



## RE-LOCATING THE INTRA-CULTURAL TRACES OF CALCUTTA: A STUDY IN AMIT CHAUDHURI NOVELS

**R. PADMA PRIYA**

Research Scholar  
Bharathidasan University  
Constituent College For Women  
Orathanadu, Thanjavur (TN) INDIA

**DR. M. PREMAVATHY**

Research Advisor  
Bharathidasan University  
Constituent College For Women  
Orathanadu, Thanjavur (TN) INDIA

### ABSTRACT

*Amit Chaudhuri is a versatile writer of contemporary Indian writings in English. He is a literary critic, essayist, novelist, poet and also a great singer. He has remarked as dazzling star of contemporary Indian writers in English. His writings are discernible, observable which strikes and vibrate the heart and mind of the readers. He has given noted importance for the Indian values. His works reflect the Indian values coated in Bengali sensibility. Chaudhuri works rebound the Bengali culture, ethnicity and regional sensibility of Calcutta. Amit Chaudhuri has also explored the vitality of Indian culture through his novels and embellished the tradition of Indian English novels with his creative innovations. Chaudhuri's novels provide a new perspective on the theoretical models of the Indian domesticity. The domestic settings of his novels illustrate the material history of the Indian home, associated with religious, social and cultural practices, he also exhibits how these are adopted and reworked by the protagonists. His artistic perception and innovative vision assist him to change the conventional concepts of Indian English fiction. The region is a mere setting or background of his works. It plays an important role in the development of the story and characterization. The main objective of this paper is a trial to streak the cultural sensibility about tradition, rituals, family, class and identities in the novels of Amit Chaudhuri.*

**Keywords:** Culture, Ethnicity, Indian tradition, Domesticity, Rituals.

### INTRODUCTION

Amit Chaudhuri's novels glorify the celebration of local cultures and Individuality. He is exclusive a writer, his writings rests largely on the fact of most sensitive evocation of locality, it exhibits episodic from, and holistic narrative. Locality and Commonplace, in fact developed as a similar preconditions in his novels. This paper is an attempt to trace the elements of Intra-cultural spaces of life in Chaudhuri's novels.

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Amit Chaudhuri has entered into the literary world of Indian English Literature in 21st century. He is very vigorous to achieve something differently. He is a multifaceted genius who has presents his talent in both literature and arts. He is also a musician. He has touched day-to-day living experiences of everyday lives like getting up in the morning, reading newspaper, taking bath, having meals, visiting relations and so on. He pictures real India especially Bengali culture in his novels.

His artistic perception and innovative vision assist him to change the conventional concepts of Indian English Fiction. Chaudhuri's novels provide new perspectives on the ideology of the Western and the Indian domesticity. My aim is to explore that how Chaudhuri's novels portrays the importance of the construction of cultural sensibility about class, caste, family and identities. Chaudhuri captures life's every detail with all his perfections of daily existence with depth and compassion in an outstanding manner. Amit Chaudhuri is one of them who also have been narrated in his novels the cultural sensibility through the representation of the lived experience of home in *A Strange and Sublime Address*, *Afternoon Raag*, *Freedom Song* and *A New World*.

The social and personal interactions connect the characters to the particular locale or region in which they lead their lives. This locale or region can be defined by its physical, human and functional approaches such as customs, values, traditions, taboos and festivals. Chaudhuri's novels have their locale mostly in Calcutta (Kolkata), Mumbai and occasionally Oxford or London. He may be called a regional novelist. He is mainly occupied with the lives of middle class Bengalis, famously known as 'bhadra lok' whose lives and culture he has attempted to trace in his novels and prose writings. Chaudhuri's first novel, *A strange and Sublime Address* sketches middle class Kolkata, a city of industrial and economic deflation but with the native cultural flavor, seen through the eyes of the twelve-year old protagonist, Sandeep, who comes to the city from Mumbai to spend his summer vacation in the household of his maternal uncle.

The conflict of worldviews voiced above is revealed in the scene where a younger relative, during a social visit, tries to touch the elder's feet as a traditional gesture of respect. The social ritual of touching an elder's feet constructed as a custom in Bengali culture. The portability and the eternity of this conflict exposed in a social history which clearly helps to understand situation of a cultural cliché. Chaudhuri's novels endeavor a non-moral, post-independence problematisation. Chaudhuri's novels provide fictional planes, of ethical political and aesthetic apprehension of culture.

