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The Calcutta Chromosome: Resistance against Western Hegemony

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This thesis submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Miss Srijana Dhungana entitled “*The Calcutta Chromosome: Resistance against Western Hegemony*” has been accepted by the undersigned members of the thesis committee.

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Abstracts

Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* spans from near future in 21st century to early Victorian era, covering almost a century of history, entangled on characters obsessed on the findings of anti malaria parasite. Story unfolds, when Antar, an employee of lifeWatch, an international company based on New York, comes across a battered I.D. of his long lost colleague Murugan, was displayed on the screen of his supercomputer, Ava. Murugan, who is a self-claimed science sleuth, is obsessed with the findings of the anti malaria parasite and came to Calcutta in 1995. In the course of his research, Murugan comes across the forgotten history of Mangala, a low caste Hindu woman and a sweeper in designation, practices a mystical cult for curing malaria patients. Mangala is able to cure malaria patients before the findings of anti malarial parasite by a British scientist, Ronald Ross, thereby raising serious concerns on the established belief of western concept of anti malaria parasite findings.

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1. Hegemony and Its Resistance

The term “hegemony” was derived from the Greek word, “egemonia,” whose root is “egemon,” meaning leader, ruler, often in the sense of a state other than his own (Williams 144). Since the 19th century, hegemony commonly has been used to indicate political predominance, usually of one state over another. According to Peter Anderson’s *The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci: A Review*, hegemony acquired “a specifically Marxist character in its use (as gegemoniya) by Russian Social-Democrats, from the late 1890s through the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917” (17). This sense of hegemony, as articulated by Vlyadmir Illyovich Lenin, referred to the leadership exercised by the proletariat over the other exploited classes. “As the only consistently revolutionary class of contemporary society, the proletariat must be leader in the struggle of the whole people for a fully democratic revolution in the struggle of all the working and exploited people, against the oppressors and exploiter” (Anderson’s Glossary 17).

Italian communist thinker, activist, and political leader Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) is perhaps the theorist most closely associated with the concept of hegemony. As Anderson notes, Gramsci uses “hegemony” to theorize not only the necessary condition for a successful overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and its allies (e.g., the peasantry), but also the structures of bourgeois power in late 19th and early 20th-century Western European states. Gramsci, particularly in his later work encompassed in the *Quaderni del Carcere or Prison Notebooks*, written during the late 1920s and early 1930s while incarcerated in a Fascist prison, develops a complex and variable usage of the term. Roughly speaking, Gramsci's hegemony refers to a process of moral and intellectual leadership through which dominated or subordinate classes of post-1870s industrial

Western European nations consent to their own domination by ruling classes, as opposed to being simply forced or coerced into accepting inferior positions. It is important to note that, although Gramsci's prison writings typically avoid using Marxist terms such as class, bourgeoisie, and proletariat because a Fascist censor read his works. Gramsci defines hegemony as a form of control exercised by a dominant class, in the Marxist sense of a group controlling the means of production. Gramsci uses fundamental group to stand in euphemistically for class. For Gramsci, the dominant class of a Western European nation of his time was the bourgeoisie, defined in the Communist Manifesto as the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labor, while the crucial potentially revolution leading subordinate class was the proletariat, "the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour-power in order to live" (21). Gramsci's use of hegemony cannot be understood apart from other concepts he develops, including those of "State" and "Civil Society."

For Gramsci, hegemony was a form of control exercised primarily through a society's superstructure, as opposed to its base or social relations of production of a predominately economic character. In *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams identifies three ways in which "superstructure" is used in the work of Karl Marx. Marx uses the term in legal and political forms that express the existing real relations of production. Forms of consciousness, which express a particular class view of the world. It is a process in which, over a whole range of activities, men become conscious of a fundamental economic conflict and fight it out.

These three senses would direct our attention respectively to (a) institutions, (b) forms of consciousness and (c) political and cultural practices. For purposes of analysis, Gramsci splits superstructure into two major levels, the one that can be called civil society, that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called private, and that of political society, or the State. Civil society includes organizations such as churches, trade unions, and schools, which as Gramsci notes are typically thought of as private or non-political. A major piece of Gramsci's project is to show that civil society's ways of establishing and organizing human relationships and consciousness are deeply political, and should in fact be considered integral to class domination and to the possibility of overcoming it, particularly in Western Europe. According to Gramsci, civil society corresponds to hegemony; while political society or state in what Gramsci will call the narrow sense corresponds to direct domination or command. Gramsci further delineates these two relatively distinct forms of control. He sites social hegemony as the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group i.e. the ruling class in Gramsci's Western Europe, the bourgeoisie; this consent is historically caused by the prestige and consequent confidence, which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

Socialist action gives tremendous emphasis to the international class struggle, the struggle of women, the black community, and all sections of the oppressed as part of working class politics. But it does not treat these simply as individual questions - vital as each is separately. Socialist action seeks to integrate them in a hegemonic strategy - that is one in which the labour movement champions the demands of all the exploited and

oppressed. Such an emphasis is not a peripheral question but at the core of Marxism. We consider the origins of the idea of hegemony in the views of Marx and its place in socialist strategy.

Political government names the apparatus of state coercive power, which legally enforces discipline on those groups who do not consent either actively or passively. This apparatus is, however, constituted for the whole of society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command and direction when spontaneous consent has failed.

Although they are useful for understanding different modes or aspects of social control, Gramsci does not retain social hegemony and political government as purely distinct categories, but rather brings them together under the integral State.

While Gramsci, at times uses state narrowly to refer to the governmental coercive apparatus, he also deploys a broader general notion of state or integral state, which includes both the functions of social hegemony and political government as described above. In this general or integral sense, the state can be mentioned in three different classes.

First, a state is a combination of dictatorship combine hegemony. It regulates its residents and organizations by the help of Police and Army force, which are the dictatorial mechanism of the government.

Secondly, state is a political society as well as civil society. In simpler version it can be understood as hegemony is protected by the armor of force.

Lastly, a state is an entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but also manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules.

The concept of integral state seems derived from historical shifts in the forms of and relations between state and civil society, which Gramsci discusses in terms of a parallel shift in military strategies, from a war of movement or manoeuvre, to war of position.

Resistance

Gramsci theorizes historical changes in modes of political struggle by drawing parallels between political struggle and military war. World War I staged a transition from war of maneuver, movement or frontal attack, characterized by relatively rapid movements of troops, to war of position or trench warfare, involving relatively immobile troops who dig and fortify relatively fixed lines of trenches. For modern states, though not for backward countries or for colonies, the war of maneuver increasingly gives way to war of position, which is not, in reality, constituted simply by the actual trenches, but by the whole organizational and industrial system of the territory which lies to the rear of the army in the field. Following major characteristics marks the modern states, meaning post 1870s Western European States were influenced by ever-widening colonial concept of expansion.

The rulers of European states wanted their territories to expand by each day. The concept of resistance comes through the increasing complexity and massiveness of internal and international organizational relations of the state emergence of great mass political parties and economic trade unions were these states machineries.

