Chapter V

5. Summing-up

Ghosh throughout his diverse and generally composite oeuvre attempts to find connections between seemingly unrelated subjects. In fact, Ghosh’s fiction challenges the artificial shadow lines that have been erected to separate nations from their neighbours, fact from fiction, and academic disciplines from each other. His interrogation of boundaries accords with the preoccupation with hybridity, in-between spaces, and diasporas in postcolonial debate. He is concerned with highlighting filiations and connections which go beyond the (neo) colonial relationship, such as the persistence of pre-colonial trade connections between the Indian subcontinent and the Arabian Peninsula or the existence of an Indian Community in Burma, which was almost entirely erased by nationalism/colonialism.

Reason follows the fortunes of a young weaver, Alu, who is brought up in a Bengal village and after a false accusation that he is a member of a terrorist group, subsequently flees westwards, first to a fictional gulf state and later to Algeria. The novel suggests that weaving is a diasporic activity which transcends national and international origins and unites worlds that have habitually been viewed as separate and in so doing, it anticipates Ghosh’s later contention in Land that the medieval trade – routes functioned as a mobile inter-continental network that was largely unaware of western oriental/occidental bifurcations.
The first part unfolds the story of Balaram, a nationalist entranced by the Life of Pasteur. His obsessive idealism leads him to treat people as objects, either of observation or of change; a trait which makes him self-destructive as he gets entangled with his alter ego, Bhudeb, a Congressman, who, though motivated by cynical considerations, looks at people in the same way as Balaram. The second part revolves around Zindi, the earthy, practical zestful trader whose presence brings together a community of Indians in the Middle East. The second part moves forward through Alu, the nephew and only survivor of Balaram's family. He brings his community to death and destruction by his attempts to create a co-operative community which tries to dispense with money and trade. Finally, the third part structures itself around Mrs. Verma, who in defiance of all rational scepticism, creates in the desert an oasis of Indian community life. The novel, however, moves on as Alu, Zindi and Jyoti Das (a police officer who tracks Alu from the first part, having taken him for an extremist) finally leave Mr. Verma and the desert, bound for destinations which are to be discovered through hope. The main source of continuity is the story of Alu and Das, which is structured on the thriller format, and talks of a relationship which, being based on officialdom and oppressive power, cannot acknowledge its human connections.

Chronologically Lines begins with a passage of time in colonial India when the narrator was not born. The year 1939 is historically significant for the outbreak of the second world war and phenomenal changes caused by that agonizing epochal event. Mayadebi’s visit to London around this time, her warm and consequential contact with the Price family and Tridib-May component of the story is recounted by Tridib to the
narrator twenty-one years later when the latter is an eight-year-old inquisitive child. Although May was a little baby when Tridib saw her in London – and they have not met since then – a romantic relationship develops through correspondence between them, transcending the shadow lines of nationality and cultural boundary.

**Lines** tells the story of three generations of the narrator’s family spread over Dhaka, Calcutta and London. It includes character from different nationalities, religions and cultures. It is written against the backdrop of civil strife in post-partition East-Bengal and riot-hit Calcutta. Its events revolve around itinerant Mayadebi’s family their friendship and sojourn with their English friends, the Prices, Tha’mma, the narrator’s grandmother’s life in Dhaka and Calcutta, the communal combustion in 1964 in Dhaka claiming the lives of Jethamoshai, Khalil and Tridib pose the challenge of intercultural understanding and friendship in contemporary society divided by arbitrary demarcations of national boundaries.

**Lines** centres on the shadowiness of existing borders. Ghosh’s interest as an Indian-born American lies in making the lines between the personal and public shadowy. The narrator’s researches are made by his indigenous effort to transform his private story into the public history viewed from another stand point. The correlations between story and history is that between literature and history. It can be seen as a story of mirror-image relations between periods and between places – the contemporaneity and the past, the historical memory and the present, and different times and places. The narrator transforms his private story into the public history. Such transformation is also exemplified by Tha’mma. Thamma struggles for both personal freedom and national
freedom. However, Thamma’s nationalism and Ila’s internationalism form a stark contrast to one another. In contrast, Ila’s belief is that her internationalism can liberate her from what she considers representative of upper-class society. She is an orientalist.

