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Traversing with *Chai*: A Scrutiny of *Chai Chai* as a Train Travelogue

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Abstract

The significance of the train can be emphasised by the fact that the train in India is posited metaphorically as the representation of the nation, symbolising its perennial ambition for progress and continuity. Keeping the significance of the train in mind in the Indian landscape, the paper endeavors to engage with the cultural analysis of the train travelogue *Chai Chai: Travels in Places Where You Stop but Never Get off* (2009) by Biswanath Ghosh. The paper contends that Biswanath Gosh uses train as the liminal and heterotopic space to underline the polyphonic realities of India. By experimenting with the concept of 'Non-Place' and 'Travel Glance,' Ghosh debunks the traditional ways of journeying and destination. This paper is an attempt to outline the narrative methods of Biswanath Ghosh in the train travelogue to understand the contemporary trends in Travel writings. It is divided into two parts. Part I is an attempt to underline the cultural significance and relevance of train travelogue in contemporary India. Part II seeks to delineate the ways in which Ghosh destabilises the established and popular ways of journeying.

Keywords: Liminal Space, Non-Place, Travel Glance, Journeying

Introduction

Chai Chai: Travels in Places Where You Stop but Never Get off (2009) gained its acclaim from the time it was put on shelves – as "a delightful travelogue with a difference" (Paperback Pickings). The train travelogue reads like an anthropological survey of railway junctions and small towns near the stations. Suffused with historical details of their foundation, naming, socio-cultural practices, and anecdotes, Ghosh attempts to write about the presence and role of

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small-town India and thereby underlines their contribution to the nation.

The paper envisages that the Indian train can be read as a liminal and heterotopic space that embraces multitude, cultural interaction and assimilation. Etymologically, the word 'liminal' derives its meaning from the Latin word *Limen*, which means "a threshold," coined by Arnold Van Gennep in 1999. In his seminal text, *The Rites of Passage*, Gennep affiliates the concept of liminal with rites of passage, which signifies the ritual of transition of a group or an individual in a certain amount of time in small societies. "This change in phase can be identified with change in status, change in location, situation from childhood to adolescence and adulthood" (Dubey 321). Gennep introduces the ritual ceremonies of transition into a tripartite structure – separation, transition, and incorporation.[i] Scrutinised in the light of Gennep's argument, the Indian train can be foregrounded as a liminal space which is a true exemplar of a culture of transience. In the liminal space of the train, unfamiliar cultures are brought into interaction and assimilation, and a new form of identity emerges. As the passengers from different cultures and religions board the train, they inhabit this in-between space, questioning the prominence of domain culture. As the train is in the process of becoming, so are its passengers because the passengers are experiencing a new socio-cultural set-up and constantly witness the landscape in alteration with the train's motion. Biswanath Ghosh notices this in the prologue, "the journeys are not just about the levelling, but also about getting acquainted with each other's cultures, especially food habits. . . . the story here is that the railways are not just a means of transport, but the circulatory system of India. No railways, no India" (3).

In the liminal space of the train, the passenger is traversing the unfamiliar terrain of culture, linguistics, and geography. During the train's journey, the passengers interact with their co-passengers and take cultural hints. Interestingly, however, along with the transience of the train, their self is also translated. This scenario is best captured in another Indian train travelogue, *Around India in 80 Trains,* by Monisha Rajesh. She notes: "An Indian train ticket was a permit to trespass on the intimacies of other people's lives, and certain improprieties became instantly acceptable" (qtd. in Dubey 132).

Therefore, the paper reads the space of the train and the halts it takes as a liminal space that allows co-habitation, further reflecting upon the multitudinous multiplicity of the culture of an Indian nation-state as enumerated by Foucault's idea of Heterogeneity.

In *Of Other Spaces*, Michel Foucault makes space understandable by dissecting it in two sites – utopia and heterotopia. Utopia is a "placeless place," whereas heterotopia is described as "a simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live" (Foucault 24). One of the central principles of the space of heterotopia is the heterogeneity and co-existence of otherness. Read in this light, a train can be analysed as a heterotopic place – as the structure of the train is such where others are both included and accepted. For instance, Biswanath Ghosh, in the travelogue, notes, "India can have no better symbol for national integration than the railways. . . . A millionaire who travels in a first-class air-conditioned compartment to maintain his exclusivity is forced to share the makeshift bedroom with a much poorer countryman. The latter happens to be travelling on office expanse" (2). As Foucault argues, heterotopia encompasses multiple spaces and "the power to juxtapose in a single real space several spaces. These several emplacements are in themselves incompatible" (qtd. in Dubey 323). Railway stations though fixed and stationary compared to the mobile train, these emplacements serve as a contact zone where unfamiliar cultures can flow easily. As Ghosh notes, especially in North India, these emplacements serve as "home-cum-workplace-cum-club" (51). Also, as Siddharth Dubey mentions, "[railway stations], become the primary ingredient to witness the primordial version of the dominant culture of the place it represents" (324).