Declining autonomy of civil society from state activities leads the government to exercise their autonomous and dictatorial power over its people. The increasing importance of civil hegemony motivated the rulers to put an imposition to their will,

thereby giving rise to the concept of resistance. It encouraged various stakeholders to raise their voice of resistance in various forms. Further more, diminishing autonomy of national market from economic relations of the world market proved to be fertile ground for the increase of state hegemony. This ground furthermore proved a fertile ground for the various middle class people and its stakeholders to hit the government and its organs.

The necessity for a hegemonic strategy for the working class is the core to its politics. It is why socialist action gives such emphasis to international politics, to the demands of women, of the black community, and of all the oppressed. In Gramsci's words, "the class, so long as it renounces the idea of hegemony or fails to fight for it, is not a class, or not yet a class, but a guild, or the sum of guild's, it is the consciousness of the idea of hegemony and its implementation through their own activities that converts the guilds as a whole into a class."

Gramsci asserts that the massive structures of the modern democracies, both as state organization, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the trenches and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position. In other passages comparing social structures to trenches and fortifications, Gramsci stresses the importance of civil society, either by suggesting it is stronger than the state as governmental coercive apparatus. When the state tremble a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks; or omitting altogether reference to the state as government technically understood.

Civil society has become a very complex structure and one, which is resistant to the catastrophic incursions of the immediate economic element crises, depressions, etc.

The superstructures of civil society are like the trench-systems of modern warfare. In war it would sometimes happen that a fierce artillery attack seemed to have destroyed the enemy's entire defensive system, whereas in fact it had only destroyed the outer perimeter.

Gramsci thus develops an argument not only about the power structures of Western European States, but also about the kind of communist revolution that might succeed in such states. He argues against a view that economic forces and crises will in them suffice to bring about the overthrow of capitalist relations of production and the installation of the proletariat as controllers of the means of production. Economic crisis alone will not galvanize the exploited classes, transforming them into an iron will; neither will it dishearten the defenders (the bourgeoisie) nor force them to abandon their positions, even among the ruins. Gramsci also argues against the view that the working classes can overthrow the bourgeoisie simply through military strikes to fix one's mind on the military model is the mark of a fool: politics, here too, must have priority over its military aspect, and only politics creates the possibility for maneuver and movement. Political struggle for Gramsci necessarily involves a struggle for hegemony, a class's struggle to become a state and take up the role of state as educator.

According to Gramsci, one of the most important functions of a state is “to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling class” (21). The ruling class in Gramsci's Italy and in the other Western European States of which he writes was the bourgeoisie, though it seems that his remarks might function also as a blueprint for communist rule. Gramsci proceeds to claim

that the state, which at one point Gramsci asserts is equivalent to the fundamental economic group or ruling class itself implements its educative project through a variety of channels, both public and private, with the school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, constituting the most important state activities in this sense. But, in reality, Gramsci maintains, “a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes” (29).

Hegemony, therefore, is a process by which educative pressure is applied to single individuals so as to obtain their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into freedom. The freedom produced by instruments of the ruling class thus moulds the free subject to the needs of an economic base, the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production. It is difficult to determine the status of this educated freedom in Gramsci’s writing, but Gramsci does assert its immense political value in a discussion of political parties, which for Gramsci must show in their specific internal life that they have assimilated as principles of moral conduct those rules, which in the state are legal obligations. In the parties necessity has already become freedom. The party exemplifies the type of collective society to which the entire mass must be educated.

Marx notes that at the level of ideology that each of the class views put forward in history is of increasing universality. Posed purely in terms of ideology one could analyse the development of society through increasingly universal ideas. On *The 18th Century Brumaire of Louis Bonapart*, he notes that:

If in considering the course of history we detach the ideas of the ruling class from the ruling class itself and attribute to them an independent existence then this conception of history will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that ever more abstract ideas hold sway, i.e., ideas which increasingly take on the form of universality. Every new class, therefore, achieves domination only on a broader basis than that of the class ruling previously. (9)

It is this fact that every new class comes to power on a broader basis than the one previously which gives practicality, as well as legitimacy, to the drive of the working class for socialism. Posed in material terms each previous revolution had stopped because of its limited and that it is non-universal and more social base. For example, replying to Bruno Bauer's cynical idea that all revolutions necessarily fail, Marx noted in *The 18th Century Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that:

The interest of the bourgeoisie in the 1798 (French) Revolution, far from having been a failure, won everything. The Revolution was a failure only for the mass, whose real conditions for emancipation were essentially different from the conditions within which the bourgeois could emancipate itself and society. If the Revolution was a failure, it was so because the mass, within whose living conditions it essentially came to a stop, was an exclusive, limited mass, not an all-embracing one. If the Revolution was a failure it was because the most numerous part of the mass, the part distinct from the bourgeoisie, did not have its real interest in the principle of the Revolution. (10)

The concept of hegemony has gained increasing importance since the 1970s, and is now a standard analytic concept in anthropology. The importance of hegemony is tied

to the rediscovery of the *Prison Notebooks*. Gramsci's ideas were based in Marx's notion of false consciousness, a state in which individuals are ideologically blinded to the domination they suffer. Simply, the masses can be duped into buying into a system, which exploits them. For Marx, ideologies and especially religion were opiates of the masses because of the social complacency they produced while parasitically eating away at the soul and livelihood of the being. For Marx, class-consciousness was the only true consciousness.

On *The 18th Century Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx opines that upon the different forms of property i.e. one's class position, upon the social conditions of existence, as foundation, there is built a superstructure of diversified and characteristic sentiments, illusions, habits of thought, and outlooks on life in general. The class as a whole creates and shapes them out of its material foundation, and out of the corresponding social relationships. The individual, in whom they arise through tradition and education, may fancy them to be the true determinant, the real origin, of his activities. The working class is the most universal class in history because its goals cannot be the liberation of one class, and the continuation of the oppression and exploitation of another, but the liberation of the whole of humanity. The working class is therefore in the terms developed later by Lenin, the class capable of the greatest hegemony.

Marx outlined this in the very phrases in which he announced for the first time his view of the proletariat as the bearer of a future society. Integrating the tasks of the developing German revolution he faced at that time Marx noted the positive possibility of German emancipation. He emphasized on the formation of a class with radical chains, a

class of civil society, but which is not a class of civil society. A class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere which has a universal character because of its universal suffering and which lays claim to no particular right because the wrong it suffers is not a particular wrong but wrong in general; a sphere of society which can no longer lay claim to a historical title, but merely to a human one, which does not stand in one-sided opposition to the consequences but in all-sided opposition to the premises of the German political system; and finally a sphere which cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from - and thereby emancipating - all other spheres of society, which is, in a word, the total loss of humanity and which can therefore redeem itself only through the total redemption of humanity. This dissolution of society as a particular class is the proletariat. The victory of the working class is, in Marx's words, the necessary step in 'universal human emancipation.'

Yet it is true that class-consciousness is thwarted by the ideology of the ruling class. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engel write that the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e. the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class, which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The individuals composing the ruling class possess, among other things, consciousness, and therefore think. Therefore they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch. It is evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things, they rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the

production and distribution of the idea of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.