The historical baggage shouldered by the novel includes the freedom movement in Bengal, the Second World War, the partition of India and the miasma of communal hatred breaking out into riots in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) following the Hazratbal incident in Srinagar in 1964. The novel is not a recapitulation of these historical upheavals. It catches alive the trauma of emotional rupture and choked human relations. The reconstruction of the past through houses, photographs, maps, road names, newspapers, advertisements and other concretizations allows the readers to examine the text with diverse cotexts and validate the author’s perception of the time and milieu covered by the novel. A close look at the principal episodes with reference to their historicity and materiality is significantly revealing in that the author's insight into the issues troubling the consciousness of characters can be identified and gleaned. In Lines, the very materiality of objects plays a vital role in validating the narrative. Tridib is an archaeologist and the chief narrator. The importance of material objects to the archaeological-historian for validation of oral narratives, for dating and establishing chronology in the reconstruction of history, cannot be over-stated.

Lines includes the freedom movement in Bengal, the second world war, the partition of India and the miasma of communal hatred breaking out into riots in East Pakistan following Hazratbal incident in Srinagar in 1964. Murari Prasad in “The Shadow Lines: A Quest for the ‘Indivisible Sanity’” says: “The novel is not a
recapituation of these historical upheavals, it catches alive the trauma of emotional rupture and choked human relations as also the damaging potential of the siege within people sundered by politics. The materiality of Ghosh’s novel constituted by the web of material relations at a certain time in a certain location binds the narratives and authenticates the nexus between the historical moment and the fictive world” (89).

Further, Prasad says:

Amitav Ghosh's **The Shadow Lines** is one of the most readable and least frivolous of the recent Indian novels in English. An effective fiction, it emanates from a particular historical moment which intersects the narrator and the nation at a crucial point of their evolution and growth. While capturing the high points of the historical moment in credible and efficient narrative action, the novel eventuates into a search for the vibrant concerns essential for the survival of central strength and sanity in society. The novel is rich in signifying transactions that do not depend for their effect on ‘solid slabs of continuous experience’ but on the potentiality of materiality marshalled by the author to anchor his perception of reality. It quickens our conscience and triggers our response to the mingled frenzy of violence, idealism, passion and intrigue that has amputated the narrator's intimate history and geography. By skilfully manipulating the narrator's developing sociological consciousness and his interaction with multicultural representatives in a fictional construct, Ghosh makes his novel a supple medium of sophisticated comment on current realities.
Although the situations are bound by their historical and geographical co-ordinates, they enlarge the spatial and temporal axes and offer a melange of insights into a kind of ‘reality’ that can sustain inter-personal bond across cultural boundaries and contain the threats flowing from the absurdities of borders and frontiers. (87)

The perception of history evolves from the novel and Ghosh never attempts to bulldoze history into some other preoccupation. History retains its historicity, as a process which hinges on characters who are representative of important historical tendencies—whether it is Balaram the idealist bhadralok, or Bhudeb the lumpen Congressman who unnervingly talks of mass media and straight lines, or even Damanhouri the one-eyed fantasy of the fledgling bourgeoisie. History is refracted through different mediums: in the first part through ideas on science and change, and in the second section, through the Damanhouri story, as a narrative from which earthy lessons are to be drawn. The difference in historical understanding corresponds to the distinction between an intellectually cosmopolitan culture and a more rural one. Being memory, history is fashioned by the way people collectively look at their inheritance. It is subject to culture.

In Land, Ghosh shows that the antique world is not entirely lost. The Bhuta-Cult itself is a subversion of the categories of Sanskrit Hinduism, still exist among the fisher folk of Mangalore. It also illustrates the sincere efforts of the enlightened people like Ustaz Sabri who believes in ghosts and miracles, and the practice of visiting graves which constitute the revolutionary counter image of orthodox religions of the Middle East like Judaism and Islam, which are not removed from the people of Nashawy and Lataifa.
It is a text that straddles the generic borderlines between fact, fiction, autobiography, history, anthropology and travel book. Ghosh maps ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in the Egyptian villages of Lataifa and Nashawy onto his subsequent research into medieval Indian Ocean trade. In so doing, he explores the connections and ruptures between the two worlds – the medieval and the contemporary. It is an authentic historical document presented in the form of fiction. It is described as Ghosh’s tour-de-force and as an historical document, moreover as a socio-historical document with an abundance of varied facts. It is also a travelogue enriched by first hand experience and exuberant details and facts. There are three parallel stories in Land.

1. First, the story of a Jewish merchant, Abraham Ben Yiju, who came from Aden to Mangalore for trade eight hundred years ago and his Indian slave, whom she married.

2. Secondly, it is the story of modern Egypt that Ghosh relates from first-hand experience in two Egyptian villages.

3. The third story is about Ghosh’s search for a story, i.e. his search for the antique world of Ben Yiju and his slave and the story he builds up from the disconnected and fragmentary medieval documents including the letter exchanged between Ben Yiju and his friends and correspondents in the twelfth century.

