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The Calcutta Chromosome: An Investigation

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Abstract:

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. The process of investigation requires lots of patience, hard work and knowledge. Amitav Ghosh is the renowned author of the aeon. Amitav Ghosh was born on 11 July 1956. He is a Bengali Indian author best known as an eclectic 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 Ghosh's first novel in which science fiction transforms into an investigation.

The Calcutta Chromosome framed the story of Antar and Murugan. Antar lives in New York as a programmer and system analyst at International Water Council. Murugan is his Indian colleague. Murugan has a weird theory about Ross and his discovery. It is an investigational novel. It investigates Ronald Ross's discovery of the mosquito as a vector for malaria.

Keywords- Discovery, Facts, Investigation, Malaria, Vector.

The Calcutta Chromosome has a massive range of characters and incidences. The novel emphasizes one country and three Continents. The main character is an Egyptian data analyst with a supercomputer and malaria infatuated Indian living in New York City. Ghosh starts the novel by giving the reference to a beautiful poem written by Sir Ronald Ross:

This day relenting God

Hath placed within my hand

A wondrous things; And God

Be praised. At His command,

Seeking His secret deeds

With tears and toiling breath,

I find thy cunning seed,

O million-murdering Death (2).

The poem creates a suitable environment to precede the novel. Ghosh successfully made it a fiction full of fantasy, excitement and antiquity. Ghosh investigates about malaria vector. The investigation of malaria, its science and its discovery are the major themes of the novel. It is a very difficult task. The novel has very diverse themes in comparison with his previous works. He writes in *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Malaria “was possibly the world’s oldest and most widespread disease” (31). Ghosh again writes in the novel:

Malaria’s probably the all-time biggest killer among diseases ...Malaria’s been around since the big bang or thereabouts, pegged at about the same level all long ...There’s no place on earth that’s off the malaria map: Arctic Circle, freezing mountaintop, burning deserts, You name it Malaria’s been there (49).

This is quite sufficient to explain his choice of theme that is malaria. His academic career is related to social science and he chooses a theme related to science and investigation. This theme needs deep knowledge of the subject. The malaria research is true so every event mentioned by him should be authentic. He mingles the fact with imagination and investigation. He portrays some imaginative characters to give it a perfect touch of fiction. Ghosh is worried about the discoveries were ‘human’ is hypothesized, tested and remapped. Human is only playing the role of tropes or figures that serve as lab equipment. Ghosh equates to discovery and Storytelling as both are the process of finding the facts out. Ross’s search for discovery, how he gets the fact is the centre of attraction of the novel.

Malaria is a disease that depends on many acquaintances through which Ghosh shows the network of the colonial laboratories. Laboratories are always sites of hard work. This is the place where theories and techniques are used to bring discoveries. The discovery and laboratory are used for searching the future. Here Ghosh describes a near future and not so distant past. The word chromosomes are also related to the future through which parents or ancestor’s quality moves to the next generation. The story of the novel never stands still for a very long time. It moves very rapidly from place to place and person to person.

The Calcutta Chromosome is science fiction in form of an investigation. It is labelled as the most complicated novel. Science fiction is a literary genre that generally consists of imaginative Prose work. Ghosh has great courage to use a real story with an imaginative perspective. Science fiction has science as one of the important aspects of the novel. It is realistic as it deals with the facts of life. The impact of science on the plot and characters is evident. It is said that God is omnipresent in space not figuratively but literally.

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 transformed it into known that female Anopheles is the vector of it.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome* Ghosh uses the icon, the city. He gave importance to the city to present his Science Fiction. The title of the novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* reveals his choice of icon. He also connects Egypt and New York as an important place in the novel that is related to Ross’s discovery.

Ghosh also takes the reference of Syphilis. It is a disease transmitted sexually. It is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Treponema pallidum*. Ghosh writes about Syphilis in *The Calcutta Chromosome*: “Syphilis was untreatable and incurable: it killed millions of people every year, all around the world” (210). Mangala uses the malaria bug as a treatment for another disease called Syphilis. Her treatment begins with some wires strain of malaria. She had developed a strain that could be cultivated in pigeons, somehow the bugs cross over and the bird could be used as a test tube or an agar plate. She began to notice that her treatment often produces weird side effects. It looks like a strange personality disorder. Her hands were crossed over off randomly assorted personality traits from the malaria donor to the recipient. The whole point is that it is a chromosome. Mangala takes the reference of Mendelian theory.

Ghosh explores a range of human technology edges, from railroad, computers and governments to genetic engineering and the mysterious working of the malaria Plasmodia. Malgala never needs to read a zoological study to differentiate between Culex and Anopheles. She didn't know the formal classifications. Even she doesn't know about malaria. She has a bigger thing in mind than the malaria bug. Murugan said: "The Calcutta Chromosome... That's my name for what she was working towards" (209). Urmila also wants to know about The Calcutta Chromosome. She has never heard about The Calcutta Chromosome. Murugan explains that The Calcutta Chromosome is a freak chromosome. It is a unique chromosome because it cannot be isolated and detected by standard techniques. It is not present in every cell. It is not even symmetrically paired like other regular chromosomes. It does not transform from one generation to the other. This chromosome develops out of a process of recombination. It is unique to every individual. It is found only in the non-regenerating tissue, the brain. It can be transmitted through malaria. It is a stray DNA carrier. Malaria bug can "cut and paste its DNA-unlike any creature we know of except the trypanosome" (214). The malaria bug has its recombination powers. It digests this bit of DNA by splitting it up and redistributing it. This redistribution can carry the information back and make some tiny little re wirings in the host's wetware.

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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