The heterotopic space of the train destabilises the dominant form of culture, as the train, especially in India, is instrumental in integrating the nation. As the people of different cultures, ethnicities and religions alight and de-board the train from various places in India, this structuring problematise the prominence of one culture over the other as it is constitutive of a new culture of accumulation created within the train and familiarise its cultural scape with the new and foreign culture.

Railway Junctions and Non-Place

Biswanath Ghosh's train travelogue *Chai Chai* is a groundbreaking work in post-liberalisation travel writing in India. By focusing on the transit points, railway junctions and the establishment of small towns thriving on the economy generated by the railways, the travelogue destabilises the centrality of place and travelling self, poetic license of the traveler and use of eye and gaze as the dominant trope of travel writing. By foregrounding non-places like railway Junctions and using the concept of travel glance, Ghosh intervenes in the dominant trends of travel writings and attempts to write back the ignored sites with a sense of history. Contrary to the contemporary trend in travel writing, Biswanath Ghosh subverts the prominence of place in the travelogue to draw attention to the process and medium of the journey and undermines the importance of the destination. The railway and its junctions are not just used as a framework in the travelogue; instead, it unfolds as a structural part of the narrative. The travelogue covers six railway junctions in its journey from north to south, reflecting a cross-section of society. Ghosh notes, "I had by now, travelled about half the breadth and almost the entire length of the country. If I were to join with a pencil the towns I had visited during the past few months, I would be drawing a crude 'S' on the map of India" (211). Biswanath Ghosh uses the space of the compartment to understand the cultural dynamics of the places travelled. *Chai Chai* reflects more on being on a train and the halts that trains take to reach any significant destination. It notes:

> Railway station! It can be the most frustrating place on earth and also the most fascinating. Right now, it was fascination that was powering me as I made my way through a multitude of sleeping people and several dogs and a few cows to buy a platform ticket. (107)

The question of place and space has always remained central to anthropology as the inquiry of culture, society, and identity depends on it. Traditionally, ethnography has foregrounded the romantic version of place as a faraway exotic locale, unchanged and un-misted by "the pollution of Modernity," "rooted in the intact soil, and kept up by the archaic and exotic rituals of the Indigenous."[ii] In contrast,

spaces are created by super modernity and practices of spatial production, which Marc Auge terms non-places.[iii] By engaging closely with the representation of (non) places in *Chai-Chai*, the chapter attempts to problematise the traditional boundaries of places and spaces. It argues that the concept of the place has to be reconsidered as a space that is not bounded or indigenous. Instead, it is a heterogeneous, political, conflictual space where identity and culture are constantly in formation. The study seeks to destabilise the absoluteness of place and non-place to underscore that non-places can convert into places and vice versa if subjectivity is considered. It is paramount to revisit the configuration of place, space and non-place as it offers insight into why "places are deeply historical and open to the challenges of human interaction."[iv] This will further help in what Appadurai argues "to shift the history of ethnography from a history of neighbourhoods to a history of technologies of the production of locality, and think through again the colonial intervention of academic, travellers, anthropologist, linguist and tourist in the production of indigenous categories." [v]

Auge defines non-place as opposed to a place where humans are presented as anonymous individuals without identifying themselves with the space. Non-places, according to Auge, are localities that "come to existence by virtue of being relational, deeply historical and intimately connected to identity, both social and individual. It is where history erupts in the form of a site-specific event, landscape erupts as the loci of the intensified relationships between humans and the world."[vi] On deeper scrutiny, non-places are restricted and governed spaces where human action and body are under surveillance. The nature of non-place in that sense resembles supermodernity characterised by impatience, control, security, and acceleration of time.