Land describes Ghosh’s historical research on travel between Egypt and India. It can be considered a postcolonial novel as it deals with the problems of the third world and antique lands. The historical narrative in Land centres round Abraham Ben Yiju and
his Indian slave, named Bomma. It is felt in the course of the narrative that it is difficult to present history without distortion in a narrative vein. But Ghosh has intermingled history and narrative in the story of Ben Yiju. He has built the narrative around the complete account of twelfth century out of fragmentary documents collected in libraries and Egyptian Geniza. In fact, characters and events have been viewed from the historical research and that makes the narrative appears as a truthful account of history. In fact, Ghosh’s historical research into Ben Yiju’s story provides a study in social anthropology and a valuable insight into the uses of history. The fiction created by Ghosh out of the historical accounts of Ben Yiju takes the readers back to an antiquated world in the middle age when religious, social and geographical divisions had spread over a wide area in the middle east and the Indian subcontinent and it made the crossings of the paths of the Jewish merchant and his Hindu slave possible.

The major source of Land lies in its theme. The origin of the theme can be traced to the deeper layers of history and its civilization. On one side the readers can see an antique civilization of twelfth century and on the other the twentieth century world. There is also a bridgable gulf between these two remote centuries. However, the accounts of these two completely different worlds reflect some attitudes and behavioural patterns that are similar and identical in nature. They reveal some human relationships that wear away the distance between the middle age and the modern age, between antiquity and modernity and that remain unchanged in the eternal tension between the old and the new.
Ghosh’s concept of history colours all his writing. **Reason** presents history as a collective memory which gathers, in a symbiotic fashion all that existed in the past into all that happens in the present. His narrative method combined with his treatment of history weaves delicate connections between different phenomena, so that no event becomes absolutely autonomous. This generates the mobility with which history traverses past and present creating an acceptable fluid pattern of time. In **Lines**, the world of war-torn London is overlaid by the memories of Calcutta and Dhaka. Letting his stories interplay with time, Ghosh achieves an unusual synthesis of time. If his first two novels move from present to past to present again and achieve a symbiotic narrative structure, **Land** blends fiction, fact and history competently. Ghosh writes on two parallel planes of time: one recounting his visit to Lataifa and Nashawy, the other reconstructing the life of Bomma, the Indian slave. The two narratives initially seem arbitrarily connected, but they gradually illumine and complement each other. In **Chromosome** the mystery of the novel accentuated by the use of magic realism dissolves the boundaries between the physical and spiritual truths and explores the possibilities of existence of various levels of consciousness. In fact, as Sharmila Guha Majumdar in “Amitav Ghosh’s **The Shadow Lines** and **In an Antique Land** : Some Thematic Considerations” admits:

Ghosh has drawn parallels between war and riot, Europe and Indian subcontinent to show how all violence whether committed in the name of nationalism or freedom is to be given no other colour. The barriers of nation, country and time find dissolve in the consciousness of the author
and he reaches a tragic realization of how unscrupulous political forces continue to suffocate human aspirations. (153)

In fact, Land demonstrates how an excursion into the past is no escape from the present, but a coming to grips with the present realities. It is done with a view of Edward Said, who claims in Culture and Imperialism as follows:

The major task is to match the new economic and socio-political dislocations and configurations of our time with the startling realities of human interdependence on a world scale. We need to go and to situate these in a geography of other identities, people, cultures, and then to study how, despite their differences, they have always overlapped one another, through unhierarchical influence, crossing, incorporation, recollection, deliberate forgetfulness and of course, conflict. (402-403)

Land is a combination of fact and history. In it, Ghosh interweaves history and narration. He has not sacrificed historical authenticity for fiction. He breaks away from the traditions of realism and magical realism. His is a combination of history, autobiography, travelogue, anthropology and so on. Shyam S. Agarwala in “In an Antique Land: A Critical Study” says:

Amitav Ghosh’s In an Antique Land, in my opinion a demi-oriental tale and epistolary fiction on the one hand, and, on the other, a contemporary novel delineating some ordinary characters in their daily encounters, with religious rites and social customs, personal whims and eccentricities,
sometimes grave, solemn and other times humorous, anti-quarian, in esse,
helps contemporaneity tale grows into story, ordinariness assumes
historicity and anthropology becomes the half-sister of history. (164)

