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## Gun Island: Not a Fiction but a Prediction

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### Abstract:

We the citizens of this world are living in the world of climate crisis. Frankenstein of the global warming came and stand at the threshold. It is time and our moral duty to raise voice for awareness of it. Many authors have started writing on this topic of global warming and destruction of environment since it was not addressed and given place in the literature. Amitav Ghosh has continuously raised voice and has been writing on it in his novels. In his recent novel, Gun Island, he wrote (predicted) on the wildfire in Los Angeles, a sprawling Southern California city. This wildfire not only shocked the world but Amitav Ghosh also. His forecast in the novel became the reality now. This paper is an attempt to throw light on this prediction of wildfire in Los Angeles.

**Keywords:** Global warming, destruction, environment.

### Introduction:

As a moral duty eco-critics started writing on the nature and environment. They write on the beauty and destruction of environment in the novels. Some authors write on the destruction of environment from anthropocentric view, the consequences of it, and the role of human being. A catastrophe is at hand, thanks to global warming, the best of us lack conviction in addressing its dangers as we righteously fly off to climate-change conferences. And the worst of us are rejecting the theory of climate change. They are not ready to believe it. Our collective denial is what Amitav Ghosh sets out to challenge it in his new novel 'Gun Island.'

### About the author:

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta and grew up in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. He studied in Delhi, Oxford and Alexandria and is the author of 'The Circle of Reason', 'The Shadow Lines', 'In An Antique Land', 'Dancing in Cambodia', 'The Calcutta Chromosome', 'The Glass Palace', 'The Hungry Tide', and 'The Ibis Trilogy', consisting of 'Sea of Poppies', 'River of Smoke' and 'Flood of Fire'. His book, 'The Great Derangement; Climate Change and the Unthinkable', a work of non-fiction, appeared in 2016. Amitav Ghosh's work has been translated into more than thirty languages. His most recent book, 'Gun Island', published in 2019 and deals with climate change and human migration. He was conferred the 54th Jnanpith award in December 2018 and is the first Indian writer in English to have been chosen for this honour.

## Climate Change in Gun Island:

Amitav Ghosh is one of them who write on the destruction of environment and its long lasting side effect on the Earth. This latest novel, Gun Island, explores many of the writer's recurring motifs: Irrawaddy dolphins; the Sunderbans; climate change. The novel has themes of illegal migration and refugee crisis, displacement and renewal but the main thing is the prediction of wildfire in the Los Angeles. He has not mentioned directly any reason for this. But he indirectly talks on global warming.

Deen is the protagonist of the novel. He is a dealer of rare books, and used to a quiet life spent indoors, but as his once-solid beliefs begin to shift, he is forced to set out on an extraordinary journey; one that takes him from India to Los Angeles and Venice via a tangled route through the memories and experiences of those he meets along the way. Cinta invited him to Los Angeles as one of the richest museums was celebrating the acquisition of one rare copies of 'The Merchant of the Venice'. On the day of the journey, when he boarded the aircraft, he caught the conversation of massive wildfire around Los Angeles. Amitav Ghosh writes, "...I learnt that massive wildfire had been raging around Los Angeles for several days. Thousands of acres of Land had been incinerated and tens of thousands of people had been moves to safety" (115).

These imaginary lines chilled the citizen of California State as it came true in January 2019. This natural destruction happened when world leader were busy in rejecting the climate change/global warming theory. Thousands of acres were burnt in this massive fire. Thousands people were evacuated from their houses and many lost their lives. The state gave reasons as extreme weather conditions in earlier months, including hurricane-force gusts, has sparked fires and forced thousands of people from their homes. In the northern regions, over 77,000 acres of wine country burned before winds began to die down. In the south, firefighters were hoping to be able to contain the fires as winds ease into the weekend.

