosh tries to highlight the significance of this connection. Man is not as robust or dominant as nature. Since ancient times, people have believed that nature can preserve and destroy. Like a mother goddess, nature can sometimes be merciful and kind, yet it can also be highly destructive. Preserving the plants and animals at the expense of the eviction of tribe members is one of the main concerns. It has been said in an article titled *Literature and Ecology* that "in ecology, man's

tragic flaw is his anthropocentric vision and his compulsion to conquer, humanise, domesticate, violate and exploit every natural thing” (Rueckert 113).

Environmental consciousness must be raised globally to encourage people to live in an environmentally friendly environment by safeguarding wildlife and plants. These days, natural disasters and wars threaten global peace, disputes, and destruction. According to Jonathan Bate, "Nature" should be challenged rather than rejected. Since nature provides for all of man's basic requirements, how could we conclude that "there is no nature"? After all, there isn't a single area of the planet that humans haven't touched.

The writers' attention has recently been drawn to ecological concerns and the peril humanity faces from ongoing environmental abuse. With their love and concern for nature depicted in their writings, writers such as Amitav Ghosh become highly relevant against the backdrop of the expanding worldwide ecological issues. An ecological interpretation of Amitav Ghosh's body of work emphasises the need for careful environmental stewardship and preserving the intricate system of created order that sustains life on Earth.

This study aims to examine *The Great Derangement*, one of his well-known works, from the standpoint of the security implications of climate change. Using ecocritical glasses to read the work highlights the need to protect the environment to ensure a better future. The non-fiction exposes environmental degradation through examples of exploitation, neglect, and destruction to undermine the corrupt political practices pervasive in the community. This further piques our curiosity about how ecology affects civilization and how crucial the environment is to human survival.

The book is a nominee for the Booker Prize and is about the absurd inactivity of humanity against climate change. This book is a compilation of lectures given at the University of Chicago. Stories, History, and Politics are the three divisions that Ghosh separated it into. In the first, he presents the facts regarding climate change and our incapacity to consider it; in the next two, he discusses how literature and politics relate to it. The primary argument posited by Ghosh in *The Great Derangement* is that, upon reflection on this book, future generations will hold politicians, writers, and leaders responsible for their failure to acknowledge the seriousness of the climate crisis.

Ghosh's book mainly discusses droughts, cyclones, and floods. It is about thinking about climate change, not thinking about it at all, or being unable to. Anyone who has read any of

Ghosh's recent books, particularly *The Hungry Tide* (2004), should not be surprised by this set of knowledge that affects humans; in fact, it is a logical progression of the authorial concerns that set Ghosh apart in his early works as well. *An Antique Land* is a significant non-fiction work focusing on human connections, routes, and tales not included in the mainstream discourse. In the two books, Ghosh had published prior, In *An Antique Land*, these little human voices beneath and below the Empire-Enlightenment-capitalized "Human" had also troubled him. In the following novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995), they were brilliantly transformed into a science fiction story.

As we talk in this work, Ghosh communicates from dim human voices to even more obscure non-human sounds surrounding us. Silent action is a natural occurrence. In an era of "unthinkable" climate change, Ghosh asked: When will we learn to listen to and converse with the non-human voices of the planet that have always spoken to us as humans and will do so under intense pressure?

Non-human agencies are more pronounced than they were in earlier narratives. Verbal communication is accepted more so than non-verbal communication. Examples from Indian epics, such as *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata*, demonstrate how nature—trees, animals, insects, birds, and all other living things—expresses emotions more effectively than words or written words. Animals and birds were conversing like humanity. The workings of the narrative apparatus depend on the intervention of God, animals, and the elements. There are numerous instances where Jatayu (the Bird) aids Ram, Fire (considered God) aids Sita, and so forth. When Ram was searching for Sita, he called Mother Nature:

हे खगमृग हे मधुकरश्रयणी, तुम देखिसीता मृग नयनी||

Man attains self-apotheosis when he separates from this material world and confronts an arbitrary God.

This applies not only to a belief system but also to storytelling techniques: non-humans provide epics with a lot of momentum because they are the ones who come up with the answers that make the story continue, which holds not only for Asian, African, Mediterranean, and other narrative traditions but also for many more. (Chap14)

The Hebrew Bible does not contain any exceptions. It bears similarities to previous national epics. A theologian argues that the central idea of Judaism is that God is not revealed via words and texts but rather through nature and experiences. Christianity and Islam, in comparison,

are more text-based religions with less connection to the environment, political power, and weather. (Chap14)

This begs the issue: Where does the non-human figure fit into the modern novel? The bizarre effect of global warming is addressed when we try to explain that, at this time, human activity was disrupting the Earth's atmosphere, leading to a literary imagination centring on humans and including non-human characters.

Ghosh contends that there needs to be more discussion or description of climate change in modern culture due to the historical rejection of diverse modernity in favour of the single, monolithic paradigm of European modernity, which is still held by ideologues who purport to be sceptical of the West, including those who adhere to Hindutva. Not despite it, but precisely because of its self-definition as "enavant," contemporary literature has failed.

Climate change is not a natural catastrophe in this book; instead, it is a "crisis of culture and thus of imagination" because, when it occurs, culture destroys:

Is the current of global warming too wild to be navigated in the accustomed barques of narration?... (Chap3)

Climate changes are strange. An inexplicable sense of mystery can be found in the Sunderbans stories. Undoubtedly, the term "uncanny" is frequently used regarding climate change. There was an explosion at the Deep water Horizon oil gulf on the Mexico rig; according to news reports, the disaster claimed the lives of up to a dozen persons. It was determined that the influence would still be felt, nevertheless. The oil spill accident in U.S. history spilt millions of gallons of crude into the waterway. It is mysterious how it was cleaned from that water.