Shadow lines are also the lines that separate the colonized and the colonizer, the present
and the past, the self and the image. They are the signifying acts that construct notions of
discrete identity. So that only Ghosh remarks that the border / frontier that separates
India from East / Pakistan / Bangladesh is a “looking-glass border” (SL 228). Lines
continuously subverts notions of truth-notions that are rooted in cultural, sociological and
historical realities while it exposes the arbitrariness of many kinds of lines, borders both
personal and political. The lines in the novel that divide people, places and realities are
both not only arbitrary and shadow-like but fixed and difficult to cross. Ghosh’s Lines
moves across national frontiers at the same time, as Robert Dixon in “Travelling in the
West : The Writing of Amitav Ghosh” observes, it fails to inhabit “a culture rooted in a
single place, but a discursive space that flows across political and national boundaries and
even across generations in time” (9). Indira Bhatt also in “The Journey Motif : A Study
of Amitav Ghosh’s The Shadow Lines” says that “Though the novel appears to be more
about historical events and violent happenings, partition and border-lines, dividing the
nations, in fact, it is more about the people who act out their life against these problems,
acquire a clear understanding, and accept the realities of lines but find that in their
personal lives, lines are blurred and shadows must be discarded. Unlike Kushwant
Singh’s Train to Pakistan, The Shadow Lines examines the impact of borders on the
personal lives, long after partition and establishes Ghosh as a major voice after Rushdie”
Border-lines can be taken as an image. Mostly critics treat it as a looking-glass where in one can behold his/her image. Rashmi Varma in “Freedom and the Image of Looking – Glass in *The Shadow Lines*” says:

Ghosh introduces a complex web of interrelated images to achieve an artistic integration between his vision and the lives of people he traces. But it is the recurring image of the looking – glass that dominates the narrative, effectively underlining its central focus. The image is employed throughout the novel to imply alikeness, with the suggestions of inseparability, bridging of distance, intimacy and impossibility of freedom in the sense of breaking free. (41)

The shadow lines mark borders. It can be bridged but Ghosh always points out that it divides people and separates them. It failures to give an identity to them. Indira Nityanandam in “The Outsider : A Study of the Characters in *The Shadow Lines*” observes:

The shadow lines that mark borders, that divide people into native and foreign and insiders and outsiders are not merely a physical reality for Ghosh. These lines go far deeper into our psyche and are hence more long-lasting and formidable. When characters break these lines, they are integrated with the world around them and if they do not break them they remain outsiders. The question that remains with us is : ‘Are these lines drawn to keep outsiders out or insiders in?’ (54)
In *Lines*, Ghosh proves that this nationalism and war in European context and nationalism, freedom and partition in Indian context become related things in the narrator’s historical consciousness. Commenting on nationhood and the resultant feeling, Meenakshi Mukherjee in “Maps and Mirrors: Co-ordinates of Meaning in *The Shadow Lines*” comments:

**The Shadow Lines** obviously questions the idea of nationhood that is consolidated through the baptism of wars or coercive state apparatus. The grandmother valorizes apocalypses that make people forget that they are born this or that, Muslim or Hindu, Bengali or Punjabi: they become a family born of the same pool of blood. Yet she does not fall outside the novel’s inclusive ambit of sympathy; the author allows her historical position to confer a certain inevitability to her ideology. The representative of a class and a generation, in this novel she stands alone, as far away from her only son who is caught up in the upwardly mobile career graph of success, as from his only son who, in his fascination for maps and stories that would enable him to transcend space and time through the fluid sharing of other lives, is emulating the 'undesirable' example of Tridib. There is something haunting and illusory about the young man's desire for complete identification with Tridib, which, it is suggested at the end, is achieved through a woman who becomes a device for their bonding. Seen as a link with Tridib, May is seldom perceived as an autonomous person and her union with the narrator at the end despite
the authorial avowals of a 'redemptive mystery' remains merely a rite of transformation of the young man. Even as May fills in some of the missing pieces in the Tridib story in a London coffee shop, their eyes meet in a mirror until at the climactic moment 'she turned away so that I could not see her eyes in the mirror'. As the narrator assumes Tridib's identity, May almost disappears. (146-147)

By exploring connections, distinctions and possibilities, Ghosh shows that in a changing world different strands of nationalism and ideology will exist and even compete. The force of nationalism in the quest for freedom or ideology is often a source of violence. So the 'shadow line' between people and nations is often mere illusion. The force and appeal of nationalism cannot be wished away. The overall focus is on the meaning and shades of political nuances in contemporary life. The universal urge for political freedom, the response to violence, and strident nationalism are some important aspects of contemporary life in the sub-continent stressed in the novel. The vision of life presented is a dynamic desire to find a harmonious and complete relationship with the rich diversity of the modern world. The quest for political freedom, the violence in modern life, the role of rumour in riots are all aptly delineated in this novel. Ghosh shows how communal violence spread in Calcutta and cities of erstwhile East Pakistan in 1961. Hence, Lines is very contemporary and relevant as it shows communal riots thrived on the spread of rumours which intensified feelings of anger and triggered off violence. The brand newspaper reports and memory techniques of Ghosh remove the impact of time. It is implied that the riots are contemporaneous. The 1964 Calcutta riots could be the 1984
Delhi riots, the 1987 Meerut riots or in recent times the 1989 Bhagalpur killings. In fact, Ghosh shows how different cultures and communities are becoming antagonistic to a point of no returns. Hence, in Lines, he effectively uses political allegory to stress the need for a syncretic civilization to avoid a communal holocaust.