Gramsci gave the term hegemony to this process of political domination through ideological domination. He showed how states use the popular culture, mass media, education, and religion to reinforce an ideology, which supports the position of dominant classes putting words into people's mouths. Importantly Gramsci showed how subtle the process of imposing hegemony worked, and that its effectiveness is in getting individuals to actively support a system, which does not act in their own best interests.

2. Magical Realism

A German art critic, Franz Roh, introduced the term 'Magic Realism' for the first time in 1925. To him, it was way of representing and responding to reality and pictorially depicting the enigmas of reality. In the decade of 1940s, in Latin America magic realism became a way to express the realistic American mentality and create an autonomous style of literature. Magic realism is an amalgamation of realism and fantasy. There is an imaginative blending of history, politics, social realism and fantasy. These imaginative style combines realistic every day details with elements of fantasy blurring the reader's usual distinctions between reality and magic. In this regard Abrams writes, "The writers interweave, in an ever shifting pattern, sharply etched realism in representing ordinary events and descriptive details together with fantastic and dreamlike elements, as well as with materials derived from myth and tales" (196). The term magic realism is used to describe the prose fiction of Gorge Louis Borges in Argentina, as well as the work of writers such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez in Columbia, Isable Allende in Chile, Gunter Grass in Germany, Italo Calvino in Italy, and John Fowels in England. In this context of magic realism Jorge Borges writes:

The writer confronts reality and tries to reveal it by looking for what can be mysterious in life, objects, and even human actions. A magical realist narrator creates the illusion of unreality, faking the escape from the natural, and tell on action that even if appears as explainable it comes across as strange. In the strange narrations, the writer instead of presenting something as real, the reality becomes magical. (203)

The realism becomes miracle of the reality. The magic realism avoids any emotional effects or horror provided by an unbelievable event. The unbelievable stop to remain unknown and incorporate the real. During colonization, many Europeans found a land full of strange and supernatural things. Their chronicles were based on their interpretations, which lead to mystification of India. Amitav Ghosh with his imaginative style combines realistic, everyday details with elements of fantasy, fairy tales, folk legends and stories of magic. He brings all these elements from the ancient culture of Latin America and makes them lively with the day-to-day reality. He drags the ancient folkloristic tradition, which was filled with magic and mystery and uses then as a powerful tool to rewrite the history of his native India.

Salman Rushdie adopts the similar fashion of magic realism to recollect and rewrite his past works. According to him,

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge which gives rise to profound uncertainties that over physical alienation from India almost inevitably means the we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost, that we will in short create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones imaginary homelands, India of the mind. (10)

So, magic realism is that literature which crosses the border between two separate literary discourses, the realistic and magical. The term realism refers to a literary discourse that represents those aspects of the world open to empirical proof, whereas

magic refers to a literary system that admits the existence of something, which cannot be empirically proven the existence of the supernatural. The supernatural however, takes culturally specific form, consisting of many different local manifestations with a variety of different laws and characteristics. By joining these contrasting literary systems, magic realism disrupts the traditional meaning of these terms and obscures the hierarchy of realism over magic, which reflects conventional western epistemologies in upsetting this hierarchy; magic realism allows for and encourages the disruption of further hierarchical binaries.

The authors like Salman Rushdie, Angela Carter, and Jeanette Winters are particularly relevant because they all write within the discursive practices of magic realism and use this discourse to complicate socio-political binaries. Angela Carters' novels use magic realism to complicate the traditional binary between male and female. In *The Passion of New Era*, Carter literally transforms her hero into a heroine through a blend of magic and science. The ambiguity between belief and disbelief allows the supposedly winged heroine to present a magical world of women to a male reporter who operates within a realist system.

Jeanette Winter's novels use magic realism to complicate the sexual binary of heterosexual and lesbian. In *Oranges are Not Only Fruits* Winter injects magic into the traditionally realistic form from the autobiography. In this novel, the protagonist's experiences of growing up and awakening to her lesbian life are on the border between the magical and the realistic sections.

On contrary, Salman Rushdie's novels use magic realism to complicate the binary fusion between Indian and British identity. According to him,

Let me suggest that Indian writers in England have access to a second tradition, quite apart from their own racial history. It is the cultural and political history of the phenomenon of migration, displacement, and life in a minority group. We can quite legitimately claim as our ancestors the Huguenots, the Irish, the Jew; the past to which we belong is an English past, the history, of immigrant Great Britain. (20)

In the *Midnight Children*, Rushdie presents a group of magical children born on the historical border of India's independence from Britain. The very existence of these children is thoroughly enmeshed in their country's difficult transition from colonialism to independence. *The Satanic Verses* uses magical metamorphoses to theme the difficulties of assimilation faced by two Indian immigrants to Britain.

So, the border crossing methods of magic realism possesses affinities in postmodernism and post structural theory. A few theorist such as Linda Hutchen and Walter Pache, have noted the magic realism by questioning the traditional opposition between realism and fantastic, accomplishes the post modern, tasks of challenging the notion of genre and questioning the conventions of realism.

Surrealism also helped many Latin American artists to realize the unique aspect of Latin American culture. During the 1920s and 30s many Latin American artists went to Europe to incorporate into the surrealist movement. They tried to look for supernatural elements to create a sense of reality based on the dream and the subconscious. However, many went back to Latin America, when they realized that they don't need to look for these strange realities in Europe because it was present everywhere in their own

environment and culture. The magic realism in Latin America is referred to a single characteristic, which is called “Lo real Maravilloso.”

In general term, the concept of the Maravilloso implies to a sense of wonder produced by unusual, unexpected or improbable phenomena. It may occur naturally, may be the result of deliberate manipulation of reality or its perception by the artist or supernatural intentions. In any case magic realism is a tool that provokes the presence of something different from the normal to mysticism.

Hybridist of magical realism incorporates many techniques that have been linked to post colonization, with hybrid being a primary feature. Magical realism is illustrated in the inharmonious area like urban and rural, and western and indigenous. Abrams writes, “The hybridization of colonial languages and cultures, in which imperialist importations are superimposed on indigenous traditions; it also included a Euro centric version of colonial history” (237).

In the 1970s and 1980s, several younger fiction writers including Emma Tenant, Angels Carter, Salman Rushdie, and V.S. Naipaul etc adopted technique of magic realism in Britain. This was the age of post modernism and post colonialism. So we can clearly say that post modernist and post colonist author used this technique.

The postcolonial literature in India raised the voice against the colonial subordination. The postcolonial voice emerges through patriotism, the preservation of human rights and dignity. The post colonists emphasize upon equality and humanity by creating protest against the colonial voices, especially against the Indian domination on the assumption that the colonialists always violated the rights of the colonized people. Leela Gandhi has following opinion:

The emergence of anti colonial independent' nation states after colonialism is frequently accompanied by the drive to forget the colonial past. This 'will to forget' takes number of historical forms, and is impelled by a variety of cultural and political motivations. Principally, postcolonial amnesia is symptomatic of the urge for historical self-invention or the need to make new start to erase painful memories of colonial subordination. (4)

Their main protest, therefore, is upon the colonial sub-ordination and subjection. The formal technique of magic realism has been singled out by many critics as one of the points of conjunction of post modernism and post colonialism. In this regard Raymond Williams writes:

The origin of magic realism as a literary style to Latin America and the third world countries is accompanied by a definition of postmodern text is signifying a charge from modernism, a historical burden of the past. It is text that self-consciously constructs its relationship to what come before the memories. (135)

Therefore, the post modernist and the postcolonial writes have used magic realism to rewrite and reconstruct the original history of the existing mystic culture. Through this technique they want to erase the painful memories of the colonial subordination, imposed to them during the era.