Maximiliano Korstanje, in his analysis of the non-place, underlines the involvement of the status quo in the differentiation of place from non-place. He problematises the acceptance of the idea of non-place by arguing that "by formulating that a place, which produces rights and persons, passes to be a non-place, we are assuming they create non-persons and non-rights" (92). Also, Korstanje highlights the need to rethink the idea of place and space, keeping in mind the third world as he says, "in the third world, non-

places such as malls, train or subway stations are dwelled by homeless and vagabonds" (Korstanje 85). Individuals construct and reconstruct the places on an everyday basis. Therefore, only anthropological mobilities cannot determine what a place means. Also, "thinking mass consumption places as non-places serves as an ideological mechanism to mark and surveillance undesired 'others' who are excluded from the capitalist ethos" (Korstanje 86).

The narrative unfolds with the description of the railway station wrapped in anonymity, undisturbed by the local tradition and culture. For instance, Ghosh notes, "Railway stations in India stand like fiercely independent states within cities and towns, insulated from the local flavor as if they are territories of a common colonial master sitting in Delhi, which they are anyway" (1). At the beginning of his journey, readers are treated with descriptions of a railway station occupied by the sea of humanity indifferent to each other. The earlier description of the railway station qualifies what Marc Auge calls a non-place. Auge considers hotels, airports, and train stations as examples of non-places that stand in contrast with 'anthropological space,' which provide the space to the people that empower their identity. Whereas, non-place are spaces that lack any social references; therefore, anonymity is the dominant sense ruling this space. Auge hypothesis that spaces sans anthropological places and do not integrate themselves with other places. Non-places, he posits, are "listed, classified, promoted" to the status of "places of memory, and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position" (Read 4). So, while anthropological places create the organically social, non-place create solitary contractuality" (Read 2).[vii]

However, as Biswanath Ghosh started observing various railway stations in his journey, the travelogue offers a critique of the concept of non-place. For example, Marc Auge depicts non-places as lacking tradition and history. The travelogue ruptures this postulate by positing the railway station as a place that has become part of personal history and folklore. Auge himself argues that both places and non-places are places of the imagination. For instance, Ghosh notes, "these junctions have become a landmark in the lives of long-distance passengers . . . for such passengers, these junctions are now part of their personal history . . . yet these junctions, even though they bind the extreme corners of India, are hardly ever mentioned other

than in the context of train travel. That is because as towns, they are too small to matter to you. They too must be having stories to tell- just that nobody ever steps out of the station yard to listen" (Ghosh 4).

The second thesis of non-places is that it is a place of transience lacking any sense of social interaction, identity, and tradition. In the travelogue, Ghosh postulates this place as a cultural space of history, struggle and protest. For instance, to underline a sense of familiarity and continuity of tradition, Ghosh mentions an episode of interaction with Jeevan Lal, a caretaker in the Indian Railways having a family history of serving on the railway. This episode posits the railway station as an emotionally charged space and presents the conversion of a non-place into a place for Jeevan Lal's family.

Ghosh notes, "There is nothing here now, except the railway station," he said. "The steam locomotives were all dismantled and bundled away in trucks. I saw that happening in front of my eyes. So what remains?" (109). The nostalgia and the emotion that the railway station evokes for Jeevan Lal are further reflected when he is mourning the loss of an earlier version of the railway station. His description of the railway junctions reveals an alternate picture where he describes junction as "a break from the monotony of a long journey" (113). However, in the twenty-first century, "most long-distance trains have transformed into self-sufficient, mobile towns . . . the railways no longer need these junctions, but the towns that have grown around these junctions badly need the railways" (113).

Biswanath Ghosh describes that for the residents of the small towns located near the railway station, a railway station is significant for its economy, but the inception and identity of the town are dependent upon the railway station. The railway station has affinities and a sense of familiarity for the people of the small towns. To quote, "in the logical scheme of things, you first have a town and then- a railway station . . . but towns like Guntakal, Mughal Sarai and Itarsi came up only after the railways set up their junctions there" (146); furthermore, Biswanath Ghosh himself feels a sense of connection with the station when he says "[through] his annual trips from Kanpur to Calcutta . . . another piece of lost childhood was catching up" (9).

