



IRWLE

The Indian Review of World Literature in English

ISSN: 0974-097X • Vol. 18, No. 2 • July 2022

Amitav Ghosh's Culture Chromosome (Book Review)

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Amitav Ghosh's *Culture Chromosome*, edited by Asis De and Alessandro Vescovi, Leiden: Brill, 2022, pp.368, \$25, ISBN 978-90-04-36034-1 Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English Pachaiyappa's College, Chennai Tamil Nadu, India

Amitav Ghosh's *Culture Chromosome* addresses the central motifs, in Ghosh's writings. Themes like postcoloniality, subalternity, migration and globalisation take central place in his novels. The book is divided into four sections: Anthropology, Epistemology, Ethics and Space. These divisions reflect on how Ghosh has dealt with a wide range of interdisciplinary themes. Rather than focusing on a sole history, place or culture, he deals with varied histories and cultures from different parts of the world. His works mirror a mosaic of "cultural, historical, moral, and cosmopolitan consciousness." The themes of the essays in the first section are anthropological: Moolla's essay explores the foundations of familial organization and family connections in *The Glass Palace*. Family relations, in Ghosh, is founded on romantic love, unlike culture and heritage, uniting together people from different castes, classes, nations, religions and ethnicities. Love, as uniting force, is posi-

tioned in contrast to the disruptive energies of the empire that prompt war, migration and instability. Rigoli, in her essay, traces human nature as plurally embodied in the Ibis trilogy. Rather than attributing a metaphysical essence to human identity, Ghosh imagines human identities as enveloped within cultural legacies and structures. Lauret-Taft's essay explains Ghosh's works not only celebrate the South-East Asian linguistic diversity but also perceive how languages interact and affect one another. In *River of Smoke*, he brings to light how language serves as an accomplice of power to locate one culturally in the globalized Indian Ocean market place. Capitani's essay explores how Ghosh traverses between secular and religious worldviews in *In an Antique Land*. Mathur's essay illuminates how the Indian indenture labourers, in Ibis trilogy, liquefy the barriers between communities to fashion hybrid identities. Mathur keenly pursues how the Indian indenture labourers demonstrate resilience by adapting to a fresh socio-cultural setting in Ibis trilogy.

In the second section, essays discuss how Ghosh reflects upon various categories of knowing, how imagination in each plot is distinguishable from the other. While Vescovi discusses the nuances that embroil in the making of *In an Antique Land*, Beretta and Prasad analyses the sense of history in Ghosh's novels. Beretta considers opium as a key to unravel the systemic contrivances of British Raj. Prasad underlines the substantial transaction between historical material related to Ross's malarial research and Ghosh's *Calcutta Chromosome*. Garofolo explains how Ghosh deconstructs the absolutes of the historiography of science and Arbab employs Spivak's notion of subaltern to subversively exemplify an alternative epistemological paradigm in *The Calcutta Chromosome*. The next section puts together essays on ethics: Roy demonstrates how Ghosh, in his Ibis trilogy, offers a critique on the colonial misrepresentations of transcultural and humanist expansion. Rana's essay interprets Ghosh's portrayal of "curious case" of Mrs Burnham

using Foucauldian, Freudian and Lacanian theories to locate how morality is wedged between self and identity, desire and decorum. Hanquart-Turner's essay

explores how the incongruity of human fate and their discernment of flower involves in an enigmatic potential to comprehend its perversity. The literary recreation of place in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* is discussed in Filipova's essay. The final section centers on the theme space: De examines the transcultural identity entangled in colonial and post-colonial periods. *The Glass Palace* demonstrates a comprehensive essence of cosmopolitanism recounting cultural hybridity and disassembling the barriers between communities. While Gopinath traces how space and cultural identities shape its characters in *The Shadow Lines*, Leon, Panigrahi and Pati reads the novel from the postmodern idea of the fluidity of space. Raimondi reads *Ibis* trilogy as a transnational Indian Ocean epic.

The essays in the volume offer diverse methodological stances to Ghosh's writings pointing to its transnational and transcultural significance. Ghosh's inexhaustible "literary genome" allows to exhibit the intricate genealogies and cultural histories in anticipating further dissemination. As an important contribution to cultural studies, the book maps his complex perspectives on history, culture, ethics and space. It recognises the intersections between these motifs and identifies the counterpoints that need further interpretation. The prominence of these themes are theoretically interfaced to accommodate the various perspectives entangled within Ghosh's narratives. However, some of the themes have been repetitively presented in the volume. The essays are befittingly rationalised to engage in a coherent interaction with Ghosh's works. This book will serve as a resourceful signpost for those who research on Ghosh's varied themes and how they cut across different disciplines.