In Land, Ghosh confronts the imperialistic history, the chief instrument of the disruption of colonized place, with the pre-history of India. Anjali Gora in “Deskothay? : Amitav Ghosh Tells Old Wives Tales” avers:

The master narratives of imperialism and nationalism, constructed through European historiographical methods, have erased and overwritten the little stories of small places. Ghosh’s search for these tales in family chronicles and neighbourhood yarns makes him dig up histories buried and forgotten under the national edifice. These stories retell the lives of ordinary families living in small intimate places by building on their memories. Even when they cross natural / national boundaries, such stories remain confined to homes, streets, or small neighbourhoods. Public events occasionally invade these intimate spaces when their occupants inadvertently walk into public areas. As memories of these events often don’t match, the veracity of the stories is often thrown into doubt. Ghosh substitutes stories for history to unmask the narrative of history. (110)

Land is an excursion into past. It juxtaposes the two worlds: the medieval and the modern. K.C. Belliappa in “Amitav Ghosh’s In an Antique Land : An Excursion into
Time Present” says: “In an Antique Land demonstrates most powerfully how an excursion into the past is no escape from the present, but a coming to grips with the present realities of living. By juxtaposing the medieval and the modern world of the 12th and 20th centuries in the two different civilizations of India and Egypt with their diverse cultures of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism, Ghosh magnificently illustrates through his fictional discourse the need for human understanding and religious tolerance” (65).

Ghosh’s Palace is an expedition in understanding the ravages done by colonialism. It begins in 1885 Burma where the British finally subjugated it and sent the Burmese Royal family into exile. The glass palace, once the traditional hall where the Burmese monarchs held audience, is the name of the photo studio in the late twentieth century, a reminder of the old days when Burma was free, both of the colonial powers and the junta which controls it now. Palace as a fictitious narrative traces the life history of Rajkumar, an orphan boy of Indian origin, who after lots of struggles becomes a rich teak merchant in Burma. He is not having a family of his own. He has to seek out people as his own. In Saya John, he finds a father, in Matthew, a brother; and in Dolly, his soul mate. He is an Indian by birth, has to start looking after himself at an early age, builds his fortune in Burma, comes to India to seek out his bride of whom he had glimpses when he was only eleven, goes back to Burma and raises his family and then again returns to India in old age, after his fortune has been devastated by war and his elder son and daughter-in-law had been killed.
Land is an indefatigable research work. It is from a social anthropologist view. It is also a document of a clear-sighted traveller. It is a sort of painstaking international research work. Reason also bears a testimony that Ghosh has a close knowledge of and intimate relation with the Middle East and the Arab world. The creative writings of Egypt, its culture and thought had along lasting influence on Ghosh. Chromosome takes up the issue of fantasy colouring it with malarial fever, delirium, mysticism, mystery, supernatural and superstition. It is based on the theory of science and counter science. Ghosh makes Murugan say:

"Let me put it like this," Murugan said. "You know all about matter and anti-matter, right? And rooms and anterooms and Christ and anti-Christ and so on? ... Now let's say there was something like science and counter-science? Thinking of it in the abstract, wouldn't you say that the first principle of a functioning counter-science would have to be secrecy? The way I see it, wouldn't just have to be secretive about what it did (it couldn't hope to beat the scientists at the game any way); it would have to be secretive in what it did. It would also have to use secrecy as a technique of procedure. It would in principle have to refuse all direct communication, straight off the bat, because to communicate, to put ideas into language would be to establish a claim to know- which is the first thing that a counter-science would dispute.” (CC 88)

Murugan further explains:

Not making sense is what it's about, conventional sense that is. May be this other team started with the ideas that knowledge is self-contradictory,
may be they believed that to know something is to change it, therefore in
knowing something, you've already changed what you think, you know so
you don't really know it at all: You only know its history. May be they
thought that knowledge couldn't begin without acknowledging the
impossibility of knowledge. (CC 88)