Subaltern Agency

The Calcutta Chromosome begins in the New York of the near future when a marginalized Egyptian employee, Antar, apparently stumbles upon clues that lead him to the disappearance of a colleague, Murugan, in our present time 1995. Murugan had disappeared in Calcutta while trying to prove his apparently eccentric theory that some people had deliberately and methodically tampered with the experiments of Sir Ronald Ross, the British scientist who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of the malaria parasite. This moves us, in due course back to the 1890s and an assortment of characters including the subaltern plotters, Mangala and Laakhan/Lutchman. Deploying elements especially from science fiction and also from ghost story, adventure tale, detective stories etc, the novel proceeds to trace the agency of a mysterious group of subalterns, owing allegiance to Mangala, Laakhan and their tradition of counter science.

Evidently, the plot is far too intricate to be paraphrased fully and, as such, I shall take up various elements of the plot for discussion later on, in the course of this paper. Instead, for now, I would like to discuss on what is the novel about? The easiest answer would be that it is a novel, as the subtitle tells us, of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery. But what connections do these terms suggest? The most obvious connection is the colonial one, the evocation of self-proclaimed age of discovery where, given the geographical and physical nature of many of the discoveries, fever and delirium went hand in hand with exploration and medical breakthroughs. It is easy for Ghosh to run around the myth of European discovery and science using in particular figure of the state scientist Ronald Ross, a concept that emerged in the colonies. There is, of course, also an ironic suggestion that the three words Discovery, Fever and Delirium are the same thing for

better or for worse. More complicatedly, though, one can see discovery as a word very closely related to science, and fever and delirium especially given their associations with sub-consciousness and trance like states with magic. At first glance, then, it appears to be easy to situate the narrative of *The Calcutta Chromosome* on the weather beaten axis of Science vs. Magic/Mysticism, with the former often standing for the West and the latter for all the rest.

Ghosh, however, is aware of the fallacy of this vulgar dualism, and does not merely reverse it. After all, the appropriation of what is called science is itself a high mark of Euro centric discourse it marks a complete blindness to the origin of many of the key discoveries and concepts of what goes for science in other cultures. Not only does it ignore, say, crucial Chinese and Indian contributions agency, it even accounts for the Arab phase one of the mere transfer, of handing on the torch of science from the ancient Greek Europe to Enlightenment Europe and account that deliberately obscures the fact that the Arab added the number of original contributions and did not take over elements from Greek Philosophy and Science, uncritically. In short, they were not just empty vessels but living and relatively autonomous agents.

Ghosh does not make the common mistake of constricting a false polarity of science and magic though his counter science is perforce made warrantable in terms and images close to the realm of magic. Here it is necessary to be noted that science and magic, in fact, share a common tradition: they are based on the assumption that there is more to the world than meets the naked eye. This 'more' can't be explained by common sense, but that it can be registered, controlled, cultivated, and even understood through a

systematic process of human action. One can claim that while magic set out to be the science of qualities, science is the magic of quantities.

By avoiding this science magic dualism, Ghosh escapes from the direct grip of a colonial discourse: a discourse that posits the objectivity and, hence, human agency of European science against the subjectivity and mechanical/historical repetitiveness of the colonized. It is a grip that can't be loosened even by merely overturning the science-magic duality and privileging magic. He avoids, for example, the false man-machine polarity. The man-machine polarity is false particularly because it posits an alienated perception of human agency: where human beings, who live by objectifying themselves in the world, are procedurally alienated from the very products of their objectification.

In fact the three narratives, Mangala and Ross standing for past, Murugan and Urmila for present and Antar and Tara for future; comprise the story. Present and intricate collaboration of man with machine: Mangala and Ross with the primitive microscope and other laboratory instruments that appears on the stature of Mangala-bibi, Antar's collaboration with Ava the demotic computer, and Murugan's varied use of technology as well as the use of print newspaper wrappings as clue. Actually, the story itself is launched due to collaboration between Ava (machine) and Antar (man). Left to himself, Antar would not have noticed Murugan's burnt I-card and launched the unraveling of Murugan's disappearance. Restive as he was, Antar probable wouldn't have given the card a second glance. It was only because Ava went into one of her traces of unrecognized over the metal chain that he took a closer look. This dissolution of the man machine opposition is other indication of Ghosh's desire to avoid the science magic axis of interpretation. Instead, he sets up a conceptual division of not essentialist in a

manichean tradition, but discursive and a times symbiotic between what Murugan's calls science and counter science.

Having thus set up the discursive and non essentialist opposition of science and counter science, Ghosh is enabled to question or subvert the colonial and, at times, neo-imperial perceptions of Indian native in the general post colonial context realities. I will briefly refer to three such perceptions here all three having infiltrated into fictions in different forms and shapes and all three marking a curtailing of the subaltern's agency.

Ghosh's narration in *The Calcutta Chromosome* suggests that different notice modes, non comprehensible within narrow and Euro centric versions of rationality, may operate in colonized-subaltern or coolie-societies. The discovery by Mangala and her subalterns, their manipulation of Ross, their ability to stay ahead of the latest research on malaria: all these point to a way of understanding and achieving that can not be dismissed as irrational even though it may not be the same as what we understand by rationality. Thus subaltern acts are not moved outside the circumference of human agency, of what it means to act as a human being in a material world: also in the sense in which the social is linked to the rational.

Tellingly, the climax of the novel is a scene that, in colonial discourses of Indian irrationality, would be described as a scene of human sacrifice. The human sacrifice is probably the most extreme metaphor of non-European whether Indian or Red Indian' otherness. In colonial and even certain neo-imperial discourse, it stands as the example par excellence of the other as mindless, herd-like, barbarous and irrational. In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, significantly, the human sacrifice' is taken over and re-inscribed within the subaltern's agency and the subaltern's suggested discourses. From those

perspectives, it becomes a form of discovery, of furthering life and of planned, purposive activity. It becomes in a way the exact opposite of what barbaric and irrational stand for a planned means of personal improvement and collective well-being.

The failure of, say Ronald Ross or D.D. Cunningham to discover *The Calcutta Chromosome* and the ability of Mangala, Lakhan to do so stems from the failure of the colonizer's concept of rationality in comprehending the colonial subaltern. A failure of one may say, the colonizer's agency in an alien place. This questions, above all, the discourse of India and the native's incomprehensibility. What Ghosh suggests is that this incomprehensibility is a consequence of discursive alienation.

