



HISTORIOGRAPHIC METAFICTION IN AMITAV GHOSH'S NON-FICTION *THE GREAT DERANGEMENT CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE UNTHINKABLE, THE IMAM AND THE INDIAN*

S. PONKARTHIKEYAN

Ph. D. Research Scholar
AVVM Sri Pushpam College,
Poondi, Thanjavur-613503.
(TN) INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Amitav Ghosh has a peculiar attention and special place in Indian English fiction. His contribution divided into two divisions. First one is fiction and the second one is non-fiction. His notable works in fiction are The Circle of Reason (1986), The Shadow Lines (1988), The Calcutta Chromosome (1995), The Glass Palace (2000), The Hungry Tide (2004), Sea of Poppies (2008), River of Smoke (2011), and The Flood of Fire (2015). His non-fiction are In an Antique Land (1992), Dancing in Cambodia and Large in Burma (1998), Countdown (1999), The Imam and the Indian (2002) and The Great Derangement Climate Change and the Unthinkable (2016). His fiction and non-fiction focused on vivid portrayal of setting and historical oriented backdrop. This paper is going to deal historiographic metafiction in Amitav Ghosh nonfiction work The Great Derangement Climate Change and the Unthinkable, The Imam and the Indian and Countdown

INTRODUCTION

“Within the pages of a novel an event that is only slightly improbable in real life –say, an unexpected encounter with a long-lost childhood friend–may seem wildly unlikely; the writer will have to work hard to make it appear persuasive”

-Amitav Ghosh

Historiographic metafiction novel :

Linda Hutcheon is a Canadian literary theorist who coined the term *Historiographic metafiction*. It often points out to the fact by using the paratextual conventions of historiography to both inscribe and undermine the authority and objectivity of historical sources and explanations. (122-123) Linda Hutcheon. It is a kind of postmodern novel which rejects focusing on present beliefs and old conventions. The term is used for works of



fiction which combine the literary devices metafiction with historical fiction. It differentiated between 'events' and 'facts'. Its traits are (i). Claiming truth in narration, (ii). Contemporary questions of the relation of story and history, (iii). Lies to multiple truths. The nature of historiographic metafiction are (i). Conscious self-reflexivity and concern with history, (ii). Ask question on metafiction and context of history, (iii). Rewriting and reconnect History and Fiction. *The Great Derangement Climate Change and the Unthinkable* is all about history and politics of Climate Change in the World. *Imam and the Indian* has a collection of essays which revealed different topics and setting. *Count Down* is a complete analysis of Pokaran nuclear test in the views of politics, nation and inhabitants of Pokaran.

Historiographic metafiction device

Rewriting and reconnect history and fiction

India has an apocalyptic events in 1984 than any other year destruction. Violence in the Punjab, military attack in Amritsar, the assassination of Prime Minister Mrs Indra Gandhi the gas disaster in Bhopal. At that time of assassination of Prime Minister, all Sikh community assaulted everywhere in all corner of New Delhi. Amitav Ghosh gave a perfect picture on the events in 1984 in the local riots. His presentation is lively of riots on Sikh community. His views portrayed accurately on the assault of Sikh in Delhi.

"Some of the people spoke about neighborhood that had been taken over by vengeful mobs. They described countless murders-many by setting the victims alight-as well as terrible destruction; the burning of Sikh temples, the looting of Sikh schools, the razing of Sikh homes and shops. The violence was worse than I had imagined. It was declared at the meeting that an effective initial tactic would be to march into one of the badly affected neighborhoods and confront the riots directly".(56)

Question on fiction and history

Amitav Ghosh executed to explain carbon-economy and its corruption in nature. He asked to rethink the concepts of History and its agency. This question directly addressed the relation between Art and Literature. Narrative of a fiction should be have radical thinking as non-human to human. This sort of question has a deep analysis between idea and its original form.

"Now that the strings of the Earth have forced us to recognize that we have never been free of non-human constrains, how are we too rethink those conceptions of history and agency?. The question could be forced with posed with the equal force in relation to Art and Literature particularly in regard to



the twentieth century ,When there was a radical turn away from the non-human to the human ,from the figurative toward the abstract”.

The Great Derangement in our lives and our choices are enframed in a pattern of history that looks to leave us nowhere to turn but towards our self-annihilation. The complexity of the history of the carbon economy is not to diminish the argument for global justice for global warming. If we enter into the argument ,we might have recognized that how deeply we are in the Great Derangement. Climate change is entirely the products of the total exploitation of human actions over time.