Some characters in the novel are incarnations of one another. Laakhan/Lutchman and
Mangala, the two mainstays of the secret society, lived in the 1890s, but continue to exist
through their 1995 incarnations. This secret is revealed by Sonali Das to Urmila and
Murugan in chapter Forty-One. It was just a coincidence that Sonali went to Robinson
Street in search of Romen Haldar. She found there the smoke, the people, the boy, the
woman in the saree, the fire, the body of Romen. The woman was Mrs. Aratounian, the
incarnation of Mangala. She touched the body that was lying in front of the fire and
called him Laakhan. Phulboni wrote a number of short stories titled The Laakhan
Stories. The stories are very short and they all feature a character called Laakhan. In one
he is a postman; in another he is a village schoolmaster. People dismissed these stories
by saying that it was some kind of elaborate allegory. Urmila suspected that there was
something more to it. Mrs. Aratounian advised her to borrow the book from the National
Library. They discuss the stories. Mrs. Aratounian says that the stories are a message to
someone; to remind him of something—some kind of shared secret.

Laakhan and Mangala and their different selves—Romen Haldar and Mrs.
Aratounian—are pivotal to the plot since they play the role of fate or chance. The
delineation of the plot and characters of the novel are controlled by the members of the
secret society. Chance meetings are rarely so. The reality is that the secret society has decided upon a certain sequence of events. Murugan says this to Urmila: "Someone’s trying to get us to make some connections; they are trying to tell us something; something they don’t want to put together themselves, so that when we get to the end we’ll have a whole new story" (CC 179). When they come to the end, the story of Phulboni, Romen Haldar and Mrs. Aratounian reveals that, like the people of the secret society in the 1890s, they are also planting carefully selected clues to the chosen people—Urmila and Murugan. This group supplied some legal-size photocopy of a page of very fine English newsprint to Urmila. It was The Colonial Services Gazette, in which she read about Colonel D.D. Cunningham and his false name, C.C. Dunn, how Cunningham took five days' leave in the middle of January 1898, boarded a Madras-bound train in the false name of C.C. Dunn. The book also reveals how he met Mme. Salminen. Similarly, Murugan has also been able to piece together the puzzle because the society has provided him with evidence as they had done with Ross.

**Chromosome** attempts to inscribe a simple scientific temper on the fever, delirium and discovery of the malarial parasite. Madhumalati Adhikari in “The Continuity of Life, Mission and Mystery in *The Calcutta Chromosome*” says: “More appropriate it would be recognise that he has contrived to introduce a maze of ideas criss-crossing each other to project the profound meaning and mystery of life through a visibly insignificant facade of a ‘spine-chiller’ that negates the rational view of science and the universe” (228). True to the element of fantasy, Chromosome documents a series of interrelated searches where in each character feverishly attempts to reach the core of his / her quest:
1. Antar, the Egyptian computer clerk, sometimes in the early twenty first century struggles to trace the adventures and disappearance of L. Murugan in Calcutta sitting in New York before his computer, Ava, using virtual reality.

2. L. Murugan, on the other hand, is engaged in searching around the missing links of malarial parasite and its research conducted by Ronald Ross between 1895-99 in the nineteenth century.

3. Urmila makes research of Phulbonis stories and his fictional character Laakhan who guides her in research about malarial parasite.

4. Sonali is engaged in a quest for Romen Halder who ceases with the unveiling of Laakhan’s story/mystery.

5. Grigson’s mission to establish Lutchman / Laakhan’s true identity which remains an accomplished as he realises that the knowledge would endanger his life.

6. Farley’s discovery of Mangala-Lutchman mystery remains buried as he disappears in a rarely used station at Renupur.

7. Mangala and Laakhan’s search for immortality.

8. Mangala’s experiment with counter-science through the principles of silence and secrecy.

9. Urmila taking on the role of Mangala and Mrs. Aratourian.

All performers are explorers of some mystery. Despite the eerie atmosphere, one should not / cannot call Mangala and Laakhan as evil incarnations. On the other
person, persons like Farley the station master of Renupur, or countess Pongracz, disappear in a perplexing manner because they are out to interfere with the mysterious life of the central characters, Laakhan and Mangala. However, it is to be accepted that the mystery of the novel accentuated by the use of magic realism dissolves the boundaries between the physical and spiritual truths and explore the possibilities of existence of various levels of consciousness. In fact, Ghosh’s fictional universe is a microcosm of the real universe dominated, ordained, controlled and guided by the spirit – the female spirit, the Goddess that nurtures and destroys, symbolised by the clay doll, a figurine with painted eyes, a pigeon on one side and microscope with malarial parasites and syphilitic paresis through counter-science or faith. It is either tarka-analysis and reason-or-Bhakti-faith and devotion. Ross is for the first one and Mangala and Laakhan perform the second.