Throughout the novel, coincidences are turned into a pattern and thus made eminently comprehensible provided one knows what one is looking for, provided one learns to speak the language of the subalterns. Examples of this pattering of coincidences' operate on the macro level the entire setting up of Antar's and Ross's very different discoveries as well as the micro level (160), where Sonali has by coincidence been let the keys of the house on Robinson Street; the letter discovered by Murugan (118) and so on. Unlike the incomprehensibility reported by colonial literature and its versions in literatures, in *The Calcutta Chromosome* this failure to comprehend is a discursive failure and an index of alienation. It is not the lack, the blankness in the face and mind of the subaltern that we after see.

For instance, what Ronald Ross sees is not all, is to even close to what can be seen by others? Not only the alternative character of the malaria parasite and its potential but even subaltern resistance and agency remain unseen by Ross and his class. Subaltern agency remains unseen even when it enables Ross's discovery, in the form of Abdul

Kadir's blood that guides him (Ross) through all the critical phases of his research (71) or as Mangala and Lutchman. Let me compare, for example, the narrative of Mangala's planning and discovery and Lutchman's actions in the novel to what Ross actually sees.

The narrative quotes the following stanzas from a poem on his discovery by Ross.

'Half stunned I look around / And see a land of death / Dead bones that walk
the ground / And dead bones underneath / A race of wretches caught /
Between the palms of need / And rubbed to utter naught / The chaff of human
seed. (203)

However it is this 'chaff of human seed' which has not only beaten Ronald Ross to the post and much beyond in the race to discovering the cause of malaria, they have even lead him by the nose: as Murugan puts it, "What gets me about this scenario is the joke. Here's Ronnie, right? He thinks he's doing experiments on the malaria parasite. And all the time it's him who is the experiment on the malaria parasite" (79).

Narrative agency's thus returned to the colonial subaltern with a vengeance: and this is not agency through the circles, the agency of getting assimilated by European discourses, of becoming rational or civilized the subalterns are from outside the Babu circles: Mangala and Lutchman probably know nothing more than a few words of English, they have been picked up from among the homeless by a European scientist who avoids 'college kids' as helpers. They're fringe and marginal types of people for the purpose of Ross's research.

Among other things, such a narration of India questions the myth of an essential lack of order and organization also lack of leadership qualities on the colonial and neo-imperial margins. What Ghosh points at is another type of order a counter-order,

Murugan might say and organization that is simply not comprehensible to the colonial centre due to the effects of alienation. Even Murugan every bit a cosmopolitan babu, who is being given clues to solve the mystery knows less about the Mangala-bibi idol and its significance than some of the children he meets in Calcutta- children who realize less than an adult like Murugan but share more of the particular subaltern discourses in question.

Not surprisingly, this re-inscription of agency as another order and organization is echoed by the very structure of the narrative in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. The presence of that rare commodity in Indian English fiction is a plot. They have a flowing narrative, a loose character base or congeries of events structuring, a beginning and an end: but the kind of plot that a novel of suspense epitomized is often missing.

The Calcutta Chromosome is contracted as a novel of suspense and has a careful, intricate plot. This plot is a conscious achievement, constituting and being constituted by the language style employed by Ghosh. Such an intricate plot insists on not only the comprehensibility and agency of the subaltern, it also dismisses arbitrary and essential dichotomies between the West and India. To an extent, it marks the restoration of history to the subaltern for history can be seen as the plotting of human experience and agency. What is problematic about much of existing history is not the fact of such plotting but the fact that subaltern agencies and experience in various contexts have been largely plotted out of extant histories.

The colonial discourse of India's lack of history was just consequence of alienation but also a justification for the presence of the colonial power in India; it portrayed the Raj as the only cohesive force. The argument, which actually led to the

partition of India in 1947, was that the Indian herself would not exist without the Raj. I do not wish to tackle this myopic argument: it has already been questioned in various ways by a number of critics and historians. What I am interested in showing is how Amitav Ghosh's narrative in *The Calcutta Chromosome* tackles the issue, thus restoring historical agency outside Euro centric definitions to the Indian subaltern and thereby inquiring the Western Hegemony.

Not only, as seen above, Ghosh deal on hegemony and plots to the colonial subaltern; he also tackles the issue of historicity as divisibility on the two levels at which it operates. The discourse of the historicity and divisibility of the colonial margin operates on, shall we say, an intra Indian and an inter-orient level. The first suggests that India itself is a purely and solely colonial construct that because it did not exist in the shapes hammered out by the discourses of European nationalism; second is it neither did nor could exist as anything other than an interminably divisible, chaotic and historic multitude of parts. It suggests that the agency of Indians themselves was not cannot be sufficient to create and maintain India. This is the India that certain elements from both the Left the Right continue to sees as frangible in its very pre-colonial essence. Such a perspective denies narration to Indian history, sees cohesive elements such a 'jati' (caste) as purely decadent and static, overlooks elements of coherent political agency on the micro levels, and mostly explains large Kingdom states, such as those of the Mauryas or the Mughals with the help of the terminology of adventurism or Oriental despotism.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome*, Ghosh presents a complex India that achieves coherence on a non-colonial, not Eurocentric and non-babu level. While not being essentialist and while operating with full awareness of the babu coolie discursive and

socio-economic line of division, Ghosh's 'Chromosome' suggests a coherence of parts which each neither a nationalist unity nor based on hegemonic and parochially universal discourses emanating from Europe or from BabuRealm of activity. Interestingly, in spite of his awareness of what I have termed the BabuCoolie line of division, Ghosh's community of the chromosome as depicted in the sacrifice scene, for example, includes people from various classes, regions and religions. In a related context, Ghosh also address the problematic because potentially reactionary but fashionable debate about the universal as Euro centric and the particular as emancipator. Ghosh suggests that there are other non-essentialist universals and the universal need not be necessary essentialist, Euro centric or constraining.

The second inter-orient level of the colonial myth of India's lack of history isolates India from the cluster of relations that have constitute it (both in its parts and as more than its parts) before European colonization turning India's history with various other people and kingdom states to an emptiness before the arrival of the colonial presence as the great connecting link. This is the other side of the same coin: it attributes historically agency only or largely to Europeans.

In most of his works, Ghosh connects the obscured and dichotomized parts of the Orient the nations that colonial discourses have often implied would be alien to each other but for the bridge of colonial power and reason. This alien-ness of the nations of the colonial other has been reported within a country such as the two-nation theory in India, which contributed to the subcontinent's double partition as well as across countries and continents. The latter is evident not only in the context of India, has reinforced to sudden alien a perception repeated not only in the rhetoric of the Hindu right but also in the view

of a centric writer like Naipaul who sees India as a country of headless people wounded by Islamic rule' and conceives of the Hindu and Islamic elements of Indian culture as essentially and always alien to each other unless bridged by deep assimilation into European discourses as in *Midnight Children*.

This particular myth of colonial centrality and the divisibility of the margins are also essential to the cosmopolitan babu discourses of post colonial hybridist in the Indian context privileging, as it does, a particular kind of postcolonial hybridist, particular Euro Indian nexus of cultural connections.