Marc Auge argues that non-places are conferred with homogeneity and anonymity because of their lack of social interaction. Initially, the travelogue asserts the sameness of the railway station so much so that it is a task to recognise one from another. For instance, Ghosh notes, "Such is the sameness that if you were to ignore the yellow slab and all other signboards that identify a railway station, you would barely know where you are. All you would know is that you are in a country where tea is available round the clock and whose inhabitants have two primary occupations-travelling and waiting" (1). However, the perception with which Ghosh begins his journey is later altered when he delineates each station's different nature and experience. For example, the railway station of Mughal Sarai is described as "the fountainhead of all evils. Pickpockets roamed the place. Ticket Examiners were into extortion, preying on poor and voiceless passengers. Vendors were hand in glove with the railway officers. Policemen were hand in glove with the pickpockets" (32). In contrast, he finds the Guntakal junction as "frozen in time." Ghosh describes this junction as "pleasant looking" – "it was one of the most pleasant-looking railway stations I had ever set foot on-clutter free, crowd-free, and standing innocently in the middle of barren land" (141). Ghosh further notes that "so old fashioned is the place that to get out of the station, you will have to walk down the platform and cross a railway track by foot to reach the parking area where autorickshaw would be waiting in the queue" (141). Interestingly, this is a place where the railway station is considered monumental. Whereas, Arakkonam "resembled any characterless suburb of Chennai . . . where ugly concrete structures had sprung up overnight to accommodate the spillover from the city's population" (172). It is due to these noticeable differences that Ghosh points out "presumptions and conclusion are two railway stations that are miles apart. Yet, there are times when we mistake one for the other. The blunder dawns upon us only after the train has left" (173).

Lastly, as Maximiliano Korstanje points out, considering the places of mass consumption as non-place becomes a tool of othering and surveillance where unacceptable others are denied access to these places. This ideology underlines the status quo of anthropology, which fails to consider how the third world modifies and inhabits the place. As Korstanje notes, places like railway stations and bus

stations become dwellings for thousands of vagabonds and the homeless in the third world. Their dwelling in the non-place turns into it a place. So the question that needs consideration is how far non-places can become places? At the various juncture in the travelogue, Ghosh illustrates the scenes outside the railway station, reflecting how the people dwelling outside are otherised because they are not part of mass consumption. Also, their constant presence in these places raises the basic tenet of the concept of non-place. For example, Ghosh describes the scene of the platform at Mughal Sarai as "the platform resembled a large ward of government hospitals, with dozens of people scattered around on impoverished beds- on the floor, by the walls, on the benches. They all looked numbed and weary as if reeling under an epidemic or a natural calamity" (8). Also, Ghosh notes that "there are two things you prepare yourself for a while stepping out of a railway station in India . . . the horde of autorickshaw drivers and rickshaw-pullers who almost grab you by the arm in their eagerness to take you to your destination. The other is the clutter around it: cheap hotels…dilapidated houses that must be standing from the time the station received its first train" (56). Thus, the travelogue delineates the passengers in transit and places in transience that are accepted and inclusive of the people, especially in the third world, who are otherised by hypermodernity's spatial and temporal boundaries.

Therefore, *Chai-Chai* critiques the celebrated idea of non-place of anthropology by underlining its shortcomings – as it fails to take into account the inhabitation of place by the third world and the question of subjectivity. As what is a place for someone can be non-place for the other person.

(Un)Romanticising Destinations

Indian literature has myriad ways of engagement with the railways seeing it as a reminder of colonisation and India's tryst with modernity. Writers like R.K Narayan have attempted to script railway into Indian consciousness in his famous work *Malgudi Days*. As Cronin argues that "the economy of [Narayan's] fiction depends on the fact that Malgudi has a 'little railway station'. Trains stop at Malgudi, newcomers arrive and disrupt the dreamy contentment of Narayan's Heroes. Without their intrusion, the novels would have no

plot, and more than that, they would have no point" (Cronin 77). The figure of the train assumes a place of significance in the Indian popular imaginary where it explodes with a plethora of emotions – that of horrors of partition, displacement and migration, a reminder of colonial rule and modernity and interconnectivity.

Traditionally, the genre of a travelogue delineates the cultural and linguistic practices of the place of dwelling. The focus is centred on and around the traveller's destination, which in most cases is pre-decided. The emphasis in the travelogue is not on the medium and journeying but on exploring the places of destination. As a train travelogue, *Chai Chai* digresses from the popular ways of travelling to famous destinations. The travelogue subverts the trope of 'popular' by underlining how the places acquire a particular character as something unchangeable and static as they become 'popular.' Ghosh juxtaposes the two small towns of Benares and Mughal Sarai to delineate how mass consumerism in some places changes the entire outlook of how and where we travel. "Mughal Sarai, even though its name gives off a whiff of history, is unlikely to interest anyone unless you have routinely passed its railway station during childhood- a time when you read about the Mughal emperors and when names of places inspire larger-than-life-images . . . Benares . . . but the moment you identify the river and the town, the earth under your feet becomes worthy of worship. Unlike other places whose history is measured in years, Benares has defied time: its history is as enchanting as and entwined with that of the gods" (49).