Ghosh has strong and dramatic storytelling skills. The story in Chromosome opens in New York with the Egyptian computer programmer/data analyst. Antar discovering an ID card of a missing acquaintance through his Ava/Ilse, a computer with an attitude. With the help of Ava, who is frighteningly human at times, can speak every language on earth, Antar enters an intriguing, timeless world to become involved with the adventures of his fellow programmer, the missing Murugan. As Antar is drawn in by Murugan's tale, he is transported to Calcutta, into the laboratory of Ronald Ross and Ross's experiments in malaria research. He sees how several fortuitous circumstances lead to discover the method of transmission of malaria to human beings. In fact, the whole story ranges from
Ross's 19th century Calcutta to the Calcutta of the 1990s. Antar discovers that the city, Calcutta, has many dangerous secrets. In the course of the events, Antar meets fascinating characters like Urmila, a journalist with a chip on her shoulder, Phulboni, a poet with a mission, and the beautiful, dramatic ex-actress, Sonali Das.

Ghosh uses flashbacks to present the virtual Murugan roaming Calcutta and trying desperately to understand and expose a subtext of counter-science in Ross's laboratory. Ghosh's Chromosome is kaleidoscopic in structure-writing the past with the present with an aim to visualize the future. The novel reads like a medical case history but later moves like a medical thriller related to Ross's discovery of malaria and its initial repercussions. Ghosh, uses Antar's character as a ploy to begin with. In fact, Antar, a computer brand Egyptian Clerk in New York and Ava, an employee of Lhasa the International water councils continental command centre for Asia, are used to frame the story related to Murugan-the protagonist of the novel. It is an amazing and alluring novel. The novel has multiple stories embedded in the main story. Some critics have evaluated Chromosome as a medical thriller, a ghost story, and a scientific quest. The whole book is rather a search for the history of the elusive and alluring 'Calcutta Chromosome'-a chromosomal means of transmitting information; "to know something is to change it". Further, without clearly articulating any particular alternative explanation for malaria, the work is stimulating for its intriguing allusions to genetics, culture, colonialism, Noble scientists, and their relationship to the disease that continues to kill many. Chromosome brings together three searches:
1. The first is that of an Egyptian clerk, Antar, working alone in a New York apartment in the early years of the twenty-first century to trace the adventures of L. Murugan, who disappeared in Calcutta in 1995.

2. The second pertains to Murugan's obsession with the missing links in the history of malaria research.

3. The third search is that of Urmila Roy, a journalist in Calcutta in 1995, who is researching the works of Phulboni, a writer, who produced a strange cycle of 'Lakhan stories' that he wrote in the 1930s but suppressed thereafter.

Ghosh’s *Chromosome* may be considered a spine thriller, a scientific thriller and also a novel about the many mysteries of life and many deep rooted cravings of man in general. In the course of the novel, with the help of the concept called Counter-Science, Murugan proves Ronald Ross, a lady by name Mangala has used malarial parasites to cure syphilis. Murugan firmly believes that there may be an 'other mind' behind this entire operation of research and discovery. True to be a Counter-Science fantasy, the novel states that

1. Ronald Ross was not able to see what is under his nose.

2. Mangala was far ahead of Ronald Ross and Cunningham in finding a Malarial parasite which may be used to cure Syphilis.

3. Mangala and Latchman entrapped Ross without giving him a chance to know that it is not he who is working on malarial parasites but the duo, Mangala and Latchman. In it, the scientist Ross has become an object of experiment.
In fact, in the course of the novel both Antar and Murugan have their own malarial delirium to cope with. Mrs. Aratounian is supposed to be the reincarnation of Mangala whereas Roman Haldar is a reborn Laakhan and Phulboni is a reborn Grigson, the linguist or Farley. Further, Urmila and Sonali duo have their counterpart in America as Tara and Maria respectively. Even the character portrayal of a Nepali boy seems to be a mysterious one true to science fantasy. He bothers and chases Murugan all the time. He leaves Sonali’s house only to be found at Roman Haldar’s building and he fetches fish for Urmila and provides clues on Cunningham and Ross through a newspaper wrapper to pick the missing link in the chase. The whole novel is packed with chases of different people:

1. Antar chases Murugan to find him in Calcutta.
2. Murugan chases research on Malaria and Ronald Ross leading to the game plan hatched by Mangala to provide evidence.

All these chases prove that **Chromosome** is a science fantasy. The novel has given credibility to an implausible fantasy.

In fact, the historical facts about malaria and the scientist Sir Ronald Ross sets off the creative artist into the jungle of science laboratories, scientific vocabulary, the methods of investigation and scientists. Ghosh has coloured the issue of malarial fever with mysticism and mystery, supernatural and superstition, and the theory of Science and Counter-Science. Even though Murugan narrates the story to Antar, Murugan and his story are screened, shown to Antar who has simply to push some buttons and Ava gives
all the historical details related to malarial parasites, Ross, Mangala, Latchman, Urmila, Sonali and so on.

