

Description of Climate Migration in Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*

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Abstract

As climate migrants leave their residences in order to cope with the climate crisis, new immigration laws are being proposed by global health organizations. Nevertheless, the questions of why residents treat climate migrants as aliens and what are the difficulties climate-migrants encounter. Researchers from a range of disciplines have been examining climate migration and its ramifications in the economy, civil and political systems of the countries, for the last two decades. According to the report of WHO in May 2022, the number of migrants is expected to increase due to environmental degradation and disasters. In their destination, climate migrants repeatedly encounter several issues, such as health care services, civil issues, and cultural hurdles. This article examines the complications and supports migrants in meeting their requirements.

Keywords: climate refugees, climate migration, displacement, climate fiction, climate-induced-migration, apocalypse

Human activities have altered the conventional operations and duties of Gaia. Consequently, Climate Change modifies the "living conditions for populations and affects food, water and physical security. These changes may lead to local conflicts due to competition for resources" (Richardson, xvii and 120). Climate change has been prevailing for years, and "it affects all the people on the earth" (Wennersten, ix). It has

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been scientifically proved that anthropogenic climate change exists on the globe (Wissenbach, 29). The Environmental/Climate change crisis steers to "drastic environmental disruptions such as earth erosion, water shortage, water poisoning and deforestation - which force people to leave their homes and seek refuge in other places" (Odalen, 123), known as migration. Climate change and migration are ineluctable discussions by world organizations, who requested that world leaders take robust actions to lessen the consequences of climate change on migrants (WHO). Nevertheless, the questions of why native citizens treat migrants as aliens, what the challenges are in providing basic amenities, and what the remedies to mitigate climate migration remain unresolved. According to the International Organization for Migrants (IOM), environmental/Climate migrants are "persons or groups who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad" (IOM).

Oscar Gomez states, "Migration linked to environmental change has been found to be mainly internal or between contiguous countries, mainly taking place in developing countries" (26). Climate change causes the displacement of millions of people as 'environmental refugees' or 'environmental migrants', and migration causes conflict (Richardson, 121; Marotzke et al., 2 & 3). Climate change-induced migration indicates conflicts such as 'competition, ethnic tension, distrust, fault lines and auxiliary conditions' (Reuveny, 659). Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) states, "Climate variability will result in some movement of stressed people, but there is *low confidence* in the ability to assign direct causality to climatic impacts or the numbers of people affected" (81).

According to the report of WHO in May 2022, because of the environmental devastation and disaster, the number of migrants is increasing perpetually. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported, "...the number of people displaced by climate change-related disasters since 2010 has risen to 21.5 million" (Weforum). Jorgen Odalen states, "...the most unpromising estimates say that the number of environmental refugees could reach about 200 million by 2050" (123).

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According to the report of Zurich posted on 26 May 2022, 1.2 billion in the world population could be displaced universally by 2050, as a result of climate change and natural disasters (Zurich).

Climate change-induced migration occurs due to the circumstances that a place becomes uninhabitable due to climate change. The purposes of the paper are to provide wide knowledge about climate change-induced migration and its consequences, prompt humanism among the people to consider migrants as their fellow citizens and request the habitants to help migrants by providing food and shelter. Moreover, the paper suggests authorities invent new policies, laws and new global protocols for the protection of migrants and mitigate climate change crises, shows ways to protect climate migrants by passing the issues to higher-level authorities (Odalen, 137), suggests enhancing or reproducing the climate change-induced-environment in biotic ways or technological ways, provides small trading opportunities to migrants in their destination land, and encourage the national academies to speak out on the issues of migration at regional, national and world levels.

As climate change puts biodiversity in hazardous circumstances, migrants need to be the survival experts. Climate migrants ought to survive as the competitors of other fellow migrants or native inhabitants.

Climate fiction has been circumstanced in growing attention among the readers within the "theoretical field of literary studies, particularly eco-criticism" (Leavenworth, 728) and it discourses the prominent issues of climate change in the text. To say in a simple statement, climate fiction is "the abstract future of a climatically changed world" (Mehnert, 93). Climate fiction is the framework or blueprint to explicit the days of climate change as the apocalyptic era when people are struggling to survive physically, economically, politically and mentally. It frames climate migrants as survivors due to their engagement with conflicts around them.

Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*, the novel depicting two different climate change eras, expresses how the inhabitants anguish migrants during the days of climate change. At the beginning of the novel, Saul, the protagonist of the novel, explores his hatred of foreigners/migrants from African countries who are trying to enter England due to the

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intolerable effects of global warming in their country. Saul disgusts them and does not want to share anything with those black people, despite the government underpins them. He believes that they lie to get support from Britain. Saul states,

I started to hate these foreigners. There was not enough to share with them...

I told her I hated black people...

I do not like black people,' I said. 'The screen said even more of them are trying to get in.' To me, they seemed like liars and scroungers who would keep my family poor forever. 'I hate people. Why must they come here? (6)

Hence, some inhabitants from entire countries do not want to share their lives and belongings with migrated people, as they assume migrants as liars and scroungers. Even government provides permission, the people have no interest in helping them. Particularly, Saul mentions them as 'black people. Thus, migrants encounter difficulties because of their racial identity.