From November 1 to April 30, Australian regions were hit with at least 11 cyclones. Some of them are more destructive and dangerous, which is the cause of stronger winds and heavy rain. Timothy Morton raises a question: "Isn't it the case that the effect delivered to us in the [unaccustomed] rain, the weird cyclone, the oil slick is something uncanny"? George Marshall says, "Climate change is inherently uncanny: Weather conditions, and the high carbon lifestyle that are changing them, are extremely familiar and yet have now been given a new menace an uncertainty."

Uncanniness is seen in Gothic literature. In unimaginable shapes and forms, the "mysterious work of our own hands" is returning to haunt us. The ghost stories of Charles Dickens (*A Christmas Carol*), Henry James, and Rabindranath Tagore are among the most

famous novelists' eerie tales. Literary fiction's ghosts are projections of once-alive humans, not actual human beings. There are no human counterparts for animals like Sundarbans tigers or odd meteorological events like the Delhi Tornado. Writing on climate change in a lyrical, elegiac, or romantic style is not appropriate because it is too potent, horrific, and frightening. Despite confusing the notion of ecological writing or environmental writing and our strange bond with non-human animals, these events are not of nature.

Ghosh envisions an extraordinary natural calamity in Mumbai early in the book—one the city has never experienced due to the Arabian Sea's mild climate. We can also go through the writing of Mridula Ramesh's *The Climate Solution*, where she talked about the disasters in Mumbai. We live on a planet becoming less and less familiar to us, though the chances of this happening are small. He creates a scenario wherein South Mumbai's hills and promontories will revert to islands, emerging from a highly turbulent body of water as a strange cyclone approaches Mumbai from the south. In the last section of his book *The Hungry Tide*, there was a scene where a hurricane sent a massive storm surge into the Sundarbans. It was pretty challenging to depict this disastrous scene in fiction.

The separation of Si-fi from the literary mainstream was not sudden, but. It was a gradual process. The seismic event of Mount Tambora in April 1815 was a tremendous volcanic eruption that spread in the air. Famines in Europe and China were the cause of significant temperature changes. Asia's population dramatically increases the effects of global warming on humans. The Bengal Delta, which is heavily inhabited worldwide and includes most of Bangladesh and a large portion of West Bengal, was created by the meeting of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra rivers. In the area, there are more than 5,000,000 residents. The Bengal Delta has seen some of the biggest natural disasters due to its high population density. The Bhola Cyclone of 1971 claimed the lives of over 3,000,000. A recent typhoon in 1991 claimed 1,38,000 lives; the majority of the victims were women as a result of the storm's ferocity and rising sea level.

According to our research on climate change, at least 24% of India's fertile land is gradually becoming desert, and a 2-degree Celsius increase in the world's average temperature will result in less food being produced there. This desertification will not even protect China and Pakistan. The worsening water issue in Asia dwarfs them. The Himalayan Glaciers are expected to vanish by 2050, having already lost all of the ice that has accumulated since the mid-1940s, according to research done in 2008. The Himalayan Glacier is accelerating, causing the flow to

increase daily. This was the cause of the 2008 Kosi River disaster in Bihar and the 2010 Indus floods. The glacier will bring catastrophic water if it keeps receding. Within a decade or two, there will be a severe water deficit if the glacier keeps shrinking.

Asia's population was crucial to the industrialization of the region's popular nations and global warming. The 1980s saw the start of industrialization, which led to the height of the climate catastrophe. We have embraced a way of life that is inappropriate for our surroundings. Men today use refrigerators, vehicles, and other appliances they cannot own. They are utilising it since man would make this procedure smoother rather than due to technical or financial limitations. But the warning signs of this self-created catastrophe have been around for a while. Ghosh asserts:

It is Asia, then, that has torn the mask from the phantom that lured it onto the stage of the Great Derangement, but only to recoil in horror at its handiwork....(Ghosh)

Because of the significant climate upheaval caused by the Industrial Revolution, much study points to the early modern period, which spanned the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Technology and information exchanges peaked then and continued until the early modern era. This was a period of new inventions and increased trade, especially with the U.S. and the Asian continent. It provides a broad overview of the field's research. Deepesh Chakrabarty states that natural philosophers of freedom were primarily concerned with how people would be freed from repression, injustice, inequality, and even uniformity imposed upon them by other people or by systems that humans created. (Ghosh)

We can agree with Ghosh that climate warming is a "wicked problem" based on these concerns. Ghosh argues that politics, like literature, has evolved from a field of group action to one of individual moral reflection. However, there is a high price for restricting politics and literature to individual moral adventures. According to Ghosh, fiction is the most appropriate cultural form for imagining alternative human existences, which the climate catastrophe forces us to consider. His book is a call to action from a great writer to take on the most pressing issue of our day.

This excellent work is the most recent example of the limitations of modern language and intellect and the dissatisfaction with human intellect over the universe we believed to be familiar with. We have become disinherited of Rainer Maria Rilke's observation that "each blind lurch of the world leaves its disinherited, to whom no longer the past nor yet the future belongs." We are

not only deranged, but we are also gradually losing our possessions. But isn't our mortal fate this contingency of meaning? Isn't the only thing that can rejuvenate ourselves, ideas, people, and worlds? Their mortality? It should be recalled by those who are looking for a final, unchanging "end" that everything in hell is also present in heaven. Not to mention that you can never go; both results are equally pointless.

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