However, Ghosh is not constant with the main framework of his novel related to science and non-science and their inter-relations. He also wants to mirrorize the fantasy related to Indian belief of rebirth. With Mangala and Latchman, Ghosh plays switching of identities by making them appear both in 19th and 20th centuries. Mangala is identified with Mrs. Aratounian, Urmila and Tara and similarly Latchman is identified with Murugan and Antar. Thus, the story moves through such a complicated texture that it appears more a day dreaming than any palatable reading. Para-psychology, thus, enters to bring a synthesis of fact and fiction, a vision quite enjoyable as fantasy as one finds in Coleridge's "Kublakhan".

True to science fantasy, there are a series of mysterious incidents that make the novel a science fantasy. The most important one is the incident of the early morning when Urmila finds a stranger standing at the gate asking her if she needed fish. Similarly, Urmila's visit to Mr. Haldar and the facts revealed there seems like a day dreaming. Further, the taxi drive of L. Murugan and Urmila to P.G. Hospital, the showing of the ID Card, the marble inscription, the manner in which malaria is discovered are some of the examples to consider the novel a science fantasy. The very idea that 'Science is supported by Counter-Science' also makes the novel science fantasy. Similarly, Phulboni's visit to Renupur and subsequently the incidents taking place at the railway station makes the novel a thriller as well as a science fantasy. In Phulboni's story, the story of Laakhan, who had occupied the signal room once, and his sudden
disappearance, and later being found at Sealdah station by a woman, intensifies the very suspense.

In malarial research an Australian clinician Julius Von Wagner Jauregg is actually ahead of Ronald Ross. He is working on the assumption that artificially induced malaria will cure or at least mitigate syphilitic paresis but even before the Austrian scientist, Mangala, a sweeper woman, who is suffering from Syphilis, knows the fact that malaria works on paresis through a different route, brain, which can cause irreparable damage to the brain resulting in hallucination. Mangala has developed a particular kind of malaria which could be induced in Pigeons that can later be transferred from pigeons to a patient of Syphilis. As it produces randomly assorted personality traits, it is called Calcutta Chromosome-a transferring agent of personality traits, a new avatar. Murugan says: "just think, a fresh start. When your body fails you, you leave it, you migrate-you or at least a matching symptomology of yourself. You begin all over again, another body, another beginning. Just think: no mistakes, a fresh start what would you give for that Ant: a technology that lets you improve on yourself in your next incarnation?" (CC91-92).

Chromosome has a basic theme of immortality. The immortality theme moves through host of female and male characters like Mangala, Aratounian, Urmila, Tara and many more Laakhans, Murugans, Antars and others. Ghose through the ages-the dosing years of the nineteenth century into the whole of twentieth century and then passess on to the early years of the twenty first century. The search for immortality is carried out by Mangala and Lachman/Lutchman/Laxman/Lachan/Laakhan/ Lokhon, the handy-man for Mangala. In fact, by controlling Ross, Farley, Grigson, Cunningham, male investigators
of malaria parasite, Mangala tries to find a cure for syphilitic paralytic by arriving at the conclusion that Malaria is a cure for Syphilis. This notion of secrecy, mystery, and self-contradictory knowledge related to existence or what exists challenges the convention of science in the quest for immortality. In Murugan’s views, the Counter-Science is the most revolutionary medical technique: “the ultimate transcendence of nature” (CC 90). It is about interpersonal transference which is based on the assumption that information can be transmitted chromosomally from body to body, the spirit can also be transmitted from body to body. It is provided in finding out the role of the so-called ‘flagellae’ by Farley in sexual reproduction. Farley learnt it from Lutchman which explicitly proves that Counter-Science is more powerful and innovative.

In Tide, the story centres on two visitors to the Sundarban community, Kanai Dutt and Piyali Roy (Piya), and their interaction with that community and with each other. Kanai, a Delhi businessman in his forties, is a semi-outsider, paying a rare visit to his aunt Nilima, an NGO activist who runs a hospital on one of the islands; Piya, an Indo-American Scientist from Seattle in her twenties, irrupts into the Sundarban world as - despite her Bengali origins - less a diasporic Indian than an outsider pure and simple, "the American." Kanai is there to pick up and read a journal left to him by his late uncle Nirmal, an idealistic, Marxist intellectual in the Bengali tradition, whose contents will oblige him to delve deep into his family history; Piya’s journey to the tide country is part of her ongoing research on dolphins. Piya knows no Bengali. Her ignorance of her own language heritage induces her to take Kanai on board as interpreter between her and