As the time reversed, unfortunately, Saul became a migrant in the middle of the novel since Britain entered into the Ice Age caused by climate change. As climate change is an apocalyptic era, there are so many conflicts in the European countries in politics and society. Culture has been altered, and women, who believe that they do not need men forever, start to rule the country. Therefore, Saul wants to emigrate from Europe in order to protect himself and his son Luke from the ice. When Saul plans his destination, he recognizes the divergence among the countries in accepting migrants. The discrepancy between the countries is exposed in the novel as,

Each African country was doing things differently, though all were overwhelmed with requests for asylum. Ghana was intending to close its borders 'within six months' to those 'special cases' allowed to immigrate because they had Ghanaian blood. The Cameroons, by contrast, had set no time limit. Sierra Leone would accept no one with any admixture of European blood. (157)

African countries provide time for migrants to enter their jurisdiction. Contrastingly, the Cameroons and Sierra Leone do not allow European blood.

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Furthermore, due to the climate calamities, the migrants commence a venture to save their lives in a new place. During the migration too, they have to face many difficulties from the people whom they pass through. They have to cross the robbers and killers in their ways. Their survival test begins when they depart from their territory. When Saul, Luke and Briony halted in a place during their travel, they noticed one of the rooms accidentally in the building where they found some documents. Saul depicts the room, "there were all these documents, passports, birth certificates, from so many countries, piled on a desk. I think they were stolen; they take them from travellers" (261). Thus, the robbers seize every migrant's belongings, for migrants cannot avoid them in their path.

Intermittently, the migrants also steal for their health motives. After losing his son Luke, Saul was captured by the wild boys, a climate-induced migrant group of boys. The wild boys control Saul and tell stories to save his life from death. In the Ice Age, collecting food was impossible, so the boys tried to steal convoys.

Unless the boys have robbed a convoy, there is no fruit or veg except potatoes, which these kids can about manage to grow, but most of them are rotten by this time of year, and they come out of the fire either burnt or half raw. At least the cold stops the pits from stinking. (56)

Thus, during climate change, the migrants commit civil disobedience to gather food, as they have no food except rotten. Thus, civil order is violence by migrants as well as native citizens.

Climate migrants embrace death by sacrificing their lives for their fellow travellers. *The Ice People* depicts how migrants sacrifice their lives for their family, friends and beloveds. Saul, Luke and Briony, during the venture, hold on in a strange place. Eventually, the three try to get out of the place after they find that the robbers occupy the place. As Briony is ready to sacrifice for them, she wants Saul to flee with Luke. For she is Wicca's Weapons Officer, she has a special gun in her bag. She manages adversities by shooting toward them until Saul and Luke get into the Car. Unfortunately, she is shot and screams, "Go! Get Luke away! Get in the fucking car, Saul!" (262). Saul tells Luke to explain her sacrifice for them and that she begged him to leave when Luke asks for

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Briony. Briony represents those who sacrifice their lives for their beloveds during civil conflicts caused by climate change.

Hence, the migrants should always be ready to face these kinds of complications during the 'climate apocalypse'. Furthermore, immigrants are considered illegal immigrants by several countries, for they need documentation for their approval. Climate fiction deliberately portrays the tremendous circumstances faced by climate change-induced migrants. Survival becomes hard for migrants, for they have these kinds of difficulties.

Even though the land may have some modifications caused by climate change, people can live with the modified land if scientists and researchers do research on the land and find how the land can be used for farming after the changes. Eventually, the government should motivate the people to refrain from migrating and instead encourage them to do fieldwork in the altered land with the help of scientists. For instance, in Bangladesh, since saline water was raised through the soil, the land became unworthy for farming. According to research from the United Nations University, 62 million hectares of agricultural land had been destroyed by salt. ICCO Corporation provided training for 5,000 farmers and educated them on how to grow salt-tolerant crops. Food security and income of the people increased (ICCO et al.). Through this kind of accomplishment, migration might be reduced, and migrants could survive in their land by enhancing them better. As Craig Landry states,

Post-disaster recovery and rebuilding ... require understanding the existing risks, communicating those risks to the public, rethinking land uses, deciding on methods to correct deficiencies in public infrastructure, and providing incentives for economic recovery that will give firms and households an opportunity to survive and thrive. (1)

Nevertheless, climate change sometimes makes territories uninhabitable. When territories lose their nature after climate-induced alteration, it cannot be done naturally but might be done with the use of technology for the sake of survival.

Economy, food, security and shelter are the basic needs to survive in a land altered by climate change. As Leavenworth says, climate fiction "target readers...and

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depict(s) a future world completely altered by climate change. (His) close readings are focused on questions of past and present climate concerns, responsibility and communal action" (728). Climate fiction induces many conflicts, particularly migration. It predicts and sketches the sequences of climate crises. Climate migration is the major ineluctable conflict in future. Indeed, as the climate is changing every day, we cannot halt the consequences but postpone them by concerning the natural environment. Aldo Leopold proposes a 'land ethic' to consider non-human and other biotic communities in the land as 'biotic citizens'. He states, "The land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it (204). To escape climate change crises like climate migration, we need initiation to enhance and protect the nature of the world. If time is given to the ecosystem of the Earth, the natural environment will renew itself in particular years, we believe.

Mitigating climate change is the major key to mitigating climate-induced migration. There is no way except longing for the help of technology when nature takes time to self-renew. Until then, people have to exist in the circumstances to cope with the consequences of climate change and migration. Especially as per the human rights for migration, we should be concerned about the migrants. Eventually, the paper insists that native citizens let climate migrants live as their fellow citizens.

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