

1 - Mr Ghosh, thanks for being so kind to answer my questions. In your essay “The Great Derangement” you tell about the tornado that you witnessed, and experienced yourself in Delhi, in 1978. Can you tell us how you survived and how it changed your perception of the destructive power of nature?

A.

Looking back now, I am glad that I had the presence of mind to take shelter when I saw the tornado coming at me that day in Delhi in 1978. Nowadays it often happens that people start taking pictures and selfies in situations of danger. It is as if they had become so accustomed to virtual reality that they cannot believe that real dangers exist. I wonder, were it to happen today would my response be to film it my phone or to run from it, as I did?

The tornado of 1978 certainly heightened my awareness of extreme weather events. But my engagement with climate change dates back to the year 2000 when I started writing my novel ‘The Hungry Tide’, which is set in the Sundarbans. Even back then the impacts of global warming were already being felt in the Sundarbans. Since that time it has become clear that this is the greatest challenge that humanity has ever faced.

2 - You write also about your elders, who had to deal with floods in Bangladesh, a nation under the sea level. Is it one of the reasons why you wrote this book about climate change?

A. My family was originally from Bangladesh but they had to leave in the 1850s because their village was flooded. Today rising sea levels in Bangladesh have forced millions of people to migrate. Some of these ‘climate migrants’ have had no choice but to move to cities; many of them have come to Europe. These environmental impacts are a major factor in Europe’s refugee crisis.

3 - Why do Asia is so much at risk nowadays for climate change? Imperialism and colonialism have something to do with the actual situation?

A. In my view the distribution of power in the world lies at the core of the climate crisis. Naturally the history of imperialism and colonialism have much to do with this.

4 - In the italian translation, “derangement” was translated as “cecità”, blindness. Are we, population of the world, in such a difficult situation also because of our blindness? Is it the blindness of politicians or also of writers, of intellectuals?

A. The word ‘blindness’ helps us understand our otherwise inexplicable inability to grasp the immensity and urgency of the changes that are already unfolding around us. This is particularly true of southern Asia since this is a region that will be particularly badly affected. It is simply a fact that climate change hardly ever figures in political discussions in India. We have only to open a newspaper, or turn on the TV, to see that dozens of issues receive more attention than, say, the ongoing drought, and the agrarian crisis more generally.

5 - You wrote that you appreciated *Laudato si'*, the text by the Pope about climate change. Why?

A. I think Pope Francis's encyclical is perhaps the single most important text on climate change. This is because unlike the politicians and bureaucrats who generally deal with climate matters the Pope recognizes that climate change cannot be solved by technological and economic 'fixes'. The factors that are driving climate change are as much cultural, and indeed, spiritual, as they are economic. He is a true visionary, and possibly the only real leader in the world today.

6 - How can a writer of fiction get inspired by climate change?

A. Unfortunately climate change does not seem to be of much interest to mainstream writers even though many have been affected by it. Consider the epic downpours that have hit Mumbai and Chennai in recent years. Both these cities are home to many writers, actors, directors, poets and so on. Needless to add, they are home also to huge film industries, some of which were badly affected by the floods. Yet, so far as I know there are no films, novels, stories or poems about the floods – not a single one!

7 - The “american century” is over. Are we now in a new era, in which Asia is the main power, the main actor in the world?

A. The countries of Asia are much more important than they used to be fifty years ago, but the US and Europe are still the dominant powers in many ways.

8 - What do you think about Trump and the new populism in politics?

A. This populism is not necessarily new. I think Silvio Berlusconi rose to power on something similar.

9 - We have a lot to learn with indian and asian philosophy and sense of religion. Is occidental world, occidental culture, near to its end?

A. Unfortunately there is very little difference today between Asia and the West, at least in such matters as consumerism, consumption and material life in general. This is a global crisis in every sense.

11 - What do you think about the return, after 20 years of Arundhati Roy, with a new novel?

A. I think it's wonderful that she has come back to fiction.