“The events of today’s changing climate, in that they represent the totality of human actions over time”.(154)

“The climate events of this era, then, are distillations of all human history: they express the entirety of our being over time”(155).

The beginning of Carbon dioxide economy counting as well as human being counting their life. Nearly we used and polluted too much nature resources in the Earth. Here Amitav Ghosh used historiographic metafiction as a tool to ask a question to whole mankind. Carbon dioxide is also a main reason for climate change. On July 26 ,2005 Mumbai has a record history of rain fall received 94.4 cm in fourteen hours. The sudden deluge resulted two hundred kilometers of road submerged,blocked ATM, no power for weeks, thousands of scooters, motor cycles, cars, and buses abandoned on the waterlogged roads.

“Could it be the case that imperialism actually delayed the onset of the climate crisis by retarding the expansion of Asian and African economics? Is it possible that if the major twentieth-century empires had been dismantled earlier , then the landmark figure of 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would have been crossed long before it actually was?”(147)

Amitav Ghosh warned the people of World that the sea-levels rose highly due to climate change. If it would come in real even Sundarbans, New York and Bangkok will be swallowed by Sea. Readers of the World never seek to find an alter solution instead of it they planned to find another Universe for their life. In reality and aim of the Art and Literature must draw the picture of their plight and warning or problems of society. It appreciated that at least literature gave self-awareness of our Universe in the name of Great Derangement.

“In a substantially altered world, when sea-levels rise has swallowed the Sundarbans and made cities like Kolkata ,New York and Bangkok uninhabitable , when readers and museumgoers 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 should they-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 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”(14-15)

Self reflexive narration and question are asked to readers for their analysis of the content of the work of art. He interrogated in many ways to reveal the derangement of nature in the name of flash floods, hundred-year storms, persistent droughts, spell of unprecedented heat, sudden landslides, raging torrents pouring down from breached glacial lakes. We have heard the disaster of New York in 2012 Hurricane Sandy, Hurricane Katrina. In historically cyclone-prone areas like Bangladesh , eastern countries, increase of cyclonic activity in the Arabian sea. Main implement for climate change is in megacities that disaster management is focused on post-disaster response.

“During the deluges of 2005 and 2015 rain fall heavily on some part of the city and lightly on others: the northern suburbs bore the brunt of the rainfall in both cases. The effects of the flooding were also most powerfully felt in low-lying areas and by the residents of ground –level houses and apartments; people living at higher elevations, and on the upper storeys of tall buildings, were not as badly affected.”

The similar fate deluge faced in Mumbai , Kolkata and Chennai in 2015. Sea level raised because of climate change. Kolkata is one of the global megacities that is in climatically risk. Ghosh posed a question on Climate change that it is really tough to escape from this danger.

“How did this come about? How did a state of consciousness come into being such that millions of people would move to such dangerously exposed locations?”

The implements of climate change due to Carbon emission. We have not to use motor vehicle for short travel, use of bulb in electricity. Replace air filters of air conditioners and heaters every three months, use florescent bulbs require less electricity, grow vegetables and fruits at local, try to concentrate on renewable energy like solar energy, never use nuclear weapons even for testing, never cut trees for transport or any construction, plant green in your environment, recycling can reduce carbon footprint are all we ought to follow today itself. In order to save planet and our life , the only way is to go green . If we would do all these in our life , we might save next generation. I quote P.B.Shelley’s poem line *“If Winter comes, Can be Spring far behind?”*. Save Green, live long.



WORKS CITED

- Ghosh, Amitav, *The Great Derangement Climate Change and the Untouchable*, 2016, Penguin Random House India.
- Ghosh, Amitav, *The Imam and the Indian*, 2002, Ravi Dayal, New Delhi, India.
- Hutcheon, Linda, *A Poetics of Postmodernism : History, Theory, Fiction*, Routledge press, 1988.
- Albritton Jonson, Fredrick, *The Origins of Cornucopianism: A Preliminary Genealogy*, Critical Historical Studies, Spring 2014 page 151.
- Marshall, George, *Don't Even Think about It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate change* (New York: Bloomsbury 2004) 95.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh, *The Climate of History : Four Theses*, Critical Inquiry 35 (Winter 2009): 208.