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**Displacement in a Changing World: A Theoretical Study of Migration  
in the select works of Amitav Ghosh**

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**Abstract:**

This paper relates Everett Lee's Push and Pull Theory and William Safran's Diaspora Theory to aspects of migration in *The Gun Island*, *Jungle Nama*, *The Great Derangement*, and *The Living Mountain* by Amitav Ghosh. The study applies Lee's model to analyse that environmental degradation and climate change are important "push" factors that make people migrate, while economic opportunities and the desire for safety serve as "pull" forces. These migrations are further contextualized by Safran's Diaspora Theory, which studies themes of collective memory, displacement, and the inclination for home. *Gun Island* emphasizes human trafficking and migration brought on by changes in climate, whereas *Jungle Nama* and *The Living Mountain* illustrate environmental circumstances that cause both human displacements through myth. *The Great Derangement*, non-fiction, exposes literature's failure to address climate change. Using these dual-theoretical lenses, the study justifies the case that Ghosh's writings resonate the broader perspective of our Anthropocene period by showing migration as a complex interplay of political, cultural, and environmental forces.

**Keywords:** Migration, Opportunities, Diaspora, Displacement, Environmental, Complex, Degradation.

**Introduction:**

Migration is a recurring phenomenon in human history. Several concerns have compelled people to move from one place to another. Primary humans were nomads who wandered for food. Human beings were displaced across continents,

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which was essential for survival. History documents the evidence that humans began to move in search of rich landscapes where they grew crops and formed permanent settlements.

As the world developed, trade thrived as a major reason for migration. For example, the Silk Road allowed the movement of goods and ideas and the expansion of ties between the East and the West. As an outcome, cities and commercial midpoints like Constantinople, Baghdad, and Venice progressed economically. The frequent travel of merchants, traders, and artists along this route improved. During the Age of Exploration, European powers occupied new regions in search of wealth, trade-off routes, and occupied territory. Consequently, parts of Asia, Africa, and the Americas were occupied. The movement of workforces and settlers to these regions fundamentally changed the economics and demography of the colonizers and the colonized. Industrialization in the 19th century saw a substantial need for manufacturing due to the growth of businesses including steel manufacturing, coal mining, and textiles. The closure of European civilizations resulted in mass immigration.. People from colonised countries migrate to European countries in pursuit of better living conditions. Literature from this period reflects the complex condition of migrants sandwiched between the two worlds. V.S. Naipaul's *A House for Mr. Biswas* and *The Mimic Men* reflects the plight of migrants. The Jewish Holocaust and the partition of India after World War II throw light on violence, trauma, and displacement. Khuswant Singh's *Train to Pakistan* candidly highlights the migrant condition.

The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed the world coming together as one under the umbrella of globalization. People began to migrate for education, work, and as an asylum. Chimamanda Ngozi, Jumpa Lahari, and Amitav Ghosh are some of the writers who explored the themes of the migrant experience in terms of identity, assimilation, and the challenges encountered by the diaspora community. Ghosh in his novels touches upon the condition of migration and related it to environmental degradation. "Having just published *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, it was perhaps inevitable that I should begin to wonder whether the exodus from the Indian subcontinent was somehow related to climate change. The fact that many of the migrants were from Bangladesh seemed to support this idea. As is well known, the Bengal delta is extremely vulnerable to climate change, and it is projected that tens of millions of Bangladeshis will be displaced by climate change in the coming decades."(Ghosh , "*The Great Uprooting*" 712)

Everet Lee's Push-Pull Theory explains migration as a result of factors that "push" people away from their homeland (such as economic difficulties, war, and environmental degradation) and "pull" them to new locations with better opportunities. Deen, the central character in the novel "*The Gun Island*," migrates to the United States for a better future. As a migrant, he is sandwiched between cultures

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and countries. Being in New York, he longs for home and very often thinks about home, and later his brief stay in Venice shows the transnational journey of diasporas. Though by birth he is an Indian, he is influenced by Western education and culture. His life reflects a cultural hybrid of following multiple cultures. The confession uttered by Deen in the very beginning of the novel drives home the point of diaspora longing for home."Kolkata was also sometimes a refuge, not only from bitter cold of a Brooklyn winter, but from the solitude of a personal life that had increasingly desolate over time, even as my professional fortunes prospered"(Ghosh, "*The Gun Island*" 1)

*The Gun Island* by Ghosh shows people leaving their homes in search of better prospects and safety. Safran's concept of dispersion is evident in the story of *Gun Island*. Rafi who migrates to Italy illegally, is followed by Tipu, a young lad who is from the Sundarban leaves home to reach a foreign land to work. He travels through Pakistan, Iran, Turkey to reach Italy. They traverse through different cultural terrains to reach a place of opportunity and safety. Rafi's identity is determined by the people he meets and interacts with at various stages of his life. He is shaped by his upbringing and the influences he comes across as he travels from Bengal to Italy. His encounter with different cultures shapes his identity.

