

# Exploration of Mystery in Amitav Ghosh's The Calcutta Chromosome

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## Abstract

This research investigates the intricate interplay of mystery within Ghosh's novel, *The Calcutta Chromosome*, analysing its narrative depth, character development, and thematic resonance. Rooted in the etymology of the term "mystery" from ancient Greek to Latin, the paper delves into Ghosh's adept blending of historical events, cultural complexities, and speculative fiction elements. The study navigates through the Indian literary landscape in English, tracing its evolution from the colonial era to the contemporary period, highlighting pivotal contributions from renowned authors. Focusing on *The Calcutta Chromosome*, published in 1995, the research uncovers layers of mystery woven into the disappearance of Murugan and the exploration of Sir Ronald Ross's discovery of malaria transmission. Through the analysis of characters, settings, and narrative techniques, the paper reveals the novel's thematic richness and its seamless integration of mystery as a narrative device. From the enigmatic character Laakhan to the haunting allure of Phulboni's past, Ghosh constructs a web of intrigue that captivates readers and invites them into a world where history, science, and imagination converge. This abstract offers a glimpse into the meticulous examination of mystery within Ghosh's masterful narrative tapestry, shedding light on its enduring narrative significance.

## Keywords

Malaria, Discovery, Facts, Investigation, Mystery

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## 1. Introduction

Indian Writing in English encompasses stories written by Indian authors using the English language, with its origins rooted in the British Colonial Period. From the 19th Century onwards, luminaries such as Raja Rammohan Roy and Toru Dutt contributed to this literary tradition. In the 20th Century, figures like Rabindranath Tagore, Mulk Raj Anand, and R.K. Narayan further enriched the genre, offering diverse narratives that reflected Indian history, traditions, and cultures.

*The Calcutta Chromosome* published in 1995, stands as a hallmark of Indian literature in English. Authored by Amitav Ghosh, the novel intertwines elements of science fiction, historical fiction, and mystery. At its core, the narrative revolves around Antar, Murugan, and the pivotal discovery of malaria by Sir Ronald Ross.

Ghosh's narrative prowess is evident as he seamlessly weaves together multiple timelines, exploring themes of science and history. Renowned for its intricate plot and the seamless integration of historical facts with speculative fiction, *The Calcutta Chromosome* captivates readers with its enigmatic allure.

Mystery is like a secret waiting to be solved. It's something hidden that makes us curious and eager to find out what is hidden. From ancient stories to modern books and movies, mystery is everywhere. It's that feeling of excitement and wonder when someone try to figure out something that's not clear. In stories, mystery keeps the readers hooked, wanting

to know what happens next. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* mystery plays a big role, making the readers to discover its secrets and solve its puzzles.

In this novel the central mystery revolves around Murugan's disappearance in 1995 and his investigation into Sir Ronald Ross's discovery of malaria transmission through mosquitoes. This exploration encompasses various elements, including the mystery surrounding writer Phulboni, an enigmatic incident at Renupur station, and the mysterious character Laakhan, interwoven with the exploration of characters, places, and incidents.

Antar and Murugan, former colleagues, embark on a quest to uncover Murugan's whereabouts and the truth behind Ross's malaria research. Murugan's investigation questions whether Ross was truly the first to discover mosquito-borne malaria, revealing hidden details, mysterious incidents, and characters associated with the research. Murugan says to antar that: So let's run with this for a bit. Let's say that just about the time that Ronnie's beginning to work on malaria there's this other person- this team - that's also been working with plasmodium falciparum but in a different way; a way so different it wouldn't make any sense to anyone who's properly trained. (*The Calcutta Chromosome* 92)

Urmila, a journalist, and Murugan's search for truth uncovers mysterious drawings and notes related to Ross's research. Antar's use of a supercomputer to collect the details of Murugan's research. This adds to the intrigue, as he investigates

Murugan's disappearance and uncovers mysterious identities.

The mystery extends to the P.G. Hospital, where Ross conducted his research. Urmila and Murugan explore the hospital's mysterious aspects, particularly its rear side, while engaging in cryptic conversations that hint at undisclosed secrets. There they both saw an inscription and Urmila says, "Doesn't it say that it was in this laboratory that Surgeon-Major Ronald Ross made the momentous discovery that malaria is conveyed by the bite of a mosquito" (169)

Characters like Mangala and Lutchman, lab workers of Ronald Ross, bridge separate storylines, connecting incidents and characters like Laakhan, who play pivotal roles in unravelling mysteries.

Phulboni's overnight stay at a village railway station unfolds a narrative of theft, a mysterious character named Laakhan. The people from renupur village have many mystical stories about Laakhan, some people believe that he is dead and his spirit is roaming in the village, others believe that he is alive. Some people believe that he went somewhere by train and hidden. The station master says to Phulboni that:

There is not much else to tell, what people say is that he hid himself on a train and went to Calcutta. They say he was living at Sealdah station when a woman found him and gave him a home. (239)

Murugan's visit to the P.G. Hospital introduces him to a mysterious boy in a discoloured T-shirt, whose actions evoke fear and intrigue. Murugan says to the boy that, "Stop walking behind me: you're not going to get anything out of me"(36). Meanwhile, Urmila's encounter with a fish seller brings unexpected clues and reunites her with Murugan, propelling them towards unravelling mysteries.

Throughout *The Calcutta Chromosome* Ghosh expertly intertwines mystery with character development, incidents, and the overarching enigma of Ronald Ross's discovery. The intricate web of mystery, epitomised by the character Laakhan, underscores the novel's allure, leaving readers captivated until the final revelation.

This comprehensive exploration highlights Ghosh's adeptness at crafting a narrative that immerses readers in a world where mystery and discovery intertwine, captivating and entralling them until the very end.

## 2. Conclusion

In conclusion, Amitav Ghosh masterfully employs the theme of mystery throughout *The Calcutta Chromosome*, intricately weaving it into the fabric of the narrative through the characters, incidents, and settings. From the opening chapter to the climactic conclusion in Chapter 45, the pervasive presence of mystery keeps readers engrossed, compelling them to unravel its enigmatic layers until the very end. Each character, from Antar and Murugan to the minor figures like Urmila and Phulboni, contributes to the overarching sense of intrigue and uncertainty, propelling the story forward with their quests for truth and discovery.

In essence, *The Calcutta Chromosome* is a captivating exploration of mystery that transcends the boundaries of genre, offering readers a compelling narrative that resonates long after the final page is turned. With its tantalising blend of history, science, and speculation, the novel leaves an indelible mark on the reader's imagination, challenging them to embrace the unknown and embark on their own journey of discovery.

## References

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