Usually, destinations and places of dwellings have enjoyed the privilege of description in travel writing. The halts like airports, railway stations, and bus stations have not received much scrutiny except for the passing reference as a point of transit. As the travelogue notes: "It is impossible to imagine these places are populated towns where people go about their daily lives just like people do elsewhere. That is because these places have never been their destiny but only the gateways to their destinations" (6). Biswanath Ghosh introduces a new layer in the travelogue by centring the narrative on the railway station and foregrounding their description in historical contexts. Form them being celebrated as transit points; *Chai Chai* presents these places as embedded in history and, therefore, present them as a place modifying and re-framing the

way identities are formed in relation to the nation. To illustrate, during his journey in Mughal Sarai, Biswanath Ghosh attempts to imagine "how the place must have looked during Sher Shah Suri" (15). From Mughal Sarai only being a halt station, Ghosh attaches a sense of history by describing it as a place "[that] used to be the biggest railway marshalling yard in Asia and a prominent coal market- and was also the birthplace of India's second prime minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri" (17). Similarly, while describing Mughal Sarai Ghosh underlines the historical importance of the place by indicating "old Grad Trunk Road-the lifeline of India, the highway of the Hindi Heartland, the tar thread that runs along the Gangetic plain to connect Punjabi aggression with Bengali intellect" (7). Not only that, Ghosh, while delineating the small towns, indicates how these small towns use the local to negotiate the global. This attempt at once questions the celebrated idea of modernity, which only considers the city and its methodologies indicative of the nation's progress. Ghosh notes, "I had not seen a single hoarding or a poster of a Hindi film in Mughal Sarai. I had been reading about the boom in the Bhojpuri film industry, but I had no idea that it had elbowed out Bollywood stars from this stretch of Hindi Heartland" (40).

Similarly, Jhansi, which is considered a small halt for passengers, Ghosh brings forth the historicity of the city known for its brave queen-Rani Laxmi Bai. The encroachment of the modern ways of being on the local gets reflected when Ghosh talks about the fort of Jhansi. Ghosh notes, "It sat on a mound like a giant tortoise, but dwarfed by cellular phone towers that dominated the landscape around it- a perfect example of the past resigning to the present" (75). Ghosh offers an alternative vision of the small towns famous for their services. Ghosh records, "Jhansi, for them, meant a railway station with grimy wooden benches on which people waited for hours for connecting trains. For me, Jhansi was now an air-conditioned room with a clean, comfortable bed on which I was going to sleep and dream of my trip to the land of Kama Sutra" (79). Ghosh even revisits the places famous in the popular imagination instilled by prominent writer of *Malgudi Days*. He brings out the real effect of the place by actually traversing it. "Since R.K Narayan, the writer, frequently travelled between Madras and Mysore, Jolarpetti finds a passing mention in one of the short stories in Malgudi Days" (177).

Secondly, Biswanath Ghosh further debunks the romantic association with travel writers when he shares an anecdote of meeting Paul Theroux, a renowned travel writer. “It was, however, a little disappointing to see Theroux in flesh and blood. In my romantic notion, a travel writer is never seen in public. He is always inaccessible to his readers, busy collecting material in a faraway, godforsaken land which you might never visit in your lifetime except through his books. He is not the one you would like to be face-to-face with: if you see him in real, you could end up looking for flaws in his personality that might take away from the flawlessness of his prose. Gods are best unseen” (139). Ghosh presents the travel writer as a flesh and blood character and, therefore, susceptible to follies and subjective interpretation. Interestingly, Ghosh, like Pankaj Mishra in *Butter Chicken in Ludhiana,* writes back the body of the travel writer in the narrative. This is a counter move on the part of Indian travel writers to question the scientific detachment Western travel writers maintain by obfuscating the body in the travel narrative or describing it as a transcendental experience.

Lastly, the train travelogue has offered new ways of narrating the travelling experience. Even though 'I' is still the dominant voice, the introduction of dialogues has bridged the chasm between fiction and travel writing. Furthermore, unlike the traditional travel narrative, the behaviour of the subject is not predicted as the subjects on the train are random and constantly keep on changing with every new destination. It, therefore, provides a new perspective in travel writing as “the reader is expected to believe that such conversations which apparently transcend a language barrier are recorded rather than invented” (Dubey 235). Furthermore, it subverts the travel writer's dominant authority and ability to record and narrativise.