Amitav Ghosh though didn't mention the reasons of the fire in his book but indirectly puts finger on global warming. When Deen reached Los Angeles, he witnessed the massive fire through the window of the aircraft. He scanned the horizon of this big city through his window. The narration of view looks so familiar with wildfire in California as if he was watching the future. He writes, "*It wasn't long before dark smudges appeared in the distance. They quickly grew into dense masses of smoke. Then leaping waves of flame came into view too, lining the horizon with the flickering tints of yellow and orange*" (116). As per PETA's report on California Fire, these fires have claimed inconceivable number of foxes, rabbits, deer, frogs, mice, coyotes, and other animals who were smoked out of their homes and burned alive. Ghosh further narrates the post fire situation that Deen saw through the window of the plain.

"Even more striking was the landscape that lay beneath our flightpath- a charred, smouldering stretch of forested hillside that had already been laid waste by the fire. The plane was now flying low enough that I could see a great mass of blackened tree trunks rising out of a vast field of ash. I noticed a also that many birds were circling over the ashes of the burnt-out forest". (116-117).

This narration helps us to understand the scope of the fire. It looks so accurate when we read the reports published in the Newspapers. Authorities fought this so called Sandalwood Fire around 120 Kilometers east of Los Angeles in Riverside County. The fire scorched an area of around 500 acres and has destroyed 74 structures near the city of Calimesa. This Sandalwood fire began after a garbage truck dumped burning trash near dry grass and vegetation.

As per the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), while wildfires are a natural part of the state's landscape, the fire season in the state and across the Western US starts earlier and ends later each year. The department notes that climate change is a "key driver" of this trend, with warmer spring and summer temperatures, reduced snowpack and earlier spring snowmelt, which create longer and more intense dry seasons. These dry seasons have increased the moisture stress on vegetation and have therefore made forests more susceptible to severe wildfires. In an analysis of scientific articles published since January 2020 that established a link between climate change and fire risk, the authors note that natural variability is superimposed on the increasingly warm and dry conditions that have resulted from climate change, which has led to more extreme fires and more extreme fire seasons.

In the next chapter of wildfire Amitav Ghosh indirectly referred global warming is a true phenomenon. He wrote on the topic of speech of the speaker at museum's acquisition function where Deen reached. The building of the museum was located on the spine of a steep ridge. The sight of fire commanded panoramic views of stretching from the hills in the east to the sea on the western horizon. Programme started and distinguished speaker elected to speak on 'Climate and Apocalypse in the Seventeenth Century'. During his speech he mentioned lot of things. He mentioned 17<sup>th</sup> century, as the Little Ice age, and reasons of reducing the world temperature at freezing point. He even mentioned how at the same time scientist started innovations and leads to environmental destruction. Amitav Ghosh Write,

"It would seem that the intellectual titans of the Enlightenment had no inkling of what was getting under way. Yet, strangely, all around the earth, ordinary people appear to have sensed the stirring of something momentous. They seemed to have understood that a process had been launched that could lead ultimately to catastrophe: What they didn't allow for was that the story might take a few hundred years to play out. It has fallen to us, centuries later, to bear witness to the last turn of the wheel. And what we are seeing already-" (124)

Here speaker took pause to point a finger in the direction of the distant wildfire. He write '*perturbations of climate change*' (114) has started and it would be trivial to compare with Little Ice Age because, he writes, '*what our ancestors experienced is but a pale foreshadowing of what the future holds!*' (114). This speech is enough to open the eyes of the readers. This is the forewarning to the readers as the consequences of global warming are very different from Little Ice Age. He even mentions the process of climate change has already begun but nowhere had he mentioned the solution on it. Now it is the reader's responsibility to act wisely.

When Amitav Ghosh heard the wildfire he was shocked. He didn't think this will happen so soon. He started writing on this novel in 2016, published it in June 2019 and immediately in November 2019 the world witnessed the prediction came true. He has been writing on climate change for more than twenty years. In as Interview when he was asked to comment on California wildfire he said the threat of climate change is real and it is intensifying. Though he focused on the problem, climate change, he didn't mentions and gave the solution to the world. He thinks as a write I can only write or show you what is happening and what will. Now the world leaders should take conscience and act accordingly.

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