Against this, Ghosh has made a constant and a hugely successful attempt to de-center the so-called colonial heritage, without ignoring it in a chauvinistic or even an idealist manner. In *Antique Land*, for example, he not only trace the pre colonial and post colonial Indian Egyptian/Arab line of cultural exchange and communication agency, but also embeds a brilliant metaphor and the Egyptian village Imam: an argument that, enacted in the post colonial context, ignores centuries of Indian, Egyptian and Indo-Arab commerce and trades in the goods of a colonial and neo-imperial Euro centric hegemony. The Mullah and the babu end up arguing for their respective countries in terms of modern military capability.

In *The Calcutta Chromosome* too, Ghosh has established a connection between Egypt and India via the complex agencies of Murugan, Antar (an Egyptian), Tara and others, and in their final and repeatedly stressed sense of community. Given the role of Ronald Ross, this reconnection addresses but does not go by way of the colonial experience and doesn't ignore aspects of the new imperialism the latter, in the novel, is both opportunity to communicate and surveillance by indoctrinated computers. Having

registered the colonial element, Ghosh also undermines it by positing pre-colonial, subaltern and subversive lines of connection as well. This makes the novel but postcolonial in the sense that postcolonial privileges the colonial experience - but, perhaps, counter post-colonial to deploy a prefix used by Murugan. It deconstructs and transcends colonial realities as a fiction, not just a fiction of the disempowerment of the make power an area of armchair ambiguity between colonies and colonized, master and slave. Ghosh clearly recognizes that power in political and economic senses remains the prerogative of the colonizer, but he also explores through fiction the ways in which the colonized, the subaltern, can subvert this power.

Ghosh's subaltern group are very complex and significant rewriting parallel narrating might be a more exact description of the beginnings of the Indian National Congress, as sited in science and the Raj for a long time. Critics of the Congress dismissed it as having been founded by the Englishman A.O. Hume who, they claimed, had been put up to it by the colonial government in the 1880s. Hume's complicity, claimed the critics, could be read in his statement that he had been shown entries and communications from over 30,000 different reporters. These 30,000 reporters had spoken of great native discontent and, as such. Hume had been moved to join some Indians in starting the Indian National Congress. The critic claimed that 30,000 reports could only have been made available to Hume by the colonial secret service: that they were actually secret service reports. Later on his own, had come to believe in his ability to communicate spiritually with thousands of immortal guru spirits in Tibet and Hume believed that these guru spirits took a keen interest in India and ratings behind the scenes.

Hume was alluding to reports by this (imaginary) secret society of ethereal Tibet-based Indian gurus: a fact turned around to powerful effect by Ghosh.

Actually, the name Ava is closely associated with the Hume Congress story as well. Perhaps that explains why the name of Antar's computer in *The Calcutta Chromosome* is Ava II apart from, of course, the obvious play on Eve/Adam and woman/man being used to drive home the point about human/machine made in this paper.

This approach to subaltern agency in which little known historical facts are carefully retrieved and creatively reused is basically different from the post modernist reduction of all histories to personal stories. The latter approach, for instance, informs Rushdie's composition in even an important novel like *Midnight's Children* while many critics have noted the various glaring historical errors some inadvertent in that novel, Rushdie has responded merely by making narrative bliss of his ignorance, and so does Ghosh.

3. Resistance against Western Hegemony

The Calcutta Chromosome (1996) by Amitav Ghosh is far from being diaspora, whose global interest obscures social and ideological specifics. It is rather concerned to excavate a labyrinthine network of traces, which foreground essentialist version of national and regional cultures, such as those inherent in oriental discourses, are unsuitable. This task also endeavors to discuss Ghosh's work in relation to the subaltern project. *The Calcutta Chromosome* exposes the limitations of post-colonial theorizing in the subject of Manichean allegory. Such theories relocate Manichaeism—a religious system that originated in the east of Suez and, when it moved westwards, threatened the medieval hegemony of the Catholic Church in Western Europe as a Western discourse. Augustinian theology deemed Manichaeism a heresy, but in this re-reading, it is wrested from its traditional position in western Christian thought for revisionist purposes predicated on a dualistic model of a kind, which traditionally would have been considered heterodox. Ghosh engages himself with this orthodox Christian ideology closely and, in so doing so, implicitly and occasionally explicitly offers a much more radical challenge to Euro centric modes of thinking. While the theorists of colonial Manichaeism see Europe as having developed binary systems of classification in which the colonial partner is of course always the inferior in two-way power relationship, Ghosh appears to subscribe to the view that western discourse silences alteration by denying its very capacity for utterance.

At the same time, despite his own location within the West, he slips the nets of Euro centric classification through and approach, which instates within the text implicated in the material they are investigating. He leaves the novel's readers having to

consider the possibility that they too are caught in the conspiracy of history. Or, to put another way, the conclusion suggests that reader have not been playing the role of passive subalterns, but rather, as makers of meaning, empowering themselves through the magical agency of reading. For adherents of reader response theory such discovery will come as nothing new, but the novel's contribution to such debates remains of fashionable post-colonial theorizing about magical allegory. Possibility of opening up a discursive space in which the notion of giving voice to their hitherto silenced from giving a viable imaginative possibility.

The Calcutta Chromosome is more overtly fictive, but again it interweaves a network of trades from the history of late 19th century malaria research, theological movements generally deemed to be heretical in the West and slightly futuristic information technology in parallel with colonial history as an equal for possible more.

The main narrative of the novel involves a re-examination of the history of late nineteenth century malaria research by a possibility deranged Calcutta-board named Murugan (also known as Morgan) who works for an international public health company called LifeWatch which uses an Americanized slang register, which characterizes him as a diasporas subject. Murugan has had a life-long obsession with the history of malaria research, which has led him to the conviction that Ronald Ross, the British scientist who was awarded the Nobel prize for 1903, for his search of malaria parasite which four years earlier has isolated how the disease is transmitted, was not a lone genius (57), but by a brilliant British dilettante who outstripped the contemporary scientists in the field. Murugan believes, “a secret history that has been erased from the scribal perfect moment of discovery when the person who discovers is the one, which is discovered” (253).

The final chapter provides an even more startling instance of a discovery of who is discovered. The text returns to Antar who, in his New York apartment with his super-computer, appears to be the ultimate discoverer of meaning within the novel. As the figure who frames the rest of the narrative, he alone seems to stand outside the multiplicity of other narratives, immune from the possibility of complicity in conspiracy, but he too is a feverish investigator and the final chapter undermines the possibility of exempting him from the process of 'interpersonal transference' that has engulfed all the other main characters. He now begins to think that Ava's stumbling upon Murugan's ID card; the opening moment of the novel has not, after all, been an accident; and the web of correspondence expands even further, as two of his New York friends who have seemed to be no more than incidental extras in the frame narrative, are absorbed into visual images of Murugan's last day in Calcutta which is projecting for him. Another discoverer finds himself discovered.

As one closes *The Calcutta Chromosome*, there is perhaps yet one more inference to be drawn from the novel. In erasing the distinction between discoverer and the discovered, Ghosh has also demonstrated the dissatisfaction of making rigid distinctions between the storyteller and listener. For nobody, the suggestion seems to be, is exempt from history or from playing an active role in the historiography process. So perhaps the ultimate discoverer who the novel discovers is the reader. *The Calcutta Chromosome* has invited its readers to play the role of hermetic detective to piece together its numerous causes to arrive, if not at a solution, at least at a possible version of meaning. The final insistence that all the investigators within the text are implicated records of the colonial

society and from medical historiography more generally. He has developed himself to uncovering the hidden truth.