Therefore, by traversing what is popularly known as transit points and writing a sense of history in smaller towns concerning the nation, Ghosh problematises the established notion of travelogue, which privileges the place of dwelling and destination and offers a place an alternative way of journeying. As “these are the towns that don’t mean a thing to you because you never get down there, but at the same time, they mean a world to you because no train journey is complete without these. They are irrelevant, yet they are a ritual” (211).

Travel Glancing the Landscape

The introduction of the railway in the early 19th century overturned the relationship between space and time. Railway travel "annihilated space and time" by quickly completing the traditionally covered amount of travel, introducing a noticeable 'shrinking of space.' Train narratives have mainly focused on the co-passenger and the travelling landscape, which is surveyed through the mechanised visual window in the train. Monisha Rajesh asserts:

> Trains were my escape, my ticket out of the city. They allowed me to curl up in comfort as my surrounding slipped away. Unlike air travel, a cramped clinical affair conducted in recycled air, causing bad tempers and bad breath, a train travel invited me to participate. (8)

There has been a long relationship between travel and visuals, as evident from the beginning of the Grand Tour. As David Bissell argues, "visual has been an axiomatic way of comprehending the experience of travel" (42). The focus on vision and visuals in contemporary mobilities will provide us with multiple ways of journeying. Therefore, it becomes imperative to deconstruct the different ways of visualising and experiencing the landscape from the mobile train. Especially the train, as Larsen notes, "The train's sensuous economy privileges seeing over other senses" (91). The architecture of the train made of steel and glass has changed how we visualise the everyday. The outside is seen and perceived differently from the different arrangements of seats in the compartment. The question that invites attention is whether there exists any relationship between visual and mobility. Secondly, how does the materiality and construction of the carriage serve and mediate how we look?

Train travel has inaugurated new ways of experiencing landscape which ultimately opens up the discussion on the new ways of seeing and modes of perception. David Bissell notes how the journey through the landscape with the new speed of the train has reconfigured the connection between people and the landscape. As "through this time-space compression and the annihilation of space, people could travel further distances in even shorter times, thus

changing passenger's routine perceptions of time and space" (Stein 42). With new travelling technology, the new modes of perceiving the landscapes and their visualisation emerged 'filtered' through "the mechanic ensemble of the train" (Stein 45). The train window becomes a new way of systematical observation of the landscape and its mobile qualities. Ghosh in *Chai Chai* notes, "The train had now picked up speed and hills started appearing on the horizons, but before you could fix your gaze on them, the hills would be suddenly gone and replaced by lush green fields. Moreover, they would reappear after a while and disappear again. Then it came upon a short stretch when you look out of the left window, you saw the brown of barrenness, but when you looked out of the right window, the greenery of the fields dazzled your eyes. The train ran like an animal that had lost its way in the confusing topography and was desperately trying to find it out" (138).

John Urry further notes that the panorama offered by the mobile landscape from the train window changed the perception and 'public mobilization.' To opt for this mode of travelling increase the diversity of landscape for their visual experience. In the beginning, the train and the mobility it facilitated were perceived as "shocking speed machines," which problematised the whole notion of distance, speed and time. He further introduced the concept of 'Travel Glance' as opposed to the Gazing practice. The "mobility of vision" (Schivelbusch 97) that the train provides is a paradigmatic example of travel glance. While the tourist gaze is a static photographic way of seeing, the travel glance provides a visual cinematic-like experience of moving landscape images to the mobilised yet (im)mobile spectatorship. To quote, "the mobile travel glance provides a visual "cinematic experience" of moving landscape images to the travelling yet corporally immobile "armchair spectator." Thus, travel glance will be captured through the metaphor of cinema" (Larsen 82).

The train's "automization of sight" and "domestication of nature" have progressively increased with continuous modernisation. The train offers a hypersensual seeing experience, which purposely governs all the other senses. In this sense, we can understand their mobility machines as simultaneous vision machines.

Conclusion

Chai Chai as a train travelogue emerges as a ground-breaking work in contemporary travel writings as it unsettles the presumed ways of journeying to places, dwelling in destinations and recordings of travel. The travelogue underlines a unique approach to journeying and further opens the debate on the relevance of travel writing in contemporary times.

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