

## AMITAV GHOSH'S "THE CALCUTTA CHROMOSOME" AS A SCIENTIFIC FANTASY

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### ABSTRACT :

In this article, I have presented Amitav Ghosh's novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* as a novel of scientific fantasy. The story jumps back and forth in time and follows different characters, weaving everything together beautifully. The investigation is extremely essential to the pursuit of justice. An investigation is a systematic fact-finding process. It produces a report. The investigation is derived from the Latin word *Vestigere*, which means 'to trace' or 'to track'. In an Investigation, the hidden facts are searched. It includes step-by-step inquiry. The investigation is a multi-disciplinary field of study it includes science, law, sociology and history etc. Investigation entails a probing mind attached with contemplation to detail. Amitav Ghosh is the renowned author of a long period. Amitav Ghosh was born on 11 July 1956. He is a Bengali Indian author best known as an extensive author. The Calcutta Chromosome is a unique work of Amitav Ghosh. It is a Novel of Fevers, Delirium, and Discovery. It is published in 1995. It is Amitav Ghosh's first novel in which science fiction transforms into an investigation. In this novel, an Egyptian clerk, Antar in New York City bumps into a lost ID card. It belongs to a strange man (Murugan) that Antar met a long time ago. The man claimed to be the world authority on Ronald Ross, the man that solved the mystery with Malaria in Calcutta in 1898. While Antar digs up information about what really happened to the man, a mystery unravels and by the time Antar finds himself involved in it.

**Keywords:** Discovery-Facts-Investigation-Malaria-Vector.

*The Calcutta Chromosome* is basically a science fiction, although a detective story which constitutes the fabric of the plot of the novel. The novel fits into the definition of a science fiction. *The Calcutta Chromosome* has an ultimate connection with the theme of transformation from unknown to known. It is different from other fiction. It has different iconography that is used to explore the unknown into the known. The same feature can be also found in detective fiction and thrillers etc.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, the malaria vector is unknown and the theme explicit that female Anopheles is the vector of it. It is an attempt to rewrite the story of Ronald Ross's discovery of the life cycle of malaria mosquito and how it causes the disease to human beings. The British bacteriologist is more close to the people of Calcutta as he did his path breaking research in this city only. The novel begins with Sir Ronald Ross's short poem in which he refers to 'His secret deeds', implying a scientific discovery. The novel is divided into two sections- "August 20: Mosquito Day" and "The Day After". The title of the novel and even the titles of the sections indicate that the thrust of the narrative is on "the Discovery" in regard to the cause of malarial fever.

True to Science Fantasy, there are a series of mysterious incidents that make the novel a science fantasy. After arriving in Calcutta on 20th August, 1995, Murugan leaves his luggage at the Robinson Street guest house. Then he visits the memorial of the British Scientist Ronald Ross. He is thrilled at reading an inscription related to the finding of malaria conveyed by mosquitos. When it begins to rain, he has to take shelter under the gates of Rabindra Sadan auditorium where he happens to meet two women, the reporters of the magazine called "Calcutta". They are Urmila Roy and Sonali Das. Later Murugan learns that there is an award ceremony for Phulboni, a writer to mark his eighty-fifth birthday. Phulboni is the pseudonym of a man called Saiyad Morad Hussain. Sonali Das is the daughter of Saiyad Morad Hussain and she is working as a reporter for a magazine, "Calcutta". She is married to Roman Haldar and Urmila Roy remains unmarried to her family's sake but represents

“Calcutta”. As we are introduced to these characters, they became “diseased” and are compelled to play their part in the malaria story.

The story speeds like a thriller: Urmila, chasing a fish monger’s boy to exchange her rotten fish, bumps into Murugan again, who unravels Cunningham’s (an English man investigating malaria in the late 19th century) story with the help of the ancient train timetable in which Urmila’s fish was wrapped. Murugan explains to the bewildered Urmila, “Someone’s trying to get us to make some connections; they are trying to tell us something; something they don’t want to put together themselves”.

Suddenly the pieces of the story fall into place as Murugan and Urmila discover that Lutchman or Laakhan is the same person (or Phantom) who worked for Cunningham as an assistant to his apprentice Mangala; together they experimented with pigeons by infusing malarial germs into them, then transferring their blood to cure syphilitic patients, thereby creating the “Calcutta Chromosome”. This addition to the traditional Mendelian chromosomes had the ability to transfer characters’ traits across species. As Urmila and Murugan reconstruct history, it becomes clear to the reader that Mangala and Lutchman have been reincarnated once again. The story ends with Antar re-viewing Murugan’s, but with different characters as his neighbour Tara and her friend Maria replace Urmila and Sonali. This suggests that the story can never be quite over, for as each character ends a story, a new one begins. It means that the role of Murugan is changed and now it is to be replaced by Antar. The novel comes to an end. This Ghosh’s novel, “The Calcutta Chromosome” exemplifies the theme of science versus counter-science. The novel is based on the theme of disappearance and discovery. One of the major themes of the novel is the dichotomy between science, rationality (the West) and magic/irrationality (the East). Another major theme of the book is the intersection of private and public history. If the novel is read out from these points of view, it becomes crystal clear that it is a novel of discovery rather than a novel of fever and delirium. The themes presented in the novel are the clues that are left to the imagination of the reader to find probable solution. The novel gives us technologies to work on the new human emerging from the tropics via tropes and troops through analysis of mechanist and sharper transformations from alchemical networking and interventions in the germline to immune system defences and forms of reproduction that circumvent the Darwinian bottleneck of heterosexuality. It is a serious novel written in the manner of a thriller. Antar from the unremarkable station helps to sort through a computer-generated tosh which leap of international bureaucracy. He includes not only documents but also all sorts of other detritus of official life which is continually inventoried by a supercomputer called Ava. By chance, Antar comes across the identity card of Murugan. He had disappeared in Calcutta while seeking to verify the theory that had consumed him and had made him a target of mockery in the scientific community. Murugan, at last, had become convinced that sir Ronald Ross’s discovery of the mechanism through which mosquito transfer malaria was the singular evidence of a conspiracy of ‘counter Scientist’s’ who had exceeded western science in their recognition of its obverse. And so the simple accident in Antar’s coming across one of Murugan’s old identity cards enflames his strong-willed examination of the extremely complicated of Murugan’s theory and his disappearance. It is such a combined work of art. It is a part of science fiction, part history, part thriller, and an investigational story. It has myth, nihilism, philosophy, logic, Indian superstitions, religion and rationality. The amalgam of the various sources made Ghosh an eclectic author and The Calcutta Chromosome a lovely piece of investigational work.

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