A single example of the novel's numerous interlocking narrative stands may help to illustrate how its linkages across time and space operate. For example, on 20 August 1995, when Murugan arrives in Calcutta, Phulboni, a famous writer, is being given an award to remember his eighty fifth birthday. Receiving the award, Phulboni gives a gnomic speech about the power of silence. Like Murugan, Phulboni has more than one name, more than one identity. His real name is Saiyad Murad Husain; Phulboni is a pen name, in his earlier life Phulboni has undergone a mysterious experience, when, as a young recruit to a British company, he was sent, in 1933, to a provincial town named Renupur. He arrived by train at the deserted station, some distance from the town and in a landscape flooded by monsoon rains; and there, despite the stationmaster's attempts to persuade him to the contrary, he decides to spend the night in the signal room. A night of terror ensues. Objects move as though controlled by some telekinetic agency. Phulboni falls asleep, awakes to discover that the signal lantern is no longer in the place he has placed it and then sees it some fifty yards down the railway track. Assuming the stationmaster is carrying it, he follows it down the line, trips and is narrowly averted from being killed by a train, which comes hurtling down the track at this movement, even though the line is a siding and no train is due. In fact the stationmaster has told him that the station has only ever been used once before. He appears to fall asleep again and wake up the next morning to find the stationmaster telling him that the lantern has not been moved. And then he appears to awaken again, just in time to throw himself out of the path to another oncoming train.

In addition to all this, there is a final twist in the narrative, which takes the investigation of epistemological relationship into yet more subtle territory. Throughout the text readers are made aware that the borderline between discourse and those who are discovered is an extremely porous one. Ross appears to be discovered who make a revolutionary advance in the science of microscopy, but it seems he has been discovered and controlled by Mangala and her followers. Murugan investigates the secret history of malaria research is in turn investigated by Antar. The last two chapters of the novel complicate and extend this pattern even further. On 21 August 1995, Murugan follows the final stages of his trial with a magazine journalist, Urmila Roy, another quested who has been prominent throughout the novel. His thesis involves the belief that the counter-science cult is absorbed with interpersonal transference as a part of a long term strategy based on the notion that to know something is to change it. Towards the end the novel it appears be moving toward some kind of apocalyptic revelation and no wonder whether Murugan is about to become a victim or an initiate of the cults. Such ambivalence is, of course, central to *The Calcutta Chromosome*' procedure and its unsettling of there is a fresh surprise in the penultimate chapter when Murugan tells Urmila that she is the 'chosen' (306), one of the Mangala's contemporary incarnation and he ask her to promise, 'that you'll take me across if I don't make it one my own' (305). Urmila investigations has have played a significant part in Murugan's detective-work, but hitherto she has not seemed to occupy a central role in the process of discovery. The first part of the episode could well be explained away Phulboni's fantasy or hallucination and the text is full of incidents which raise the possibility that those who experience them are paranoid schizophrenics or fever-prone former malaria sufferers,

experiencing recurrent bouts of delirium. Antar, Murugan and Ross have all contracted malaria at some point in their lives-but there is a body of circumstantial evidence to suggest that the dangers faced by the text's quipsters are 'all too real' and that a secret Manichean counter-force may be at large in the world. Rather more than thirty years previously, 1984, an American scientist, manipulating the experiments of Ross' Calcutta predecessor D.D. Cuningham has been reported as having vanished after disembarking from a train at Renupur. Like virtually everything else in the text of this report is presented as unreliable: it takes the form of the Antar's super-computer Ava's partly fictionalized reconstruction of a lost e-mail account of Farley's missing last letter, a letter which has itself mysteriously disappeared after Murugan has read it in a Baltimore library. Nevertheless it posits the possibility of a Ghosh changes with Manichaeism in an altogether more complex and historically grounded way than the post-colonial interpreters of Manichean allegory. He only mentions it as such on one occasion in the novel.

The Calcutta Chromosome and the possibility of affecting the interpersonal transference's of knowledge occupies a central role in this investigation, transference would erode the barrier between elite and subaltern classes, between the pure voyeurs and the recipients of knowledge. Everything about Ghosh's novel seems to working towards this end. Structurally it moves between multiple stories and characters and the near-repetition of variants forms of same situation, such as the Renupur station episode, also works to dismantle the notion of discrete essentialist version, startling link with the Phulboni episode. In this episode the veteran guard of the train that has nearly killed Phulboni remembers a foreigner dying at Renupur in 1894 in an almost identical incident.

At the time of the foreigner's death the sole occupant of the station was a young man named Laakhan. Also known as Lutchaman; the shifting nature of the names is a clue to the texts' central revelation concerning *The Calcutta Chromosome*, which also has been one of the assistance in Cunningham's laboratory, whose computational activities Farley appears to have been discovered. Hence, at least according to one interpretation, they need to eliminate Farley. By this point in the novel, which employs Conradian battery of time-shifts the reader knows that Laakhan has subsequently worked for Ross and there are also traces of his identity in a range of other contexts, that he has a thumbless left hand. In the Phulboni episode, along with the evidence of poltergeist activity Phulboni has seen a mysterious hand in the signal box at Renupur. The elderly guard completes the story of what happened at Renupur in 1894 by telling Phulboni that, "after the death of the foreigner a stationmaster was found an upper-caste man who attempted to kill by witching the points and laying him before a train" (281) only to suffer the fate he has intended for Laakhan himself - third instance of a narrowly averted or actual death of this kind.

In some ways the third instance is the most interesting, though it is narrated in a more summary fashion, since it provides the most obvious case of a magic realism exerting power, even in this figurative storytelling process. There will be a fourth trace of the Renupur station motif towards the end of the novel, which I will return to before concluding.

The mystery of Phulboni's survival at the Renupur station experience, while Farley and the station master appear to have died, is not made clear, but his latter spousal of the

gospel of silence suggests that he has become a devotee of Mangala's cult and raises the possibility that he may be a subject of interpersonal transference'.

Relationship, but orthodox Augustinian theology, which is the lynchpin of Western Christianity, regards Manichaeism as a heresy because it propounds modes of classification. It is a heresy because it allows evil to exist in the world as a counter-force to good, whereas the position denies all any such autonomous existence.

Manichaeism is European thought of the heydays of the European empire. But the popular post-colonial version of Manichaeism's has been monistic not dualistic.

Manichaeism is more accurately characterized as an Eastern challenge to the exclusiveness of Western discourse which denies the other's capacity for utterance. In Calcutta notably, Laakhan and a woman, who in the text's imaginative reconstruction of these events is named Mangala appears to be both the high priestess of a secret medical cult offering a cure for syphilis and the brain behind the discoveries that will eventually lead to Ross' winning the Nobel Prize. So Ghosh' narrative discredits the Western scientist and instates an Indian magical realism in this place.