In *Afternoon Raag*, the narrator pleasures with little insights and with the subtle coil of his vintage art prose. This piece of work by Chaudhuri is loosely structured like a Hindustani



‘\_raag’ the classical music. The ‘\_raag’ (a piece of classical Indian music) of the title is not just allusion to the musical taste of the ‘\_I’ narrator – it seems to refer to the very substance of novel and its poetic, musical prose. The novel adopts the metaphor of Indian Classical Music, the raag, to evoke the complex emotions displayed by the narrator, in a young Indian student at Oxford.

When he physically situated in Oxford, often returns in his thoughts to his family home in Bombay and, later, to Calcutta. He rides with the two worlds literally on his trips back and forth imaginatively. They learn to observe the present moment as it was captured by the modernists. In his notes on the novel after Globalization, Chaudhuri stress the realities of post-independence India. *In Freedom Song* Chaudhuri interpret the deterioration and eventual decline of the family business and the loss of the extended family's houses, moving from a privileged warped life in the family's private compound to ordinary apartments in a municipal block. This loss of house and the destruction of the family business, in this novel, is a metaphor for the decline of ‘\_old’ middle class values in modern India, which explores that Chaudhuri has a great promonence for Indian values coated in Bengali sensibility.

*Freedom Song* is about the life of three generations of an enlarged family. It Sets in Calcutta in the 1990s, the novel chronicles the lives of Bhola and his sister Khuku and their corresponding families delineate the platitude of daily life: eating, sleeping, and going to work. Its chaudhuri’s style to focal point on culture and tradition in his writing that correlate his readers with native and regional aspects of different culture and helps them to comprehend minutely.

His fourth novel, *A New World* (2000), won SahityaAkademi Award in 2003. It is the story of JayojitChatterjee, a divorced writer living in America, who returns to his parents’home in Calcutta with his son Vikram (Bonny) for summer break. His elderly parents are first unable to comprehend the collapse of his marriage. What hurts Jayojit is the unbalanced space of Bengali culture and the changing face of the metropolis life and commonplace issues like hurry to catch the train, noise in the railway, canteen and announcement in the departure. It forecast intricacies between foreignness and indianess in his life.

It is thus clear that Chaudhuri considers the poetry of the nation locale and region shows its importance of culture, is well reflected in his writings. He finds magic in the daily life and so he depicts just the small, ordinary details of everyday life of an individual in his novels. His novels fulfilled with ordinary happenings, everyday events, habits, customs and tradition of Bengali lifestyle.

*The Immortals* is a fascinating look at the Bombay of 30 years ago a Bombay that existed in pre-boom India. Most of all, it’s a meditation on how or if art and commerce interconnected



through insightful observations that are both precise and graceful. It is a tale of two families: one luxuriating in a new world of corporate affluence and the other getting by on the old world of musical tradition. Together, they are joined by a common, day-to-day pursuit of music.

It is the thread that ties this book together, and Amit Chaudhuri knows his stuff. He is, himself, a composer and musician and precise the detail and grand amount of exposition is clearly written by a man who has inhabited the world he creates.

Hence Chaudhuri's minute descriptions of the living style of Bengali people and their culture is very outstanding. In the postmodern individual has become the most important phenomenon. Postmodern authors are trying to highlight their particular region and culture even though they are cosmopolitan wanderers. But they never forget their own culture and region. They are victims of nostalgia. Amit Chaudhuri is also one of them. He is an expert in creating images. Chaudhuri possesses a unique gift for sounds and sound patterns. His novels abound in sound images. He is a novelist who depicts the ordinary, mundane, daily activities of people specially the middle class and by the magic of his words and language, defamiliarizes the familiar happenings of daily life. It is not surprising then that much of Amit Chaudhuri's novels are a celebration of local cultures and subjectivities

Amit Chaudhuri belongs to the category of writers and depicts Bengali Culture and its people in his novels. Amit Chaudhuri represents both a synthesis of and a tension between his Bengali and postmodern sensibility. His writings serve as a wonderful key to understanding the vitality and specificity of Indian modernity and of modern transformation of Indian civilization. His works reflect the Indian values coated in Bengali- cultural sensibility.

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