*The Jungle Nama* is another story in which Amitav Ghosh portrays the poor Dukhey, who decides to leave his home for better prospects in life. Though the movement is not to a foreign land, the push factor is poverty in the Sundarbans, and the pull factor is better prospects for him and his grandmother. Dukhey falls prey to his uncle's greed and is forced to move out of his home but returns as a more wise individual to face life.

In the novella, *The Living Mountain*, the indigenous people moving away and leaving behind their traditional beliefs is the push factor, and the urge to gain more is the pull factor as the natives decide to conquer the mountain. The natives of the mountain in the novella *The Living Mountain* experience being spiritual refugees as an outcome of the mountain's wreckage. They are expelled from their inherited land, beliefs, and environment. External forces ruin their efforts to protect the mountain's holiness. Sense of alienation from their own home, many environmental exiles often feel estranged from the fast-changing natural world. The narrative is infused with the desire for a lost home.

The nonfiction *The Great Derangement* by Ghosh describes how climate change is the push factor, as many people live in low-lying areas, and the pull factor is the way to survive in another land with promise. "The violence of climate change is not just in the storms and floods, but in the silent displacement it causes, uprooting communities and forcing them to migrate in search of survival."(Ghosh. "*The Great Derangement*" 32)

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William Safran's theory of diaspora offers a framework for understanding the problems of migration in Amitav Ghosh's nonfiction *The Great Derangement*. Amitav Ghosh emphasises that environmental changes around the world can lead to migration and thereby cause distress in the lives of people. Using Safran's vital framework of diaspora, one can perceive how Ghosh connects migrant patterns and environmental problems. For example, Ghosh highlights the condition of coastline inhabitants that are moved by the sea's invasion, particularly in places like the Sundarbans. "The Bengal Delta has been a region of continuous human habitation for millennia, but now, as sea levels rise and cyclones grow more frequent, entire communities face the prospect of becoming climate refugees." (Ghosh, "The Great Derangement" 61)The environmental catastrophe acts as a powerful instigator, driving folks to displace and search for other sources of earnings. Safrans theory of collective memory in the migrant community is a prominent theme in the nonfiction *The Great Derangement*. When the migrants relate to each other in terms of a similar experience, then there emerges a sense of identity as a community. As the migrants adapt to the new country and space, they nevertheless wish to remain connected to their own culture.

Ghosh's novel *The Jungle Nama* can be studied through the lens of Saran's theory of diaspora about migration, environment, and cultural identity. The simpleton Dhukey, who is the central character, along with his mother, manoeuvre through the challenges faced by the deteriorating environment around them. Dhukey, the young lad, is the central character in the story. Dukhey's uncle forces him to earn a living by moving into the deep forest. Dhukey and his mother, who live in sheer poverty due to the change in the landscape of the Sundarban, negotiate their identity in a society that is changing quickly where collective memory plays a vital role. Dhukey's mother preserves the shared tales to keep their culture alive.

Safran's theory that migrants' collective memory keeps the culture alive can be aligned with Ghosh's retelling of the myth of Bon Bibi in *the Jungle Nama*. The environmental changes experienced by Dhukey and his mother make them feel marginalised and alienated as they confront the realities of life in the impoverished Sundarban. Dhukey and his mother feel helpless and vulnerable when faced with poverty due to a lack of livelihood in the Sundarbans. The key culprit is the changing landscape of the sundarban. So Dhukey is willing to migrate for the sake of a better life for his family.

Ghosh subtly highlights the idea of dispersion in the novella *The Living Mountain* when the natives are hard hit by the change in nature around them. The plot of the novella *The Living Mountain* tells of human history when the colonizer changed the landscape of the colonized. The valley people believed in the invaders of the mountain and were tempted by the stories of the invaders and began to move from their home to the summit of the mountain. In this novella, Ghosh's presentation

aligns perfectly with Safran's ideology of collective memory. The communal memory is represented by the old woman in the village who keeps reminding the natives of their identity and the bond they share with the mountain.

The relationship between migration, cultural identity and environmental degradation is subtly handled in the work of Amitav Ghosh. Lee's ideology of push and pull factor in relation to migration aligns with the plots of Ghosh in which better opportunities forces people to migrate. Safran's concept of diaspora, which includes the longing for home, collective memory, loneliness, and the struggle for identity, backs up the themes brought about by Ghosh in his works.

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