Murugan's conclusion that Mangala and her associates are hindering Cunningham's researches will be replaced by Ross, whom they can use a vessel of their discovery. The discoveries are, however, concerned with far more than malaria cure. They involve counter epistemology, which promises a form of immortality through the erosion of Western conception of discrete subjectivity, through the dismantling of the shadow-lines that construct notions of autonomous selfhood. This perhaps explains the texts recurrent de-stabilizing of notions of fixed identity by giving character more than one name. Mangala's discovery of the means by which Malaria is transmitted has come

about as a by-product of her real research interest. Working outside the streakier of western empirical methodologies, she has been attempting to evolve a technology of interpersonal transferences' (106), a means of transmitting knowledge 'chromosomally from body to body' (107). In Murugan's view the relationship between Mangala's counter-science and that of convention scientists such as Ronald Ross is analogous to the relationship between "matter antimatter, rooms and anti-rooms, Christ and antichrist and so on" (103). So, if one accepts Murugan's thesis, there is the possibility of a subaltern Manichean force which, through its operators through silence and secrecy, is at least as powerful as Western logo centrism. Whether such a conspirer exists or whether it is simply the product of paranoid fantasizing is the central deliberate conclusion with this question left unanswered.

In one sense, *The Calcutta Chromosome* is equally open-ended. Towards the end Antar receives information about Murugan's disappearance. He too, has taken a train to Renupur and so it seems as though he may have suffered the fate of Farley and the stationmaster who has attempted to kill Laakhan. However, towards the end Ava, Antar's computer, located him in the Department of Alternative States in Fort William, Calcutta: he has become a psychiatric patient. At this point Antar himself is feverish as a result of a recurrence of his malaria. So, both the main interpreters of the evidence are from one point of view, extremely unreliable, but, then all of Ghosh's work suggests that the imaginative, fictive reconstruction of sublethal experience is the only way in which it can be rendered, hence his blurring of the boundaries between anthropology and fiction, if one admits that fictive invention can be operative in this way, then the reliability of the

centers of consciousness who are experiencing the action ceases to be such a serious issue.

This is not the suggestion that ghost is engaged in a playful post modernist reactivate. However, *The Calcutta Chromosome* forces its readers to engage with it the possibility of an alternative historiography, in which traditionally disemboweled subjects prove to the real puppeteer-masters. The counter science cult by Managala, canny operates through silence. Phulboni's disquisition on the power of silence on his eighty-fifth birthday is the single passage leading to the magical reality. Murugan's detective work leads him to be discovered. The discoverer becomes discovered. Murugan's search of knowledge is blurred:

You see, for them the only way to escape the tyranny of knowledge is to term it on itself. But for that to work they have to create a single perfect moment of discovery when the person who discovers is also that which is discovered. (253)

It is quite interesting to know how Ghosh plays with the findings of anti malarial chromosome. Like in real life, too, Ross was in Calcutta, a place where malaria patients were cured, long before the findings of anti malaria parasite. In the Indian sub-continent, there used to be a mystical practice followed with herbal treatment, as the cure for malaria, which in most cases worked, if not in few.

Ghosh has some clever ideas and the stories meander along quite entertainingly in the text, thereby raising doubts on the supremacy of the Western science, especially on the findings of anti malaria cure. The Calcutta Chromosome through, Mangala and her

mystical practice want to present the world that prior to the findings of scientific cure of malaria, the Easterners were able to cure it.

4. Conclusion

The Calcutta Chromosome is a multi-layered novel, presenting different storylines from different time's perspective but all woven together, to make a larger whole. Ghosh brings the fragmented pieces of ideas neatly together, at the end but not before, creating a perplexed notion to its readers, followed by some decent entertainment, along the way.

The Calcutta Chromosome begins in a near future, in New York, where Antar works for International Water Council (IWC), a mega organization. The IWC had swallowed up Antar's colleague, Murugan, who worked for LifeWatch, a global public health consultancy and epidemiological data bank, a subsidiary organization of IWC.

Ghosh offers a mild dystopia here. Antar's New York is a more desolate decrepit, and impersonal one than the present day city, but Antar can still find convivial souls and his life isn't all too bad. Ghosh doesn't expend much energy on working out a vision of the future, and didn't put much thought into it. Antar's computer, known as Ava, is a pretty neat thing, able to speak in any dialect and do a good number of things, but otherwise Ghosh's future sounds out of date even these few years after he wrote it.

Ghosh' quaint lack of imagination about the future is appropriate, because the focus of the book is on the past, rather than present or future. The past first drops into Antar's lap, one day when suddenly, his computer screen displays a piece of an ID card that belongs to L. Murugan, his old colleague, who went

missing, since 1995. Then the story unfolds from Murugan's point of view, from the timeline, when Murugan landed in Calcutta, in 1995.

Murugan was obsessed with the findings of anti malaria parasite, as he was once a patient of the disease. In the course of discovery, he comes across the history of Ronald Ross, who was awarded with the Nobel Prize in 1902 for his work on findings of anti Malari parasite. Then the novel shifts to timeframe, somewhere in the late Victorian era. With that, the three timelines are set in the novel. The narrative technique shifts back and forth between the three major incidents. The first of them is Antar's point of view, somewhere in near future, s he investigates the ID card and what might have happened to his friend, Murugan. Second is the event leading to Murugan's disappearance in 1995, which includes his discussions with Antar in the later part of the novel and then there are the events from the late 19th century, as the malaria discoveries are being made. These events are largely and confusingly related to Murugan, though often based on accounts and letters from the present time. The third time frame narrates mysterious stories of Phulboni, a writer and Mangala, the magical cult practitioner.

There are other figures in Calcutta, like a journalist, a write, and others who play larger roles in the search of Murugan's quest. They all have a role to play but the story comes together quite nicely, when mysticism enters in the storyline, threading all the characters together.

Ross's malaria related discoveries are the key, elements of all the happenings in the novel. As Murugan's discoveries unfolds, he come across the

forgotten history of Mangala, a low Hindu caste woman, sweeper by designation. By the findings of Mangala and her magical cult, the theory of Ronald Ross as the discoverer of anti malaria parasite, gets a severe threat. Murugan finds that there is more history to be dug out than it was visible, as he has strong reasons to believe that the finding of anti malaria parasite by Ross, was not a work of lone genius. He comes across reasons, which make him believe that D. D. Cunningham, the predecessor of Ross was forced to quit his lab in Calcutta, paving path for Ross to take his place, who was in turn used as puppet by Mangala, in her mystical cult.

The malarial theories and what Ghosh does with them are quite interesting because there are ample reasons in real life, to disbelieve Ross, as the sole finder of anti malaria parasite. Like, Ross was in Calcutta when his anti malaria parasite research was on. And on top, Malaria though deadly, was curable in Indian sub continent by use of some herbs and a mystical practice. He through Mangala and her mystical practice wants to present the world that prior to the findings of cure of Malaria, the Easterners were successful in curing the malarial patients.

Much of the novel is based on science fiction but as the novel introduces magic realism in form of magical cult and supernatural happenings in Renupur station; the ultimate findings of the western world are questioned, especially focused on the findings of anti malaria parasite. Ghosh, strongly opines that the mysterious cult of Mangal, is somehow related to Ross's findings, putting a question on the western findings. The book promises a strong resistance against the western belief and its supremacy.

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